

Symposium session 1

Career development: intervention strategies and process outcomes

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Human development arises out of a continuous and dynamic interaction between the specific characteristics of different developmental moments and all the characteristics of life contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus being, as the aim of any career guidance intervention appears to be the support to the working up and implementing of (life, career) projects, enabling individuals to take a position concerning what they would (or not) like to do, to evaluate what they are or are not capable of doing, to consider all the different choices available, as well as their level of accessibility. The confrontation with new environmental demands, such as future prospects referring to new roles and responsibilities, namely those attached to a (un)successful school-to-work transition, comes out as one of the many tasks (young) people will be confronted to throughout their life and career development process. How are young people of today dealing with this particular developmental task? How do their many exploration experiences enable them to be (or not) successful in such a transition, especially those intentionally planned for the effect? More precisely, what is the influence of the specific tools used by psychologists on youngsters' career development? What other variables should be accounted for? Is parenting an important dimension when thinking about adolescents' career development? If so why and under which conditions and with which results? In short, these are some of the issues being addressed by this symposium focusing on career development interventions strategies and process outcomes.

How are Portuguese youth negotiating the school-to-work transition process?

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Youth circumstances of today are in many ways different, making it necessary for them to negotiate alternative ways of relating to traditional transitional processes (Wyn & White, 2000), namely the school-to-work transition. It is the aim of this study to understand and characterise the ways in which Portuguese youth are negotiating such a transition, since it might provide them an opportunity for the exploration of their commitments, a process which, under certain conditions, enables them to control, at least partially, their trajectories. A multiple regression will be conducted as a means of realizing how individuals' perception of their ability to do the necessary tasks and to reach desired aims; namely, the way they deal with (career) commitments or seem to be able to project themselves in the (near) future, as well as their commitment to work or employment; influences their action potential; i.e., their career adaptability, a critical dimension in any transition.

The self and self-knowledge: do tools in career education sequences influence the self-concept of adolescents?

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Career education practice in French schools seeks to help pupils increase their self-knowledge. This study aimed at determining what occurs when a career counselor implements exercises, using a specific tool, in order to achieve this goal. Do such programs enable the students to merely discover certain aspects of themselves, or do they bring them to construct representations of themselves, determined by the actual structure of the instrument used? An experiment, based on a quasi-experimental design, was carried out with high-school students. Our study, situated within a theoretical model based on William James conception of the self and on Markus's research in self-schemata (1977), showed that after only one exercise aiming at «increasing self-knowledge», students in the experimental group developed further «self-schemata» encompassing dimensions which corresponded to the structure of the instrument used. A qualitative analysis confirmed such a move in the self process.