Thematic session 3
Vocational development

Representation: the social concept and the professional concept
Vaz Henrique
Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

The overall frame of this empirical work is 'school work', analysed according to the conviction that work seen as a determinant item structuring inclusion does imply a new approach to school work (the period of training, previous to work time, questioning here its properties under this conception), renewing its social value as a projective activity for the individual, rather than simply understanding it through its market value.

This presentation aims to reflect upon empirical work held on a professional school whose courses on arts interpretation, plastic and technical production appear to be a privileged field to understand connections between training and work items, mostly through the meaning of 'representation', once it has to be understood as a social concept as well as a professional concept.

The observation of both theoretical and practical classes aims to seek for the basis on which understanding is constructed, according to the senses that structure the relation with reality, as well as according to the meanings structuring the relation with the other.

A Kohutian approach to generalized indecision
Santos Paulo Jorge
Faculdade de Letras, Secção Autónoma de Educação, Porto, Portugal

For individuals faced with a social and work life that is undergoing significant changes in contemporary societies, the career decision process is presently a much challenging task compared with the situation that was dominant some decades ago. Career indecision is a classic topic of vocational psychology and presently it is accepted that it is a multidimensional construct. Career undecided individuals have been classified in two main categories. The first corresponds to a normal phase, in developmental terms, of career exploration of alternatives that precedes investment in a specific career option. The second, normally designated indecisiveness or generalized indecision, is of a more structural nature. For indecisive individuals, and not simply undecided, the decision-making process, including career choice, tends to be a difficult task. The distinction and identification of the determinants of developmental versus generalized indecision have important implications for career counselling. Based on the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut, the primary purpose of this study was to analyse the relationship between goal instability and self-esteem, two markers of the self's maturity according to this psychological framework of psychoanalytical orientation, and indecisiveness and anxiety, two distinctive characteristics of indecisive individuals. A canonical correlation analysis, one for each gender, was applied to a Portuguese high-school sample of 11th and 12th grade students. Implications for career theory and counselling are discussed.

Self-Doubt and difficulties in making a vocational choice in adolescence
Lacoste Serge (1), Fonseca Maria (2), Tap, Pierre (1), Vasconcelos Maria de Loucles (2)
(1) Bouloue - Le - Mirall University (UTM), France;
(2) European Centre for Research into Behaviour and Institutions (CEICI, Coimbra, Portugal)

Under the programme of scientific collaboration between three research teams from France (University of Bouloue-Le-Mirail) and Portugal (Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa) UAL and the European Centre for Research into Behaviours and Institutions (CEICI, Coimbra, Portugal), this symposium proposes to analyse the choice of educational and vocational guidance for French and Portuguese high school students, as well as the problems and anxieties that such a choice involves.

For a large majority of school adolescents between 12 and 20 years of age, choosing between different vocations or occupations suggested by private schools according to their abilities is a huge problem, a source of stress. The principal cause of this stress is the self-doubt defined by Oleson (2000, p. 500): "feeling uncertain about one's competence". Among the various external and internal difficulties, self-doubt is the major variable that accounts for the perceived stress level. External difficulties cause agitation and emotional tension, while internal difficulties are associated with a mood of depression as a manifestation of stress. The results show that girls have more difficulties