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Career Orientation: a qualitative study of the best practices in the Swiss context

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Abstract

The latest economic crisis, globalization, and fast-changing of post-industrial society have severely impacted educational transitions. This 21st century world of work complexity is considered a risk factor for adolescents and young adults. Due to this scenario, the theory and practice of career counseling have undergone profound changes. This research proposes qualitative interviews with five Swiss leading and experienced counselors and work professionals aiming to study career counseling models and career orientation best practices. The study uses the consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology, recently used in qualitative research on counseling interventions in different contexts. From the analysis, four domains emerge: *Tacking care of the client*, *Distress*, *Collaboration*, and *Future need*. The results highlight the importance of supporting young people in career construction already from primary school, intervening within education systems, and involving them. Starting from findings of qualitative interviews, implications regarding the counseling model and research, and future directions are discussed.

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1. Introduction

The individual experience of the school-to-work transition has changed nowadays due to the characteristic of 21st century societies. The typical job model of 20th century societies, characterized by safer employment and more stable organizations that offered a solid basis for building life paths and planning a future, has been replaced by the new 21st century model characterized by uncertainty and instability of labour market and fluid organizations (Kalleberg et al., 2000). This change significantly impacted the school-to-work transition (Bynner, 2012) and the complexity encountered in this transition.

Contemporary theories propose new career concepts, e.g., the boundaryless career and the protean career (Gubler et al., 2014). The core idea is flexibility (Kalleberg, 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2018) of a career in a life course. Due to the 21st century changes, these career concepts assume that individuals should be increasingly self-directed in their careers (Gubler et al., 2014).

In the main challenge of effectively tackling work-related transitions (Di Fabio & Maree, 2016; Maree, 2017), career experts are asked to find new concepts to understand these changes, defined as a spiral out of control (Maree, 2017). Changes in societies and organizations have had several consequences in reformulating the theoretical constructs and restructuring the interventions supporting career development. Specifically, these changes have led both to understand which new skills are required by the labour market and the need to adopt a long-life perspective for the in-depth study of career development antecedents. These aspects are defined as crucial elements for adolescents and young adults' subsequent adaptation and well-being (Hartung et al., 2005; McMahon & Watson, 2008; Porfeli et al., 2008; Schultheiss, 2008).

This article aims to shed some light on the career models adopted in the Swiss context and the characteristics and practices of leading and experienced counselors and work professionals.

1.1 Theory, research, and interventions

Career development is a life-long process from childhood to old age (Hartung et al., 2005). This process is influenced by personal factors, such as physical, cognitive, and psychosocial dimensions (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2002), and contextual factors (Vondracek et al., 2019). The career interventions of the 20th century responded to a society characterized by predictability (e.g., the stability of personal and social characteristics, labour market certainty, and conceptualization of career development in terms of phases based on social needs).

The emergence of the “knowledge society”, that refers to knowledge as primary production, and education, ICT, innovation, and science technology as the main pillars (Friedman, 2005; Peters, 2007) impacts the need to adopt high levels of individual adaptability and a wide range of specific skills to face the changes produced by the uncertainty of contemporary society. In the 21st century, students will need the capacity to respond effectively to novelty. This evidence affects the educational system that has geared its curricula to develop 21st century career skills (Di Nauta et al., 2015; Malik, 2018; Tuunainen, 2005). Moreover, students will need personal resilience to deal with uncertainty. The current context, characterized by human flexibility and adaptability, requires counseling models based on dynamic and complex approaches (Savickas et al., 2010). Career practitioners can no longer limit to guide young people towards jobs in line with their aspirations, desires, and interests. To better assist adolescents and young adults in designing their career in this century, career counselors must consider the current complexity

of professional transitions and the increasing exposure of young people to professional insecurity and/or social exclusion (Masdonati, 2019).

Intervention models based on matching people-to-job (e.g., PE, person – environment-fit theories, Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; TWA, theory of work adjustment, Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) seem to no longer respond to the current challenges of the labour market (Krumboltz & Chan, 2005). Pope (2015) suggests that among the most widespread models, the interventions based on the life design (LD) paradigm (Savickas, 2009) are the most effective. According to Pope, the vocational guidance interventions, based on the person-environment fit model, were functional in 20th-century societies. In contrast, career education interventions were effective only with not vulnerable individuals and, therefore, “protected” by current changes in the labour market (Richardson et al., 2005). In light of the current de-standardization of transition trajectories (Larson, 2011), the life design (LD) intervention, based on the assumption of imagining life trajectories in which individuals plan and build their own lives progressively (Savickas, 2009, 2012) adequately address the life design need of adolescents and young adults. The LD model focused on adapting the individual to the context, regulation, and self-identity process to support people constructing their career projects through autobiographical reflexive activities. Autobiography allows adolescents and young adults to focus on the *distinctiveness*, *coherence*, and *continuity* necessary in such societies with unstable work (Savickas et al., 2010).

The new models are consequently required to promote skills such as flexibility and adjustment (Savickas et al., 2009), taking into account the unpredictability of the labour market and promoting decent work (Blustein et al., 2019; Masdonati et al., 2019). LD paradigm emphasized the balance that an individual must aspire to (and achieve) while considering the continuous life changes towards a positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2011; Overton, 2010). From this perspective, career adaptability, future orientation, hope, optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction play a central role (Santilli et al., 2017). Interventions should promote and enhance the plasticity, adaptability, and flexibility of adolescents and young adults. These skills can be useful for young people to extricate themselves in the current society, increase their employability potential, and develop cognitions, emotions, and self-regulation (de Guzman & Choi, 2013; Glavin, 2015; Hamtiaux et al., 2013; Hirschi et al., 2015; Rossier, 2015; Savickas et al., 2009).

Studies show that interventions that take into account the development of these skills decrease career indecision in the short and long term (Gati & Saka, 2001; Hijazi et al., 2004; Patton & Creed, 2001; Gati et al., 1996), and increase life satisfaction in the short term (Perdrix et al., 2012).

1.2 The Swiss context

In Switzerland, specifically in the Ticino context, adolescents need guidance and support already during middle school (Marcionetti et al., 2015). In the Southern Swiss education system, adolescents must make a first career choice at the age of 14. After compulsory schooling, they must choose whether to continue their education in a high school (provided they meet the educational requirements), in an apprenticeship (provided they find an employer), or a full-time vocational school.

Due to the importance of this first career choice, the public service provides free career counseling for adolescents who complete compulsory education. Moreover, Ticino services also provide numerous projects to accompany and support sequent career choices. The latest data on early school leaving and the difficulties of school-to-work transition show that Switzerland's youth unemployment rate remains among the lowest compared to the other countries (2.8%, Eurostat, 2020). However, in recent years the request for assistance has increased in Ticino (Marcionetti et al., 2017). Since 2012, the Swiss context has responded to this emergency by activating professional reintegration programs and measures to prevent the dropout phenomenon. In this context, several public measures exist to help young adults unemployed to find a job or/and enroll in a VET program (Schmidlin, 2018).

In Switzerland, Transition I refers to the first transition that occurs after the compulsory education; Transition II refers to the transition that takes place after obtaining a professional or a high school diploma (Boldrini & Bausch, 2009). Moreover, Transition II is strongly linked to adulthood's transition (Bertschy et al., 2007; Behrens, 2007).

1.3 Research aims

The Swiss context, currently active in planning interventions, was considered one of the countries with the best practices to support career transition and monitoring (Masdonati et al., 2020).

Analyzing data collected with five leading and experienced counselors and work professionals on the transition between education systems and the school-to-work transition in the Ticino context, the research aimed to shed light on career practitioners' characteristics and practices. The analysis will focus on the services and counseling environments made available to young people, career practitioners' models, and the critical issues that emerge in working with young people in transition. Furthermore, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on career guidance. Identifying best practices in the Swiss context can help to better plan interventions for young people in other contexts too.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Five senior experts were selected from the five different centers that deal with support for the transitions in the Ticino area. These senior professionals all work as responsible for the centers, active in coordinating counselors, psychologists, and other professional figures who deal with counseling and accompanying the transition. These centers have a cantonal mandate (4 out of 5) or receive funding from the Canton and/or private citizens and organizations. The career centers work from a preventive perspective supporting adolescents' career choice and young people still included in education or training. Moreover, these centers work also from an intervention perspective, promoting the job choice of young adults NEET or helping them choose a new path of education or training.

Despite a joint mission, each center has specific features regarding the services provided, the age target, and the particular transition (Transition I, Transition II). Institute I is responsible for coordinating the intervention measures to help young people transition from compulsory to post-compulsory education for integration into professional and social life. Moreover, this center also provides specific support programs to start, maintain, and complete the first education. Therefore, the support is addressed both to Transition I and adolescents at risk of failure in their training path. Institute II deals with Transition I and Transition II and cooperates with employment and labor market policies through training and professional development. Institute III deals with Transition I and Transition II. The center supports young people and adults in their career choices.

Moreover, the center guides to select specific advanced courses, vocational retraining, and continuing training. Institute IV deals with the socio-professional reintegration of young people. Institute V deals with Transition II, with a specific target of young people aged 18 to 25. The center offers social and professional reintegration programs specifically for young people unable to transition into the labour market. More generally, the center is aimed at young people who find it difficult to work, offering support and guidance through specific training.

The participants were informed about the research aims and the subsequent data processing. Those who agreed to participate in the study recognized the need and importance of the stated research aims.

2.2 Procedure

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in this study. This instrument was chosen to provide internal coherence to the interview. Moreover, according to Joo (2009), semi-

structured qualitative interviews allow the interviewers' flexibility to deviate from the protocol. The thematic areas of the interview and the specific protocol were determined by the research aims, based on the career models literature, and the review of the previous study conducted on the topic (Beutler et al., 1994; Jennings & Skovholt, 1999; Joo, 2009; Masdonati et al., 2020). Before the data collection process, the study and the interview protocol were approved by the Ethical Committee of Psychological Research of the University of Naples Federico II to ensure participants' protection.

The interviews were conducted by the research team and audiotaped at the work setting of experts. Before each interview, the purpose of this study was explained. The interview was done inside the premises provided by the interviewees. No time limit was handed out, giving freedom of expression to the respondents. Each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes. Then, the audiotapes were transcribed to allow subsequent data analysis.

2.3 Interviews Guideline

The interview guideline was constructed by the scholars participating in this research project. The interview protocol included three parts, named "Transition", "Difficulties", and "Support". The first part addressed the transition issue and referred to the specific aims and scope of the institution. This part included questions such as "How does the center support the transition between education systems and the school-to-work transition?", "How can adolescent/young adults access the service?", "Does the center diversify guidance and support programs by age, transition moment, and clients' needs?". The second part focused on the difficulties of adolescents and young people. This part included questions such as "What are the difficulties that adolescents/young people face in the transition?", "Which are the clients most at health and/or social exclusion risk?". The third part investigated their current career models, i.e., counseling models, specific activities, training programs. Interview questions included "Could you describe a typical program of support and guidance used with adolescents?", "Do the career intervention models include individual or group sessions?".

2.4 Analysis

In this study, a qualitative methodology was used. This type of research was considered appropriate for the exploratory phase of investigation (McLeod, 1996; Patton, 1990). A qualitative methodology was useful to clarify the actions and social situations meanings (Bogdan et al., 1975; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research, due to non-standardized and context-sensitive characteristics, can help researchers access participants' thoughts and feelings.

The analysis of the interview transcriptions was carried out according to the Consensual Qualitative Research procedure (CQR; Hill et al., 1997, 2005; Hill, 2012). The CQR methodology used a consensual agreement between the research team members (Judges and Auditors). This procedure reduces the probability that a perspective influences the data analysis process (Hill, 2012). The CQR represents a mixed qualitative research methodology that helps to study aspects of a phenomenon using inductive analysis and consensus among team members. For this reason, this coding was recommended when the study involves a small number of participants and uses semi-structured interviews. The procedure consists of three-step: coding of domains, coding of core ideas, and cross-analysis. In the first two phases (vertical analysis), each team member independently read the interviews to identify the thematic areas (domains). The core ideas represent abstracts that express the selected domains (Del Corno & Rizzi, 2010), supervised by the Auditor. The third phase (horizontal analysis) allows the comparison to reach a common ground.

Hill's procedures (2012) were adopted to describe the categories of variations within the sample. In this study, the categories were applied with a higher degree of rigidity due to the limited number of interviews. The communality of categories was coded in General (all cases); Typical (50% of the cases); Variant (below the 50% of the cases).

3. Results

Table 1 presents domains, categories, and communality. Four domains have been identified: "Taking care of the client", "Distress", "Collaboration," and "Future need". For each domain, the categories that account for further domain specifications have been underlined.

Table 1. Domains, categories, and commonality of five respondent experiences

Domains	Categories	Commonality
Taking care of the client	Target and Mission	*****
	Figure involved	****
	Career interventions	****
Distress	Individual	*****
	Context	***
Collaboration	Education system	*****
	Parents	*****
Future need	New career models	***
	Monitoring career path	***

Domain 1: Taking care of the client

The first domain focuses on Taking care of the client, i.e., the adolescent/young people in transition. The joint mission of the Institutes was to support the transition, with a focus on a specific age target (adolescents, young people, and adults) and/or transition points (Transition

I and Transition II). This particular focus reflects the type of support and guidance offered. Each interviewee specifies this aspect, that refers to the first category emerged:

“[...] Transition and support. The transition-related ones are [service name] that [...] are oriented to the young people indicated by their middle school. The [service name] aims to help young people choose and then start a [service name]. Moreover, the [service name] is oriented to adolescents between 16 and 18 who have interrupted the education. In this case, our [service name] takes care of re-motivating the clients. Related to support: there are the [service name] and the [service name]. [...]. The support aims to help young people to elaborate on the contents of schooling [...]. Moreover, there is the [service name] that supports young people in difficulty during their education and before education, even while they are still in middle school.”

“We deal with people in difficulty in Transition I, and we try to prevent the dropout phenomenon.”

“We have a series of mandates for the unemployment office, where we work with unemployed. These clients sent to us have a desire and the potential to follow a new education path or training. Besides support, we take care of a crucial part of counselor work, i.e., information. By knowing all the possibilities (education, training, apprenticeship), the clients can open up to the new experience to grow and mature the new ideas and projects. Our center also takes care of Transition II. In this case, the clients freely choose to get help. We currently have a [service name] for employed, for anyone interested in the current situation.”

“We have many projects on the socio-professional reintegration of young people. We work on the four areas: personal, i.e., psychological needs and interpersonal relationships; domestic capabilities, i.e., the ability to manage the household; common area, for example, those activities such as sport, culture; finally, job area, as looking for a job.”

“We support the school-to-work transition. Specifically, we deal with risk categories. [...]. We must not forget mothers, women from 20 to 30 years who stopped working for their children’s care and need a new strength to return to the labour market. These women have lost contact with their skills and the characteristic of the current job market. The support must be ad hoc and specific to their problem and need.”

The interviews show that most interventions aim to monitor and support adolescents transitioning from compulsory to post-compulsory education. The support seeks to sustain the adolescent in choosing what to do after middle school, e.g., apprenticeship or full-time vocational school. Moreover, the centers have active projects for young adults to sustain them in the school-to-work transition or find a new education system path. Finally, there are also courses for adults aimed at reformulating their career choice.

The second category that emerges from the interviews concerns the professional figures, i.e., counselor, case manager, psychologist, clinicians, involved in career interventions. For career support, there are both psychologists and counselors, with two distinct functions:

“The case manager is not a professional counselor. This professional has an academic background a personal and professional knowledge that usually allows him/her to deal with counseling issues. Usually, the case manager is a psychologist. Moreover, there are also psychologists.”

“Psychologists and counselors have a different mandate. The counselor often has training in psychology with a specialization in vocational psychology. However, the goal of the counselor is support and guidance. The counselor does not do the psychologist’s work. The career intervention aims at choosing the career. It can deal with certain difficult and complex aspects of the clients. Still, in this phase, the counselor is joined by the psychologist in a different setting. Counselor and psychologist work simultaneously but one on the career aspects and one on the personal ones.”

Career counselors and psychologists play two different roles, and they work on two different plans (career path and personal). Besides, in some cases, the centers also recommend the intervention of a clinician:

“I needed a third figure too: a psychotherapist. In the past, some adolescents and young adults had risky behavioral problems. We requested an assessment at the beginning of the intervention. The psychotherapist’s diagnosis is communicated to the counselors in the first six weeks of taking charge of the client.”

“We offer career support. For psychotherapy, we rely on outsiders, public and private. This situation occurs, above all, with more fragile adolescents and young adults who could interrupt the career paths undertaken.”

The last category of the first domain sheds light on career interventions. The interviewees describe their interventions, strategies, and phases of their teamwork. First, the interviewees argue that career guidance passes through the information concerning the career path, i.e., education system, possible jobs.

“The information takes place in career counseling but also outside the center. Every year we make a publication that we distribute to all third-year middle school students. The book contains all the education/training offers in the canton.”

“We offer brochures that collect career descriptions. Besides, the descriptions are also present on our site. There are over 600 descriptions. The descriptions present in the brochures have the advantage of having images and workers’ stories. Also, we offer works beyond gender stereotype, e.g., the mechanical girl.”

“It would be important to work with children from primary school on career exploration. It is important to work from childhood on gender stereotypes in order not to hinder a career choice. Thus, counselors with middle school pupils’ might have a substrate to work on career choice.”

Interviews show that career/job knowledge was conceived as an instrument of the counselor. Moreover, the knowledge also passes through the work on gender stereotypes related to careers.

From the interviews, the need to guide young people in the “possible space”, transferring practical knowledge on the potential career path and jobs emerges. This intervention would allow children and adolescents to start planning for the future. “Moving in space” is a metaphor that one career practitioner used.

Related to the school-to-work transition, the interviewees explain the training used. More specifically, for the transition to the labour market, there is a work that can be done individually with the person, as happens in some institutions, but also the use of a methodology that includes both group and individual support.

“Several sessions are planned with the clients. In the first session, the counselor explores the adolescent/young adult life history, i.e., education, family, friends. In subsequent sessions, the counselor continues the interview by exploring the non-emerged areas. Once the puzzle is reconstructed, the counselor works with the client on planning, through their need, desires, dreams, on what he/she wants to do.”

“The group intervention part allows us to work on career skills. The group dynamic helps a lot to bring out these skills. Afterward, when adolescents face individual intervention with the counselor, they start working on their career projects. So, the moments are distinct.”

“One of our interventions involves group and individual sessions with adolescents / young adults. We mean about ten people. The aim is to bring out adolescents and young people’s career concerns. To explore strategies for the future’s motivation, we used the life story, active listening, group activities, and the life design approach. Through this model, adolescents can find a place in the world. The project begins with three days of residential activity. The activities were conducted to allow adolescents and young adults to work on their plans and wishes. This support will enable adolescents to create a relationship with peers in the same condition, participate in a team. Moreover, this support allows adolescents to discover, experiment, and realize the career projects, develop individual career paths, refine strategies and career skills useful in the labour market, look for internships, and know possible jobs. Weekly there are groups and individual sessions. Individually, each client with his/her career counselor defines his/her goals and paths and the concrete steps to achieve them.”

The interviews show that the interventions take place face to face and can be a one-to-one, group, or both.

Domain 2: Distress

The first domain focuses on the distress of adolescents and young people. Distress perceived by leading and experienced counselors and work professionals refer to individual difficulties and distress due to the context’s requests. About the personal distress, the first category of this domain, the adolescents/young people, are described as “closed”, “isolated”, with “lack of parents and/or social support”. Besides, some adolescents have experienced educational

dropout and work failures. Adolescents are also described as individuals with a lack of planning. These aspects reflect difficulties related to the career decision-making process and adapting to the actual society and world of work.

“It seems that adolescents are telling the world, “Stop, I am not ready yet”. It seems that adolescents manifest the need to stop for a moment. These young people also lack everyday life and the activities that mark the days.”

“Many young people at 17-18 years old have not chosen a path yet. Besides, society has changed and is going so fast that it does not allow adolescents to stop and reflect. I have the impression that sometimes they ask silently for help, but nobody listens to them. These adolescents are probably screaming, “stop me. There is something wrong. I do not want to go so fast. I want to do something else.”

“Young people don’t understand the importance of creating a future. But if they can’t find a job, they can’t marry and have children. If they don’t build the future, they get stuck in the present time. This occurs in the NEET condition. There is no escape when planning is lacking.”

“The critical age is certainly the one between 18 and 25 years old. At this age, young people are the most lost. Career counseling aims to put these people back into positive planning concerning their life, to take it back in hand.”

In the interviews emerges how the difficulties of young people are strongly linked to the current context. The interviewees found the age group from 18 to 24 as most at risk. Furthermore, the interviews underline how the lack of vision of the future impacts on all life plans, e.g., the transition to adulthood.

Domain 3: Collaboration

The third domain focuses on the external influence in career choice. The leading and experienced counselors and work professionals highlight the importance of the school context and the parents. The school context refers to the first category of these domains. Specifically, in Transition I, the teachers can both facilitate the career counselor’s work and signal at-risk adolescents.

“School is the key. The school can signal cases at risk of early school leaving.”

“Counselors are present at middle schools one or two days a week. Inside the schools, they work with pupils and parents to plan their career paths.”

The parents are the second category of this domain and represent a crucial influence on adolescents.

“We have included the sessions with the families. We realized that without the parents’ network, i.e., therefore, without the systemic approach, we could not go anywhere.”

“The counselor can take care of the clients and his/her family [...]. Lately, we are facing great difficulties. More and more families hinder career intervention. Therefore, we are trying to understand how to involve new professional figures that support the counselor’s intervention with greater involvement of parents in this process.”

Domain 4: Future need

A fourth domain is related to the future perspectives of career counseling. The counselors are trained continuously and move within the Swiss context and abroad to refine their career intervention models. The interviewees show the importance of constant training on the models used. The career models must reflect a fast-changing post-modern context. Moreover, as already underlined in the first domain, there is the need to develop specific career counseling interventions for pupils in primary schools. These actions can and must be done inside of educational context through teachers. This aspect emerges in the first category of this domain:

“All the work on transitions is done from middle school upwards, but it is too late. In the future, we should work with children. Teachers must stimulate children’s curiosity about professions.”

Another category that emerges from the interviews is monitoring the adolescents’ and young adults’ chosen career paths. Once adolescents have left the counseling pathways, they could be at risk of unemployment. The tracking is provided only up to Transition I, through specific databases (from childhood to the end of middle school).

“From the 15 years of age, we can no longer track their paths. Instead, it would be important to act immediately on young people who leave the training path.”

“One of the important aspects of career counseling, and that I have struggled with the canton administration is the duration of career interventions. When you work for one year, you have found the way. However, there are at least three years of stabilization of the chosen path. In these years, you must continue to do coaching with adolescents/young adults. Otherwise, adolescents lose the work done with the counselors.”

4. Discussion

The study focused on the possibilities offered to support the career path of the young people in the South of Switzerland context. Related to Transition I and Transition II, career interventions are aimed at preventing the phenomenon of dropout, trying to reduce the risk of marginalization and social exclusion for young people. From a developmental point of view, young people are called to make career choices at different times in one’s life (e.g., at the end of middle school, at the end of high school, at the end of university.) On the one hand, these choices can provide an opportunity because they are related to progress in development and life plans. On the other hand, the moments of transition, such as from one education system to another, or from school to the world of work, can lead to an increase in career indecision (Gati

& Saka, 2001), distress and anxiety (Campagna & Curtis, 2007; Nalbantoglu Yilmaz & Cetin Gunduz, 2018; Vignoli, 2015), and the perception of a loss of control on their life (Weinstein et al., 2002). Indeed, supporting adolescents and young people in career choice would allow them to effectively deal with the career transitions they necessarily have to make.

The failure of the school-to-work transition between 15 and 34 years is a health risk factor (Hammarström, 1994; Kasl et al., 1998; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Parola, 2020; Paul & Moser, 2009). Several studies showed a strong relationship between dropout and NEET condition and behavioral problems, e.g., alcohol abuse or substances consumption (Compton et al., 2014; Fergusson et al., 2001), and rule-breaking problems (Atkinson & Hills, 1997; Henderson et al., 2017). According to Baggio (2015), these risky behaviors increase the risk of disengaging from society. Moreover, recent studies show that the NEET status is mainly associated with distress (Bjarnason & Sigurdardottir, 2003; Stea et al., 2019), depression (Bartelink et al., 2019; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016), and anxiety (Bartelink et al., 2019; Virtanen et al., 2016).

This study focuses on the models used by career practitioners. Several studies deal with the effectiveness of specific counseling interventions (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Fusco et al., 2020b; Masdonati et al., 2009; Perdrix et al., 2012; Whiston & Rahardja, 2008), thus focusing on the adolescents/young adults who benefit from the interventions. On the opposite, few studies focus on career practitioners and highlight the interconnections between career theory and practice (Brown, 2002).

Firstly, the results support Savickas' (1994) and Brown's (2002) findings that practitioners have integrated various theories and found ways to apply each to practice by providing different career services. Interviewees do not refer to any specific counseling model. Career practitioners provide information regarding the possible career path (e.g., job, apprenticeship, university) and personal educational and vocational interests of adolescents and young adults. Moreover, career practitioners encourage career exploration.

In the interviews it emerges that the category of young from 18 years is the one most at risk. From a developmental perspective, the 18 years mark the gradual transition from the end of adolescence to the early adult age. Difficulties that counselors encounter among young people refer to the dimension of temporality, describing a young person's profile stuck in the present to whom future aspirations are not accessible (Parola & Felaco, 2020). This aspect affects different life plans, including independence and the creation of a new family. The literature shows how adulthood's transition is strongly influenced by job insecurity (Arnett et al., 2014; Nota et al., 2014). In this situation, adulthood's markers, including stable work and leaving the parental home, become increasingly elusive for many young adults (Arnett et al., 2014).

From the interviews, it emerges that young people are supported in acquiring career skills and psychological resources, e.g., enhancing coping strategies, especially when the context of belonging does not allow them a healthy development (e.g., young people from families at risk). Counselors work with young people to re-think their training path and start building new career paths through the phases that Savickas (2012) defines as construction, de-construction, and co-construction.

The education system seems the key to supporting adolescents and young people in their career choices. A counselor's service is engaging in efforts to create professional inter collaborative relationships within the school setting. Several studies show the importance of the school and the teacher's support in the career choice (Solberg et al., 2002; Zhang et al., 2018). Teacher support is one of the most important external influences that impact students' career decision-making process (Cheung & Arnold, 2014; Perry et al., 2010). Hirschi and Läge (2008) showed the short- and long-term effectiveness of a career intervention for Swiss adolescents conducted in a school, highlighting the significant increase of career decision, career planning, career exploration, and vocational identity during the intervention. Significant effects were still present three months later. As reported by the interviews, the influence of the school is so strong as to think to plan interventions aiming at exploring vocational interests and career paths also in the primary schools. This aspect is supported by studies on children's work aspirations that show how the development of a future career is a process that begins during childhood (Hartung et al., 2005; Magnuson & Starr, 2000). Childhood is considered the first period of commitment, preparatory to entering the labour market, developing an initial concern about the future, and the confidence to make and implement future career choices (Hartung et al., 2008; Magnuson & Starr, 2000). The development of the vocational identity originates in primary school when children have the cognitive skills to project themselves into the future. For example, even the work on stereotypes discussed in the interviews finds feasibility over primary school years. In this period, personal exposure and cultural stereotypes seem to have a primary role in influencing the children's knowledge of the labour market (Porfeli et al., 2008), while towards the end of primary school, a more realistic view of the labour market and its functionality emerges.

In all the career interventions described by the interviewees, the support passes through the information of possible career paths and potential future jobs. According to the leading and experienced counselors and work professionals, it is crucial to allow children and adolescents to explore possible careers by providing them with tools, e.g., books with figures of potential jobs and description of experiences.

The intervention and the instruments of the counselors are different, but all interventions use the narration. According to Savickas and colleagues (2010), the stories are tools for building careers because the narration makes the self and crystallizes what adolescents/young adults think of themselves. Several studies show that the counseling pathways' narration serves to allow the clients to facilitate individual agency (Patton & Mchanon, 2006). Work with the client on past and present stories related to the education and co-construction of a future story is one of the goals to follow when focusing on transition guidance.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the intervention appears necessary. The counselors are always looking for standardized instruments that can somehow measure the effectiveness of their interventions. Alongside this, there is a need to plan follow-up interventions useful for monitoring the client's transition to the labour market. The literature demonstrates how career counseling interventions are helpful and that most clients implement their professional choice within one year from the intervention, showing that they have an essential role in constructing work-life plans (Perdrix et al., 2012). Additionally, the literature has long dealt with the negative consequences of the lack of counseling and training interventions and, conversely, on the effectiveness of these interventions for self-construction (Guichard, 2009).

These findings must be considered in all the contexts where the school-to-work transition is a risk factor for well-being and health, plan career intervention useful for career choice, and overcome the career indecision that emerges in transition moments. The support, in these cases, must go increasingly towards the promotion of positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2011; Overton, 2010) by supporting positive trajectories in the development of adolescents for positive outcomes in adulthood (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Fusco et al., 2020a; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2009). Understanding how people can achieve life satisfaction through work must be the central goal of career construction theory and practice (Savickas, 2002, 2005). Specifically, the literature shows how a positive orientation towards building one's career promotes well-being and, on the contrary, reduces distress (Skorikov, 2007). The ability to prepare, adapt and modify behaviors and expectations allows students to achieve higher academic satisfaction and greater life satisfaction (Wilkins et al., 2014). Having chosen an education and professional goals to follow helps young people to feel more satisfied. This result emerges from studies that focus on adolescents and young adults in education (Hirschi, 2009) and from studies with cohorts of young NEET (Konstam et al., 2015) showing how their adaptability can bring into play necessary resources in increasing life satisfaction (Santilli et al., 2016), and orientation towards the future (Fusco et al., 2019).

Moreover, a relevant difference between career counseling and clinical setting emerges. Career orientation focuses on the difficulties related to the career decision-making process and aims to support transitions, promoting adaptability and flexibility. Although young adults avoid asking for help (Mannarini & Rossi, 2019; Mannarini et al., 2018, 2020; Rossi & Mannarini, 2019), the request for a clinical setting appears in situations of profound fear and anxiety (Merlo, 2019a; Merlo et al., 2020a, 2020b; Settineri et al., 2018) or when other diseases arise that may hinder the positive development of the adolescent/young adult (Merlo, 2019b).

5. Limitation and Future Directions

Some limitations of the present study also need to be addressed. First, the research focuses only on the best practices of the Ticino context. Our results need to be replicated in other geographical areas and areas with different neighborhood characteristics. These findings would compare the model adopted in Ticino with other Swiss contexts and outside the Swiss context. Second, the study uses a purposive sampling procedure reducing the transferability of the results. Third, the number of interviews may appear reduced. Despite this, the five most active career centers in the Ticino context were involved.

Future research should extend the study also to adolescents/young adults who use orientation services to investigate the support perceived by adolescents and young people. Qualitative investigations would be necessary to shed light on personal experiences' subjective meanings (Tessitore & Margherita, 2020; Felaco & Parola, 2020).

6. Conclusion

The study sheds new light on current career interventions. Many studies focus on adolescents and young people's needs in career building, but few studies deal with the counseling services offered for this goal. This study shows that due to the current difficulties of the school-to-work transition process in modern Western societies, an ever-greater need to develop interventions focused on the relationship between individuals and their specific life context emerges.

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