

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT – A LIFESPAN PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** *Career counseling includes tools that allow us to define at a young age what our strengths and weaknesses are, what field of activity we would feel comfortable about and what we get from a profession. Thanks to such a consultation, we get the opportunity to make an informed career path decision that we do not regret later on. We asked 224 people in Bulgaria how they made their choice for the profession they chose through a survey-students for themselves and parents for their children. We were interested in choosing the specialty to be taught in a higher education institution. We were also interested in being aware of the curriculum of the chosen specialty, and whether they had information about the duties they were expected to perform when they started work in the specialty. We asked them if, in selecting a specialty, they had information on the average pay for the position they would occupy with the subject studied.*

**Keywords:** *career counseling, career studies, career path.*

### 1. Introduction

*Career studies is an active area of inquiry which cuts across a variety of disciplines, domains of work, and levels of analysis. CEOs, surgeons, politicians, actors, professional athletes, scientists, and line workers all have careers, where a “career” is defined as an evolving sequence of work experiences.*

At the heart of the Career Consultation are some key definitions that we can draw in a succinct way:

### 2. Key Terms and Definitions Career

Career can be defined as “a lifestyle concept that involves the sequence of work, learning and leisure activities through a lifetime. Careers are unique to each person and are dynamic: unfolding throughout life. Careers include how persons balance their paid and unpaid work and personal life roles” (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2006, p. 37). Adapted from Canadian National Steering

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Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards (2004).

### **3. Career Development**

Career development is the “lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure and transitions in order to moved towards a personally determined and evolving future” (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2006, p. 38).

#### **3.1. Career Development Learning**

“Career development learning in its broadest form relates to learning about the content and process of career development or life/career management. The content of career development learning in essence represents learning about self and learning about the world of work. Process learning represents the development of the skills necessary to navigate a successful and satisfying life/career” (McMahon, Patton, & Tatham, 2003, p. 6).

#### **3.2. Career Education**

The development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences in education and training settings which will assist students to make informed decisions about their study and/or work options and enable effective participation in working life” (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2006, p. 39).

### **4. Employability Skills**

The attributes, skills, knowledge, and attitudes required in the world-of-work; akin to transferable skills. The term graduate employability skills refers to

employability skills developed through higher education; subsumed by the higher order notion of graduate attributes.

### **5. Service Learning**

Work-integrated learning which is initiated by community organisations, and which provides explicit social benefit to the organisation.

#### **5.1. Work-integrated Learning**

Learning which is embedded in the experience of work: which may work which is paid or unpaid; or full-time or part-time; or formally endorsed as part of a university course; or extra-curricular and complementary of studies; or totally independent of studies; in the past, present, or future; and which is made meaningful for a student when reflected upon in terms of personal learning and development occurring as part of a career development learning experience or course-related process.

#### **5.2. Work related learning**

Work related learning can occur in activities inside and outside of the curriculum and outside of the University itself through students own part time employment, vacation work, voluntary work, work experience and extra curricular activities. Students learn from their work related learning experiences – wherever they occur. (Moreland, 2005)

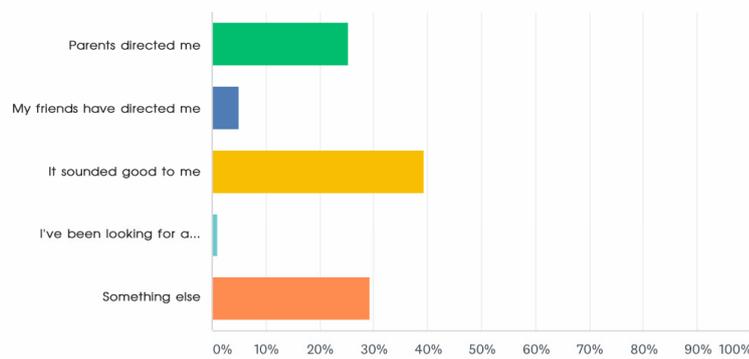
#### **5.3. Career Development Learning**

Maximising the contribution of work-integrated learning to the student experience 9.

**6. Executive Summary**

All universities should provide work-integrated learning of some type in their academic programs.

Q1 How did you choose a specialty to study at a higher education institution?



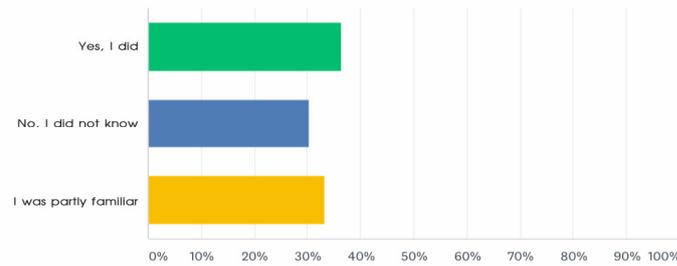
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Parents directed me	25.25%
My friends have directed me	5.05%
It sounded good to me	39.39%
I've been looking for a career counselling	1.01%
Something else	29.29%

Fig. 1. *The distribution of responses to the item on the choice of specialty for study in higher education*

Universities' Career Services have historically played a significant role in the delivery of work-integrated learning. However, the extent and manner in which career development learning, as a pedagogical framework, has been embedded in the work-integrated learning experiences of students has been unclear.

Furthermore, the extent to which Career Services and other university departments which deliver work-integrated learning interact and cooperate with one another in their separate or joint delivery of work-integrated learning varies across the sector.

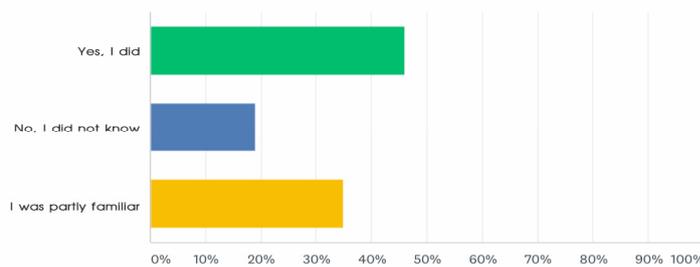
Q2 Did you know what subjects you will study in your specialty program?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes, I did	36.36%
No, I did not know	30.30%
I was partly familiar	33.33%

Fig. 2. The distribution of responses to the item on subjects for study in specialty program

Q3 Did you know what duties you will have if you start working in your specialty?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes, I did	46.00%
No, I did not know	19.00%
I was partly familiar	35.00%

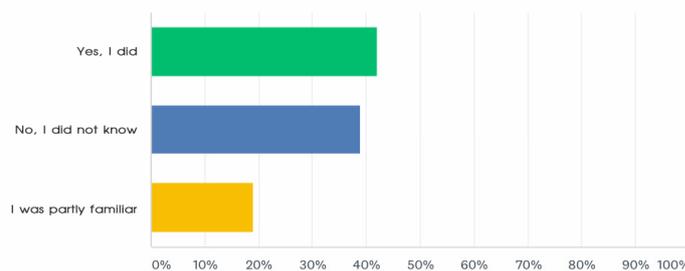
Fig. 3. The distribution of responses to the item about duties in working in specialty

**Question 1** (figure 1)

How did you choose a specialty to study at a higher education institution?

When asked the respondents, "How did you choose a specialty to study in a higher education institution?"

Q4 Did you know what duties you will have if you start working in your specialty?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes, I did	42.00%
No, I did not know	39.00%
I was partly familiar	19.00%

Fig. 4. The distribution of responses to the item on the choice of specialty for study in higher education

25% responded that the parents were directing them to the specialty to study.

The highest percentage - 40% indicates that the name of the specialty sounded good and that is the only reason to choose a specialty.

5% say friends have targeted them, and only 1% have sought career counseling.

About 30% say that their choice is based on other reasons.

**Question 2** (figure 2)

Did you know what subjects you will study in your specialty program?

We asked the students and parents of our students:

Did you know what subjects you will study in your specialty program?

On this issue, 37% respond positively. 30% of them claim they did not know, and 33% were partially aware.

**Question 3** (figure 3)

Did you know what duties you will have if you start working in your specialty?

3. We asked the respondents whether they knew what duties they would have if they started working in the specialty. 46% of them were acquainted with the expected duties of the chosen position.

19% responded negatively to this question.

35% were partially aware.

**Question 4** (figure 4)

Did you know what is the country's average pay for a specialist as you were preparing for?

42% responded positively, 39% did not know, and 19% were partially aware.

**7. Conclusions**

Based on the survey conducted and the responses received, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. Career counseling is the least used mechanism for choosing a specialty, which in turn forms a vicious practice in which the choice is based on good or bad "sounding" of the name of the specialty;
2. More than 66% of the interviewed or did not know before choosing their specialties what subjects are tweaked or knew in part, which necessitates, the seria change in the pre-candidate student counseling;
3. More than half of students interviewed and students' parents did not know or were partially aware of the duties of the profession they were studying for;
4. About 60 percent of the respondents in the survey are not aware of the salary paid for the specialty they are studying, which is a serious indicator of the inability of a career counseling.

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