
Career guidance and tutorial actions in the educational framework in Catalonia

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Catalonia is a country that is part of Spain as autonomous community in northeastern Iberian Peninsula, with the official status of a “nationality” of Spain. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalonia> - cite_note-0 Catalonia comprises four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona. Its capital and largest city is Barcelona which is the second Spanish city by population after Madrid. Its borders essentially reflect those of the former Principality of Catalonia. It borders France and Andorra to the north, Aragon to the west, the Valencia Community to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the east (580 km coastline). The official languages are Catalan, Spanish and Aranese (Occitan).

1. Introduction

The objectives of the tutorial action and career guidance are included in the Catalan education law and they refer to monitoring, personal development, personal guidance and to academic and professional relationship with families and environment.

The tutorial action has to plan activities that allow the involvement of students in their educational process.

The teaching function implies a close link between the guidance and teaching, therefore the objectives are a shared responsibility of all teachers involved, being also necessary that students and families have the knowledge and they know how to value it.

The Centre’s educational project and its organizational and operational rules must specify how to distribute the individual and collectively responsibility.

The tutorial action and career guidance contribute to the acquisition and development of basic skills to be developed through contexts, learning, modelling

approaches and interactions that promote their autonomy and personal initiative, as well as the integration and social cohesion.

2. Career guidance for secondary school students

The Catalan Government makes available to the students, families and professional staff, the psycho-pedagogical guidance teams: (PGT). The PGT are educational services teams.

The teams are composed by different profiles (psychology, pedagogy, social work). Their aim is the counselling and educational guidance in schools to respond in the best way to the different needs that students face throughout their schooling. The teams give support to teachers and schools in responding to student diversity and in relation to learners with special educational needs as well as their families.

The PGT teams are part of the educational services in different areas. They work together with learning centres and with specialized support equipment: language, multiculturalism and social cohesion.

The PGT resources are addresses to schools, management teams, teachers and other professionals involved in caring for students with difficulties or with special educational needs, as well as the students and their families.

Professionals, teachers and parents can access these services through the schools.

Normally is needed an "Action Plan" previously made for the centre according the detected needs.

Currently there are 79 PGT covering all Catalonia

In each PGT team there are one or two social workers taking care of all educational centres in the area. In total, there are 111 professionals in Catalonia.

Each psychologist attends several schools per area and collaborates with health and social services of each area to provide a coordinated attention to students and families in need.

The targets are schools, management teams, teachers and staff involved in the care of students or their families.

The goals of the PGT teams are:

- To identify and assess educational needs of students and make an education proposal, working together with specific services if needed.
- Guiding teachers and families of learners with special educational needs, in collaboration with specialist teachers and specific educational services.
- Advising teaching staff, students and families on personal, educational and professional aspects.
- Supporting schools in improving the attention to diversity and inclusion.

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- Working together with the educational services of each area to promote exchange activities.
 - The model used in the guidance process considers the personal characteristics, the real possibilities and the socioeconomic circumstances.

The tutor and the educational psychologist advice on a personal, educational and professional way, however, others can also inform and assist: family, friends, teachers and specialists in educational guidance.

The guidance processes consists at four phases:

- To determinate objectives: In general, people who start the post-compulsory studies have the idea of preparing themselves to enter professional world. But the choice of studies does not always means a well-defined career option.
- Many times the choice is making a college education or to continue studies as an alternative to joining the labour market. In other circumstances the student prioritizes the duration of studies or if they are compatibles with the simultaneous development of a job.
- Although the structure of the educational system offers the possibility of reconsidering a change in the choice made, it should be bear in mind that premature specialization, sometimes behaves more disadvantages than advantages.
- Gather information: To be able to choose in the best way is necessary to have complete, clear and updated information on the range of studies. Therefore to carry out this process is needed to know about the conditions required for access, the knowledge subjects, the professional fields where youth apply and the study centres.
- Analysis of possible option, meaning the identification of alternatives more according to the possibilities.
- Choosing an option. The Educational Department offers different tools to do it. Tools can be used as an intervention integrated into the guidance and tutoring plan.

The Education Department brings several tools to face the career guidance process:

An application to help finding the most suitable career path based on the completed studies. The application is addressed to the young people, in fact are the same youth who, through a circuit of questions, solve their professional unknowns.

A career guidance book that includes a student guide, to help the youth to define their career plans. To help them in the process of choosing the future career to better understand how they are and reflect on what they want to do. Young

people are guided through several questions classified according to the work environments, areas of learning, skills and abilities, professional values, interests, personal and professional type, professional codes, table of correspondence between codes and professional working environments, analysis of results, table of correspondence between the workplace and areas of learning, skills and values.

A tutor's Guide to help students to a better understanding how they are and reflect on what they want to do.

The guide is structured in five main objectives; a classification of work environments,

an analysis and reflection on the areas or subjects, skill, abilities and occupational values that students believe they have, an inventory of interests and typologies, the analysis of the results, the correlation table between work areas, skills and values.

The main objective of all the tools offered by the Educational Department is to bring to the young people a better understanding of themselves, as well as the range of studies and professions.

All the counselling activities in Catalonia are carried out during the last year of secondary school.

The families are a very important target and the offered tools are very focus on them.

3. The role of the family in the academic and professional process

Families develop the most important roles as educators. Despite sometimes parents do not have enough information, they are the ones that must accompany their children in decision-making.

One of the strategic objectives of the Catalan Government Plan 2011-2014 is to facilitate and promote family involvement in the monitoring of the academic and personal development of their children.

In this sense and with a clear idea of ensuring that families are involved in the process guide, in 2010-2011 the Department of Education added a new procedure in the educational process, "the letter of commitment to education". The document aims to encourage the involvement of families in the education of their children and to get some commitments from the centres.

The educational community of each school must design the model letter which considers appropriate, within the framework of its autonomy. However the Department of Education establishes the minimum content for the letter: tracking the progress of students; respect for the moral and ideological convictions of the families; communication between school and families; the responsibility of the centre and the family in the orientation process and additional specific commitments between the centre and families in particular, if deemed necessary.

Also with the aim to involve families in the educational process the Department of Education makes available to the school centres the “School and family” document. The paper is a support with guidelines and resources to promote the involvement of families in the educational process as well as their cooperation and participation with the centre.

The “School and family” paper covers the following areas of intervention: reception and welcome for families, Letter of commitment to education, information, communication, Participation in the monitoring of school children, participation in the school project, training for families: school parents.

The Education department also offers a guide for families. The guide is a resource to support the tutorials and guidance sessions, especially in periods that education is a transitional stage for some children and families.

4. Families and schools, an inseparable tandem

The family is the best agent to transmit the necessary values to motivate children for further studies and therefore to continue training.

The opinion of the family is an essential conditioner factor for the academic and career choices of youth. It is very important that parents follow with interest and support during the orientation process and decisions about the academic and professional future of their children.

Provide support through dialogue, not from taxation.

When, in the guidance process, the children obtain the results about their self-knowledge, the tutor asks to the children to show the results and comment them with the family.

That is a good opportunity to initiate the dialogue between children and parents and help children to analyze the different aspects that the report contains: personal factors, professional environments, etc.

When establishing this dialogue is important not to put much emphasis on the results achieved but in the opinions and expectations generated by the results with the idea to start thinking about a future option.

For all those reasons we can conclude that in all career guidance process families are the cornerstone, working together with schools. It is the responsibility of both to help and guide the young people. The process is achieved from the school by involving parents in the exciting world of education, and from families’ perspective, being open to suggestions proposed by the educational professionals.

It is very important families and school “working” together, especially in the orientation process because it is in that process when more young people need to feel accompanied.

Of course it’s not a simple task. It is not. But it is a rewarding work and there are many pleasant surprises which we can find along the way.

Don't forget is in the education of our children that families and schools must make an effort to work together for the common good of our society.

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Summary

In Catalonia is the Education Department of the Catalan Government the responsible for establishing guidelines and tools for vocational guidance and tutorial actions.

The 2011-2014 Government Plan considers the Education one of the main priorities.

One of the areas developed in the axis of Education is the Training and the Lifelong learning, integrating the promotion of vocational training as a great challenge.

The Government Plan considers families as an essential element to achieve educational success and contribute to better academic and social integration of the children.

The Education Department works on:

- Creating mechanisms to achieve the progressive integration of vocational training subsystems in Catalonia.
- Developing an integrated model of information and guidance to propose routes to facilitate the qualification and employment.
- Developing a flexible and feasible model of recognition and accreditation of skills acquired.
- Strengthening the possibilities to combine training and work.
- Establishing degrees, according to the needs of productive sectors and integrating them into the catalogue of training and professional qualifications.
- Improving the management of initial vocational training programs and exploring new ways of funding.

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