

## **CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES IN EMPLOYER ENTITIES AND LIFE-LONG EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present paper is based on the concept of life-long guidance with focus on the labor market, employability, professional orientation and career development. In career development, an important role is played by career counseling provided by employers, namely in the classification of career guidance services provided in the private sector. The aim of the paper is to characterize selected career-related guidance services activities provided by employers. It is based on the analysis of theoretical sources and practical applications of career counseling services, resorts, and sectors providing services, their legislative and institutional support from the aspect of national and European institutions. Apart from the methods of analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction, also informal interviews and questionnaire methods were used in data analysis. Empirical research was conducted in the area of career guidance provided by employers. Two types of methods were used to process collected data: manual processing and automated processing. Our intention is to deal with career guidance services as an important element of the life-long education in the light of the research project on “The preparation of the content and structure of subject disciplines focused on the business knowledge and skills in graduates from selected Medical Services fields of study”.

***Keywords: guidance services, labor market, unemployment, life-long education, mentoring***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Guidance services can be described as an exchange of information between the consultant and the client; this process is carried out by highly qualified professionals from organizations providing career guidance services that are diverse in their focus and type of activities. Career guidance should be conducted at all stages of human life, in pre-school period, during formal education, post-employment or unemployment, as well as in promoting further education as an important part of lifelong learning. The guidance service is carried out on the following basic pillars: the knowledge of the individual, person's innate and acquired dispositions, and the knowledge of labor market data and their mutual comparison for the purposes of defining career paths. The choice of the individual's education, occupation and his career path has to be based on the person's personal dispositions and needs to correspond to fields offering employment in the labor market. A low employability is caused by the surplus of the graduates in the given field of study or by the loss of jobs linked to some study fields, while the numbers of graduates are not adjusted to the situation. On the other hand, however, we can observe the shortage of graduates in certain professions. These disproportions can be partially eliminated by a well-

defined career guidance system. In view of the need for integrity in providing career guidance services, several subsystems of career guidance services can be characterized, namely: career services in the department of schools and education, career guidance services in the sector of labor, social affairs and family; career guidance services in the private sector; guidance services in the non-profit sector.

Career guidance is becoming an important part of lifelong learning, and it focuses on solving specific problems related to career preparation and implementation. In connection with the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, the European Commission perceives life-long education as a concept covering all education systems.

Changes in the living and working conditions place an ever increasing emphasis on the importance of lifelong learning, which is the main topic of the research project KEGA project no. 014EU-4/2016 "Preparation of content and structure of subjects focused on the development of basic entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of graduates from selected medical study fields". The implementation of lifelong learning needs to be done in line with lifelong guidance, which will enable individuals to properly target the selection of education matching the job requirements. The aim of creating a lifelong guidance system is to improve the orientation in educational activities, to orientate the labor market, to increase and maintain lifelong employment, and to improve job mobility.

### **1 GUIDANCE SERVICES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES IN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS AND LIFELONG EDUCATION**

The task of guidance is the development of human resource quality development, via a targeted development of developing individuals' personality. Personality stands for a set of properties, skills and qualities of psychological processes, inherited and acquired under pressure of upbringing and society, connected with the selection of the field of study and employability in the national economy. There are three essential aims of guidance: selection of profession/occupation, selection of suitable education, and adjustment to the occupation/profession [1]. We shall deal with the adjustment to changing conditions of the work performance, where guidance services could facilitate the entire process of adaptation to personality and qualification requirements of employees to changing conditions of the performance of individual work activities in employer entities. The fulfillment of basic aims is facilitated by personnel processes and guidance services. These include: career services implemented by means of main personnel processes oriented to assessment processes and methods applied, while the most frequently applied methods of employee evaluation are assessment centre, development centre, 360-degree feedback, and professional psycho-diagnostics.

Career guidance services related to succession planning and talent management development. In succession planning and talent development management, career advisors' services can be used. Career guidance is provided as part of educational services. However, so far there has not been defined in Slovakia the qualification standard for the position of career advisor, nor is it

developed within the framework of the National System of Qualifications. For this reason, we will use the term of guidance provider. Guidance providers can also use coaching and/or mentoring approach, outplacement, and counseling. E-guidance services are provided by employers. Career guidance services can be worked out by other guidance service providers. An important support role is here played by the Internet labor market manual elaborated by the implementation team of Trexima, s r. o. Bratislava, Slovakia [2].

Selection of staff by a personnel worker begins with career guidance accompanied by an in-depth interview and a thorough analysis of the candidate's job potential [3]. The Assessment Centre is often used to fill the job with suitable candidates. In business practice, it is used for evaluation purposes. This centre [4] can be included in modern combined psychological methods, which are based on the application of a combination of general methods, e.g. observation, psychological experiment as well as modified methods where projection methods are included. The development centre is used to assess the capabilities and competences of current employees of the company. This centre may have an individual or group form. Multiple methods of collecting data on the participant are combined, and it is also possible to evaluate several participants simultaneously and compare them with one another. The 360-degree feedback is a circle rating and gives an unbiased picture of the qualities of individuals. This is a multi-resource evaluation from several assessors. The assessment is conducted from multiple points of view: by the immediate superior, direct subordinates, colleagues who are either members of the team, or other organizational units [5]. It can also be conducted by other stakeholders of internal and external customers and/or suppliers. Alternatively, we can use self-assessment, while maintaining the same criteria as other evaluators; this is referred to as the 540-degree feedback.

Career guidance services for succession planning and talent management programs are based on staff assessments, conducted by means of personality questionnaires aimed at identifying personality assumptions of good performance, comparison of actual and required competencies. Employee appraisals often employ behavioral interviewing for talent management and scheduling purposes, which enable to assess past achievements and procedures to solve the problems important for assumptions about future work results.

Although the essence of the guidance is that the advisor is responsible for the entire guidance process (who answers the client's questions and gives them an expert view of the problems and the assessment of the situation not addressed externally), guidance can use both elements of the coaching process and elements of mentoring elements. Guidance is more widespread than coaching.

Coaching is open to questions, preferring positive questions about the future [6]. Responses are sought by clients themselves, based on their knowledge, inner attitudes, opinions, and acknowledged values. Coaching focuses on the goal, the search for ways and ways of the client's decision to achieve the goal and remove the barriers to its achievement [7]. Coaching is a nondirective way of guiding people [8]; it is a specific and long-term care of a person and their growth in professional and personal life. It is also the counterpart to command and control. The concept of coach can be traced to the 16th century [3] and it denotes an auxiliary means needed

when we set out on a journey and reach the destination. During the coaching process, the coach accompanies the client and helps him or her to refine the goals.

In mentoring, the mentor provides assistance to the mentee through leadership and advice. Mentor is an experienced person who helps a less well-trained person (mentee) in the performance of day-to-day work. Mentoring is a method of helping individuals in the process of learning to work. The mentor is considered to be the authority and the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is generated informally, i.e., spontaneously, or if the mentoring process is formally organized in an organization. If the person in the mentor's position is hierarchically superior, it is a mentor system. When it involves individuals at the same level, it is referred to as the peer-mentoring system [7].

Outplacement is a modern method of personnel management that provides help to redundant employees at the employer's costs associated with this service. This is a process of professional help for employees, usually after organizational changes in organizations, resulting in re-designing jobs, cancelling job positions, closing plants, and cancelling sections. Counseling is an English term for psychological guidance, i.e. one of the forms of therapeutic contact intended for people who do not suffer from a serious mental disorder or illness but are motivated to change their lives. It focuses on the prevention and maintenance of good mental health, and as a counselor is a psychologist [9], [10].

### **3. METHODS, DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH, AND METHODS OF RESULT ASSESSMENT**

In the present paper, we deal with the career guidance services provided by employers in the private sector guidance services within the framework of the typology of guidance services. From this aspect, we view career guidance in an employer entity as an important activity of an employee's professional education and the policy of career management in an enterprise. It is an intersection of personnel, psychological and adult education guidance.

The basis of the paper is the analysis of the theoretical resources and practical applications of career guidance services, sectors and service sectors, their legislative and institutional support from the perspective of national and European institutions. The subjects of the survey were employers in selected divisions of section C – Industrial production (according to the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities SK NACE Rev. 2, Decree 306/2007 Coll.). For purposes of our analysis, employees of this section were selected from the following divisions: food processing, beverage production, production of chemicals and chemical products, and the production of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations.

As many as 180 respondents – employees in selected enterprises were addressed. Respondents are workers in small, medium-sized, large-scale enterprises, with a proportionate representation of sixty respondents in each group of enterprises by size. Since most experienced in the implementation of career guidance in employer entities were employees of large-scale and

medium-sized enterprises, we included a research sample consisting from the employees of large and medium-sized enterprises (altogether 120 respondents) into the evaluation of empirical research results. In small enterprises the initiative in career counseling is left to employees; therefore we decided to include them in the research sample. If they perceive the need for career, professional and work guidance services, they rely on guidance services provided by other institutions, in the private sector, in the employment services sector, or they can use the e-guidance services prepared by non-profit sector institutions. Such a wide range of guidance services is not addressed in the paper and the results are presented only for the guidance provided by employers.

Empirical research described in the paper was conducted by means of the interview method. At the first stage, we carried out informal interviews with selected employees, in order to investigate into the nature of guidance services provided by employers. In the second stage, we drafted a questionnaire and conducted the questionnaire research, designed for 120 respondents of small, medium-sized, and large enterprises, where the decisive criterion was the number of employees of selected employer entities. In the course of the questionnaire research we managed to collect information about employer activities related to the provision of career guidance services, as well as the opinions of these services and the preference and interest of employees in specific guidance services connected with their careers.

Both manual processing and automated processing were used to statistically process accumulated information. In the case of the manual processing, the barcode method was applied. In the case of automated processing, data accumulated were analyzed in MS Excel [11]. Respondent profile and their opinions gained during the empirical research are presented in table survey.

#### **4. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

Guidance is important at the stage of coordination of the personality and qualification pre-requisites of the individual and the needs of the company in relation to the performance of the required and anticipated activities of the individual. Until recently, the individual was gradually preparing for one profession, which they will perform throughout their lives, and will be employed in one company [8], which will take care of their career growth and personality development. The career perception as a promotion sequence and upward practices in a work-related hierarchy throughout one's life in one organization has been replaced with the perception of career in several employer entities. In certain types of professions, where the systematic approach is a clear pattern (e.g. physicians, university teachers, and lawyers), regardless of the location of the organization it is understood as a lifelong sequence of employment resulting from an individual's working history.

The elimination of linking the career with only one employer has also influenced the career guidance provided by the personnel departments of employers. The provision of guidance services to employers was evaluated by employees. The characteristics of the research sample and their selected views are presented in the following two tables.

*Tab. 1 Methods of career guidance applied in enterprises analyzed*

Methods of career guidance	Medium-sized enterprises (60)	Large enterprises (60)
Assessment centre	9	21
Development centre	15	27
Testing of knowledge and skills acquired (language tests, testing of computer skills, communication skills testing, and manual skills testing)	29	37
360-degree feedback	57	60
Professional psycho-diagnostics (psychological and personality tests)	4	6
Guidance with elements of coaching approach	14	39
Guidance with elements of mentoring approach	18	42
Counseling	1	5
Outplacement	5	12
Electronic form of guidance provision – prepared in an enterprise	–	4

Source: results of empirical research

To complete the table above, the electronic form was connected with the application of 360-degree feedback in the case of several respondents. This method is applied only exceptionally in this form and is applied in an on-line version via the internet. When using this method, administrative problems accompanying the completion of the paper version disappear. Nor is there a time-lag between data collection and results of processing. Repetition of evaluation by means of 360-feedback enables to more precisely monitor the progress in the development of competences in comparison with preceding assessment and contributes to motivation for the purpose of self-development.

*Tab. 2 Respondents' opinions about the preferences in providing methods of guidance*

Methods of career guidance	Medium-sized enterprises (60)	Large enterprises (60)
360-degree feedback	8	13
Provision of guidance with elements of coaching approach	51	48
Provision of guidance with elements of mentoring approach	34	28
Counseling	57	55
Outplacement	60	58

Source: results of empirical research

The table shows that the scope of methods respondents prefer in the implementation of career guidance has become smaller. Only relatively few respondents prefer 360 degree feedback. The greatest interest is in counseling and outplacement, which is related to the increase in work intensity and uncertainty concerning further career path within an enterprise. In the case of counseling, respondents prefer a psychologist to advise them on the prevention of burnout syndrome or dealing with high workload and longer working hours. Many respondents report that the high workload makes them work fourteen hours a day. Frequently, they have to complete the backlog of work during holidays. Such a trend is untenable in the long run, and a number of respondents indicated they needed some guidance on how to overcome such roles in existing jobs.

Outplacement is used by organizations to suppress a negative impact of dismissals of employees, in particular in the case of large numbers of the dismissed. It is a guidance service whose task is to facilitate employees a smooth departure from the organization and assist them in searching for a new job. It is a great advantage if an enterprise is able to offer the dismissed employees a new job [12], apart from providing information support. Outplacement is a service that is costly for businesses and only larger, more stable and prosperous businesses can afford this kind of service. It strengthens the self-confidence of a dismissed employee enabling him or her thus to involve them in the process of seeking a new job; it allows to use a personal guidance service or a personnel company.

Providing advice on the elements of the coaching process is in turn the third required guidance service method. This is due to the fact that coaching is an effective method of personnel and work development, which enables clients to fulfill their potential and acquire skills in order to improve performance, work efficiency and increase personal satisfaction. A preferred method is individual coaching with an external coach, which allows one to gain insight of an uninvolved person. An employee need not trust an intern coach, because the information may spread at the workplace. An external coach is usually a professional with an appropriate certification, who has professional supervision and can be impartial in solving work problems. The disadvantage is high costs; businesses do not consider that a priority as they expect the desired results from internal coaching as well.

Mentoring involves the strategy of personal development, assistance and development of another person by means of sharing sources, professional knowledge, values, experience, and well-tried approaches. Mentoring, similarly to coaching, is used as a process, which supports the development of employees. However, a high motivation of the monitored – the mentee is required; a frequent problem of monitoring is that specialists who are involved in mentoring are too busy. Guidance activity is a process of assistance to an individual and support to self-help to the extent and scope and by means of such methods, so that employees recognized and were able to utilize their sources and powers and optimally perform work activities resulting from the job, or even when considering further career paths.

## CONCLUSION

Guidance can be described as a specific human activity, as a process of assistance, the purpose of which is to use existing resources and personality options for dealing with work life problems. The need for quantitative and qualitative development of guidance services is determined by the social, economic, and cultural transformation of our society; which in turn leads to an increase in each employee's performance and that of the company as a whole, and its management and regulatory functions.

Guidance activity is characterized as a specific, historically evolving form of communication in the human community. It fulfils particular functions in the lives of people, in the development of relationships between them, in the process of learning, in interpersonal communication, as well as in meeting specific needs. Employee counseling is part of the concept of personnel work in an enterprise.

Career guidance services in a business have to be based on the quality of services, which depends on the advisor, his or her professional knowledge and abilities of acquiring the information needed; the quality of services that the consultant draws from his or her expertise and the ability to obtain the necessary information; the complexity and specificity of career development information. Most employees are developing their careers in a precisely defined area of work performance, related to the performance of work activities or work roles; therefore, they need specific information about the needs of their qualifications and personal development for specific job positions.

These services are often made available by means of information and communication technologies. For employees with a low level of computer skills, this form need not be accessible. Based on the information from respondents, this form of career guidance services is minimal and rather limited in our businesses.

The results of our research indicate that the level of career guidance in analyzed enterprises is not satisfactory, which has been manifested in respondents' dissatisfaction. Guidance is often provided by employers for selected employees. Small-sized enterprises do not deal with the issue of career guidance as it is a financially intensive type of service. In medium and large enterprises, counseling is usually provided without experts in guidance, via assessment processes, which stand only for some replacement for the implementation of coaching and mentoring processes.

Providing guidance services is a significant financial load for employers; especially in cases when high-quality and career guidance services are to be provided. It seems therefore sensible to consider the possibility of some government stimuli for the development of guidance as well as the option to involve some trade union organizations in career guidance services.

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