

Life Design Counseling With High School Students: A Narrative Approach

Najia Amini, Hassan II University of Casablanca, Morocco
Youssef Sefri, Hassan II University of Casablanca, Morocco
Mohamed Radid, Hassan II University of Casablanca, Morocco

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Abstract

According to educational experts and career guidance, the market and global economic forces linked to a postmodern society have led to a crisis in career development models and practices. In such an uncertain changing context students face major challenges during their career development. The life design method was used in this study to increase student's engagement in their career development. Life Career Design is a constructivist and narrative model-based approach that is mainly advised to empower people and inspire them to participate in a process that has personal significance for them. Our career interventions consist of face-to-face interviews with 30 high school students. This study uses a qualitative method to offer in-depth details on this practice. The narratives of 30 participants were analyzed afterward using the content analysis technique by NVivo 11 software to better assess students' career development. The findings can help students improve their capacity to anticipate their career actions and design strategies appropriate for their goals and context. This study is a component of the efforts made by improving career interventions to better prepare future citizens for participation in a knowledge-based society.

Keywords: Secondary School, Narrative Approach, Vocational Process, Students' Context

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Introduction

The global change in the economy and the strong competitiveness caused new conditions in the labor market. Today, the world of employment is experiencing transformations in the skills required, automation of tasks, and time-limited projects. This situation has caused instability and insecurity in the 21st-century labor market and difficulties in predicting life course trajectories (Briddick et al., 2018).

These new global restrictions affect the individual's relationship with his or her context. Razumova (2014), finds that an increasing number of students on the verge of graduation are unable to proceed to the next phase (Juan Guillermo Mansilla Sepúlveda et al., 2020). This fact has made it necessary to create strategies for preparing people for unpredictability, strategies that prioritize adaptability, flexibility, and lifelong learning. The current vocational development theories are no longer valid in the face of the unstable situation of the postmodern economy, leading vocational development authors to propose a set of postmodern theories based on social constructivism. The updated theories place a stronger emphasis on the interpersonal and interpretative processes that underlie career development.

The problems caused by an inadequate guidance system produce societal and economic problems in countries. The political decision-makers are concerned about the difference between new graduates' qualifications and labor-market demands. Researchers propose that universities establish guidance centers that operate under a guidance system that is open to their socioeconomic context, takes regional characteristics into account, provides support services, and has a center for the engineering development of guidance and counseling programs. These writers propose that this system adhere to the continuity of the study cycles and meet the goals and needs of its socioeconomic setting (Juan Guillermo Mansilla Sepúlveda et al., 2020).

Background of study

One of the most essential tools in counseling practice is the interview. A counseling interview might differ depending on the approach utilized; in the counseling intervention, the personality of the client, the training of the counselor, and the relationship to the context must all be considered.

Faced with the ineffectiveness of career development approaches Life design has emerged to focus on the postmodern link between humans and their environment (Santilli et al., 2019). The globality and flexibility of the context involve people in what Giddens (1991) describes as a reflexive personal project (Hooley, 2021). In 2012 Savickas proposed the life career design approach to update counseling practices to the needs of the postmodern society and to strengthen the previously existing career approaches, life design counseling is a method of career counseling that applies the Career Construction Theory (Cardoso et al., 2016; di Fabio & Maree, 2012). Life design is used to help students explore their own identity, improve their career development skills and participate in the progression of their career development (Wehmeyer et al., 2019).

Given the significance of structural and contextual elements in shaping young people's futures, it is now crucial to thoroughly examine their life experiences. The qualitative method appears to be suitable in this regard. Numerous youth-related social issues, including addiction and deviance as well as educational concerns like engagement and dropout, have

been investigated using qualitative methodologies (Ravn, 2019). Their results seem beneficial for policymakers (Barabasch, 2018). Narrative methods have been applied in career interventions since the constructivist paradigm first appeared. At the beginning of the 21st century, investigations were carried out to understand the new conditions for career development. In Vilhjálmsdóttir's research, the narrative method is considered by counselors effective in helping individuals to deeply investigate the meaning of their life experiences (Vilhjálmsdóttir & Tulinius, 2016). Life stories are methods that have proven their effectiveness in helping clients define their identity in a complex context and clarify the central themes of their careers (Cardoso et al., 2018, 2019; Whiston & Rahardja, 2005).

We aim by this study to explore secondary school students' vocational processes to provide intervention based on the Life career design paradigm that will suit their needs. To that goal, we carried out this research to document the changes that resulted from doing student-centered narrative sessions.

Research Design

This study aims to understand in depth the process of students' vocational development. To accomplish this goal, a qualitative approach seems appropriate. We chose the narrative method since it was advised to be useful for the author in recognizing the key variables involved in the vocational process. On the other side, they allow students to invade the meaning of their choices. Thirty students in their final year of secondary school from various fields of study participated in this study: Arabic physical science, French physical science, life and earth sciences, mathematical sciences, and the professional baccalaureate with a specialization in automobile mechanics. The sample consists of 16 boys and 14 girls. Participants ages range from 16 to 19 years old. Our career intervention is to encourage students to tell their vocational stories. The length of the stories ranged from thirty to forty minutes. By the last, students were self-evaluated by a questionnaire, the survey consisted of open-ended questions about elements or sequences of their vocational experiences to be deleted, reformulated or new decisions made. Each interview was digitally recorded for later transcription.

Data analysis was carried out with NVIVO11 software to qualitatively analyze and show the data gathered from the student's responses in the form of a mind map.

Discussion

Narrative interventions with a constructivist approach, such as life career design, are well adapted to the difficulties encountered in such a hectic environment. Such interventions enable participants to explore their decision-making process, consider anticipating their acts and create meaning that is pertinent to their circumstances.

This study is conducted by the question, "What are the themes that structure secondary school students' vocational development?" We explored sequences of life of high school students that lead to the construction of their project, we found that their project develops mainly through the interaction: individual- contexts. The thematic analysis of the student stories reveals many issues that were mentioned by all the respondents. Secondary school students base themselves primarily on individual characteristics: academic performance and interests, they also assign importance to their professional projects, study projects, and the influence of the family.

At the beginning of secondary school, students make selections about their vocations based on personal traits like their interests and school experiences. The decision-making process grows more difficult as students near the end of secondary school and choices include additional factors like career aspirations. Major significance is attached to the transfer to higher education. Our findings support earlier research by Gati and Saka, who examined the difficulties associated with decision-making and advises the use of counseling programs in this regard (Babarović & Šverko, 2016). The family's influence on vocational development is evident in the students' narratives: the family is the primary support indicated by the students and the first context in which their aspirations are formed. Many researchers state the complexity of the family's involvement, particularly in supporting their children's career objectives, which supports the importance of the family in academic and vocational development. The socio-cognitive career theory (SCCT) is a conceptual framework that combines all the components of the vocational process to explain how they relate to one another. The SCCT emphasizes the role of context concerning other variables and introduces the notion of agentivity, which prompts researchers and counselors to consider creating career management interventions.

The qualitative approach highlighted the complexity of the vocational process and the interconnection of the factors that influence it, allowing for a better understanding of the student's needs. The narrative method's flexibility enables the participant to become an expert on their own experience. As a result, qualitative methods are advised to address research hypotheses that carry a higher level of quality. A qualitative method is an approach that is adapted to explain the profound changes that vocational development is undergoing due to social and economic transformation.

Conclusions

This study reveals the interactions that lead adolescents to develop their vocational choices. At the beginning of secondary school, individual characteristics are often favored in students' choice, towards the end of secondary school criteria associated with access to higher education and labor market conditions interfere to make the vocational process more complicated. It is recommended that programs be designed to allow for a variety of exploratory activities to assist students to explore their interests and develop links with the world of work. One of the limitations of our qualitative research is the small sample size, which prevents results from being generalized. Nevertheless, the qualitative method is beneficial to thoroughly explore some hypotheses, including ours.

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