

CAREER GUIDANCE IN QUÉBEC, CANADÁ

Pierrete Dupont

Abstract

First, the guidance counselor profession in the province of Quebec will be described: the professional association to which it belongs, the required instruction, the counselors' tasks and the institutions for which they work. There follows the description of the main current tendencies in career guidance development in this French-speaking area of Canada with about 7.2 million inhabitants, approximately one fourth of the total country population. Finally, a brief description of the Center for Research on Education and Labor of the University of Shebrooke as well as of some instruments that one of the teams is constructing will be provided.

The guidance counselor profession

Although there are different people having various degrees who carry out activities related to guidance, professional insertion and adaptation in varied institutions, the degree of guidance counselor is reserved to those who are members of the "Ordre professionnel des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec" (OPCCOQ, 1997). This association is governed by the Code of Professionals of Quebec. Its mission is to protect the public by ensuring both the quality of the professional services rendered by its members and access to the resources provided for in the professional laws.

In order to become a member of the Association it is necessary to have finished the university studies of the second cycle (18 years of study) with specialization in guidance and counseling. Instruction focuses mainly on psychology and particular guidance methods and it comprises both theoretical and practical knowledge about individual dynamics, human labor and the relationships between the individual and labor. The Corporation demands the following specific credits (each credit corresponds to a 15-hour course): 9 credits in individual counseling; 3 credits in group counseling; 6 credits in individual testing (theory and practice); 3 credits in group testing (theory and practice); 3 credits in measurement and statistics; 3 credits in research theory; 3 credits in vocational development theory; 3 credits in personal psychology; 6 credits in school and professional information; 3 credits in psychopathology ; 9 credits of supervised practical stage of at least 400 hours.

The Association has about 1900 members who work in different sectors and over 250 students of guidance who have the associate student degree. The education sector comprises 51.4% of the members distributed in the different levels as follows: elementary (1.3%), secondary (27.3%), college or career preparation (8.5%), university (5.3%) and adult education (9.0%). The sector of labor and human resources comprises 11.4% of the

members, 5.2% of them involved in social and health issues. As needs in private practice have significantly increased, 13.6% of guidance counselors devote full-time to this kind of practice while other 3.8% offer part-time private consultation. On the other hand, institutions employ 13.6% of counselors and the rest have varied jobs.

The Association of Guidance Counselors carries out professional inspections in the different environments where its members work and is specially concerned with the initial instruction and permanent training of its members. Therefore, it regularly organizes training activities and an annual colloquium, publishes a monthly newsletter and a quarterly magazine. The Association also provides information and references to the public. It also passes judgment on issues of its concern that affect the different practice sectors of its members in order to render suitable services to different clients.

Guidance counselors' particular specialization allows them to work as individual and institutional counselors as regards all issues related to career development. The counselors' work is concerned with the individual's relationship with his environment through courses of study, work, personal and social life. The counselor is particularly interested in the difficulties experienced by the individual which often appear as chronic indecision, lack of professional goals, study, labor or life problems as well as in the difficulties shown by institutions.

In a brochure called "Les conceillers y conseilleres d'orientation: Partenaires de votre avenir", the Association presents the services it provides as follows:

Institutional services

- Career development: career organizational management, individual career planning.
- Need analysis of human resources.
- Labor recruitment
- Labor selection.
- Identification and analysis of specific competencies.
- Analysis of instruction needs.
- Instruction management.
- Labor reclassification and redistribution.
- Shift planning.
- Psychometric evaluation: potential, interest, personality, aptitudes.
- Change management.
- Programs to help employees: individual and group counseling: stress, adaptation, motivation, behavior, professional fatigue.
- Retirement preparation and planning.

- Psychotherapy.
- Family mediation.

Individual services

- Evaluation of potential, personality, interests.
- Guidance counseling.
- School and professional information.
- Portfolio balance and management.
- School dossier evaluation
- Child and family counseling.
- Transition from primary to secondary level.
- Help for students facing adaptation, motivation, behavior or learning difficulties.
- Activities that favor educational success for those manifesting abandon risks.
- Help to find a job.
- Election of supplementary instruction.
- Help for adults facing difficulties related to stress, behavior, motivation or professional fatigue.
- Socioprofessional reintegration as the result of illness or accident.
- Family mediation.
- Retirement preparation and planning.
- Psychotherapy.

Current tendencies in guidance practices

Career guidance first appeared in school institutions in Quebec during 1940-1960. In the early '60s, guidance counselor –then called Orientators- played an essential role in the new school organization.

As schools were short of counselors, as from 1962 some universities began to instruct teachers specialized in school and professional information. In the early '80s, a kind of rupture in the profession took place, the practice being questioned (Mellouski and Beauchemin, 1994).

In 1981, the Ministry of Education established a new compulsory subject in each of the years comprising the secondary studies called "Education au choix de carrière", which somehow contributed to question the guidance counselor's role at schools, thus reducing their number; nowadays there is approximately one counselor every 1,000 to 1,200 students. Since then, guidance counselors work in more diversified environments.

The "Ordre professionnel des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec" (1995)

has recently presented an interesting report called "Miser sur ('orientation: donner un sens au project éducatif, making a realistic though negative balance of guidance current situation in the school environment: less guidance counselors, lack of motivation to study, lack of interest in professional instruction, numerous syllabi changes, mistaken career selection and school dropout.

The important reform that is taking place in secondary education recommends to abolish the compulsory program called "Education au choix de carrière", which is not being taught seriously, being frequently given by teachers who lack instruction or interest and thus fails to arouse interest in the young people. The Association of guidance counselors of Quebec, various secondary schools as well as Our Center for Research on Education and Labor and our guidance department at the University of Sherbrooke work insistently so that the concept of guiding school, suggested by the Minister of Education, is soon put into practice. This concept originates on the recommendations presented this year by a group working on the reform of the "curriculum" (1997) formed by the government. The main recommendations follow:

- Information, guidance and help provided to the student for his choices should be part of the activities organized by the school having as goal to lead the student in his process of information and guidance besides making the necessary resources available for his school course development.
- The implantation of a guiding school which, right from the first year of the secondary school, proposes the student an individual instruction plan to be completed along his education period. This plan requires the student to discover his own guidance objectives and to determine the way that will lead him towards their achievement.
- The students should be offered the possibility of choosing certain activities of professional exploration in the fourth and fifth year of their secondary school, within the periods devoted to optional subjects, and according to the organization existing in the second cycle of the secondary school studies.
- Professional as well as school information should be present in the school transversally, i.e., in all the activities. Every teacher shall have to contribute and occasionally integrate in their teaching, learning activities which may help the student to enlarge his knowledge on the labor market.
- An updated documentation center on the studies, courses of studies, and professions should be created which should be accessible to students at any moment.
- Students as from the first cycle of secondary school should be able to meet guidance specialists on a regular basis for individual consultation.
- Visits to companies as well as workshops and conferences with specialists on

different crafts should be organised at the school.

We believe a guidance counselor should be the leader and coordinator of the development of the course of studies at the secondary school. As well as counseling students, he shall also have to offer support and the necessary means to teachers, parents and companies and every one implied in the process of guiding youth.

Outside the school there exist other very diversified clients, requesting different guidance services to governmental offices helping the instruction and integration to work, companies, and private offices.

The economic situation nowadays is very hard. The Quebec government foresees an active policy of labor market stressing employment and the reduction of strike. Within this context, several micro-economic measures urge companies, teaching institutions, syndicates, community organisms, and employment services of each region to sit together at the same table to bring into line and guarantee local development through the creation of jobs, training and adaptation of the labor force. Guidance and job services are being currently reorganized. Public job services funded by different ministries are re-grouping as from spring 1998 into Local Job Centers in which the "arrimage" between labor force offer and demand shall be established, as well as the decentralization of the assistance for training, guidance and professional integration.

Progressive privatization of services in general also reaches our profession. Data computerization on the characteristics of a certain individual and on the labor market also introduces changes in the interventions with the different clients.

Certain functions of guidance proceed as before, whereas certain individuals and companies also have new needs. Among the new needs and the new forms of assistance guidance counselors are responsible for -either in the private or public spheres- we can mention the planning of a course of studies, with special attention to workers of a certain age (a growing number of workers are currently under pressure so that they retire at fifty), family mediation, and career-family conciliation, the analysis of the needs of training, help for preparation and for searching job for the underprivileged.

The Center for Research on Education and Labor

We shall briefly describe the Center for Research on Education and Labor and the work of the School of Education of the University of Sherbrooke we currently direct. Let us point out the Center was created with the invaluable collaboration of Prof. Donald E. Super, who has contributed with the work of our first research team since mid '70s.

Characteristics of individuals as regards their career (work life)

A study on the psychosocial characteristics of individuals as related to different periods of

their work life, ranging from school time to retirement; study of their needs, worries, motivations and professional aspirations.

Approaches and methods of education for career, professional insertion and adaptation.

Development, experimentation and evaluation of educational practices whose aim is to assist different clients (youngsters, adults, university students, disadvantaged people, minorities, etc.) in guidance and to improve their preparation for the career, to develop basic and specific professional competencies, required by the labor market, or to solve different problems of motivation, of job possibilities, of professional insertion and adaptation.

"Partenariat", education-work as instruction model.

Study of functions, aims and needs of educators (teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, bosses, parents, etc.) and of environments (schools, educational services, companies, organizations, families, etc.) as "partenaires" in education for work life in young people and adults. Implantation of said model in institutions of general and professional instruction.

The Center for Research on Education and Labor, which is an institution recognized by the directors of the University of Sherbrooke is made up by a multidisciplinary team of specialists on guidance and counseling, psychology, measurements and evaluation, psychopedagogy, andragogy, statistics, and research methodology.

The professor researchers and students have access to its different services: the laboratory with specialized documentation and computers, research assistance, means of communication, secretariat, etc. Scholarships are granted to students of the 2nd. and 3rd. cycles and postdoctoral *stagiaires* who carry out their work within the frame of research funded by the Center.

Lastly, we shall mention that our research team shall complete during this year the construction of two new guidance measurement tools, namely: 1) the Visual Inventory of Professional Interests for clients in disadvantage, those who have no possibility of getting a diploma of post-secondary school studies and who generally choose little specialized professions; 2) the Questionnaire of vocational motivation, constructed with the aim of determining guidance needs and the causes of the high de-motivation for studies in secondary school students. These instruments answer the requests from schools and guidance services.

References

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