

STUDY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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CONTEXT

The present research study is developing within the Comenius Regio partnership project ***Education and Career Guidance - Let's help students choose the right career! (Consilierea și educarea carierei – Să-i ajutăm pe elevi să își aleagă o carieră potrivită!)***, reference no. **13-PR-04-DJ-RO,TR**, cofinanced by The European Commission through the Lifelong Learning Programme, and taking place during the period August 1st 2013- July 31st 2015 in the Dolj County- Romania and the Mersin Province- Turkey under the government of the CCD Dolj (Dolj County Teachers Department)- the partnership coordinator and the National Education Department of the Mersin Province- the regional coordinator, together with their national partners, namely "Traian Vuia" Highschool in Craiova, "Traian" Secondary School in Craiova, EduFor Craiova Association and The Vocational and Technical Highschool Mezitli, The Informatics Highschool in Mersin and The Education Bureau in the Bozyazi Region, respectively.

The main category of the target-group is represented by the teachers, but, at the same time, school managers, parents, students, local communities representatives will be involved.

The General Objective of the project is the improvement of education and career guidance services for students (students' ECG) in schools, in order to facilitate students' transition to higher levels of education or labour market.

Specific objectives:

O1. Identifying the importance, relevance and quality of counselling and career guidance services for students in schools, as well as the needs

Results: survey through questionnaires, 4 focus group surveys for: parents, teachers, local community representatives, representatives of educational institutions of different levels (secondary school, college, university), electronic research study.

O2. Developing teachers skills for students' ECG in Dolj County - Romania and Mersin - Turkey

Results: teachers` job shadowing activities in the partner regions: comparing the education systems of the two partner regions, in terms of counselling and career guidance; content analysis of school programs and identifying opportunities offered by each discipline/ area for students' career education; reports on shadowing period; elaboration of a guide for students' ECG and support materials; elaboration of a blended learning training program for teachers, conducting the blended learning training program with a number of teachers from different subject areas and assess its impact on the target-group; accreditation of the training course.

O3. Reducing the distance between the school and the labour world, opening the schools towards the community and identifying its opportunities for students' career development, preparing them for future "transitions" in their career.

Results:

-Focused interview with parents, business representatives/ local authorities (county council, city council, work employment agency)/ associative structures in the community (volunteer centers,

parents associations, village sons` associations, former school students` associations etc.), with the purpose of fostering the school-community partnership, establishing the modalities through which students could involve themselves in the private life, identifying the opportunities of getting them involved into the students career education, finding relevant examples in this respect, proposing real activities, involving the youngsters into the local decisions, facilitating students access to the information regarding the offer and evolution of the local/ regional labour market.

- Focused interview with the representatives of the higher levels` education institutions (i.e. secondary schools, highschoools, universities) in order to identify these ones` needs, requirements and offers and, thus, establishing in a set of activities for facilitating an experiential exchange and connecting students to a higher level of education they intend to follow.

- Participation of the local community representatives` in the three conferences of the project.

O4. Increasing students' access to information for successful careers guidance

Results: a regularly and periodically updated website with useful information and materials for both teachers and students, for an efficient students' ECG activity; a discussion forum with sections dedicated to teachers and students and subsections for students' ECG and European projects/ programs; a promotional flyer to promote the project and website among students and teachers from each of the two partner regions; a e-newsletter every six months with the status of project, results and latest news.

This research is an evaluation research, whose aim is to make a real appreciation regarding the importance, relevance and quality of the counselling and career guidance offered to students within the educational background, as well as the needs of all the stakeholders involved both directly and indirectly in this activity (students, teachers, principals, counsellors, parents, local community representatives) from the two partner regions.

STAGES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Establishing the research problem:

The vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students within the educational background

Stating the aim, the objectives and the research hypotheses:

Aim: appreciation of the current state regarding the importance, relevance and quality of the counseling and career guidance offered to students from the educational background, as well as the needs of all the stakeholders involved both directly and indirectly in this activity (students, teachers, principals, counsellors, parents, local community representatives) from the two partner regions, the Dolj County- Romania and the Mersin Province – Turkey.

Objectives: by completing this study we intend:

- to identify students` perception and needs concerning the vocational counselling and career guidance activity;
- to identify parents` perception and needs concerning students` vocational counselling and career guidance activity;
- to identify both the school counsellors and teachers` perception and needs concerning the students` vocational counselling and career guidance activity;
- to identify the principals/ education institutions representatives` perception and needs

concerning the students` vocational counselling and career guidance activity;

- to identify local community representatives` perception and needs (i.e. public authorities, the private sector, the citizenry) concerning the students` vocational counseling and career guidance activity;

Research hypotheses:

- The vocational counseling and career guidance services are considered important by most educational stakeholders/ factors ;
- The concern about students` vocational counseling and career guidance becomes a priority aspect both to students, their parents and teachers, only during the finishing school years (i.e the 8th and 12th grades).

Sampling:

Sociology usually resorts to selective researches, based on representatives samples. If the representation is assured, then the conclusions drawn by studying the sample can be extended to the whole population.

The sample is part of a whole, reproducing a scaled-down version of the studied society, more exactly, assuring a certain representation in relation to the variables considered relevant to the studied issue (gender, age, school studies, occupation, social background, nationality etc.).

A variable characterizing a certain population is a **parameter**. The same variable, measured to the sample level, is called **estimation**.

The estimation limits are represented by a **confidence interval**, in which the value of the parameter is written in relation to the estimation.

By the **margin of error** we understand **the equivalent deviate**. The margin of error of +/-3% is considered acceptable. In order to have such a good measuring accuracy, the sample must include about 1,100 people, whose selection should be done by the principle of the equality of chances. For a 400 people sample, the margin of error is of approximately +/- 5%.

Within the present study, the sample for the questionnaire survey will include 400 students coming from each country, belonging to the mass education.

The sampling itself assumes doing some different methodological operations, but tightly connected between them:

1. *The spacial division of the research*

The research will be carried in the Dolj County- Romania, as well as in the Mersin region- Turkey.

2. *Establishing the general colectivity*

We will take into consideration all the groups of the persons implied directly or indirectly in the activity which makes the objective of our research- students` vocational counseling and career guidance:

- *Students- for the questionnaire survey*
- *Teachers, principals, school counsellors, parents, local community representatives- for the target-groups.*
 - *The division or the grouping of the population/ school units in relation to the social characteristics considered important for the studied issue (gender, age, occupation etc).*
 - *The socio-demographic characteristics relevant within this context are:*
- *gender (masculine, feminine);*
- *shool grade (3rd – 12th);*
- *education level (primary, secondary, highschool);*
- *social background (big urban- Craiova, small urban- other town in the Dolj County; rural).*
- *The geographical location of the school unit (central area/ peripheral area)*

1. Selection of the samples on which the research is supposed to be done.

- Mainly, there are two sampling modalities: *aleatory (presumable) sampling* and *quota sampling*.
- Concerning the aleatory (presumable) sampling there are three procedures:
- *Frequent selection- a lottery procedure by reintroducing the extracted unit into the urn*
- *One-frequency selection- a lottery procedure without reintroducing the extracted unit into the urn*
- *The mechanicselection-* a list with all the people in a general collectivity is done, then a statistical interval is considered, calculated by the following operation: $k=N/n$

(*N*- the general colectivity, *n*- the sampling). *E.g.: if N=1,000, and n=100, then k, i.e. the statistical interval/ measuring step is 10. A satrting number is extracted through the lottery procedure, which is smaller or equal to the measuring step/ statistical interval. If the extracted number is 4, then the sampling will contain the following numbers: 4, 14, 24, 34, ...*

- The quota sampling assumes establishing the sampling criteria and including the persons or social units in proportion to the survey universe structure within the sample, following the mentioned sampling criteria.

In the case of the questionnaire survey, the quota sampling will be used in order to select the education units, and the aleatory sampling when selecting the students.

Education units sample:

No crt.	Name of the education unit	Social background			Education level and number of classes			Geographical location	
		Urban big*	Urban small*	Rural	Primary (no. of classes/ students)	Secondary (no. of classes/ students)	Highschool (no. of classes/ students)	central	peripheral

**In the present study, we take into account Craiova as a big urban local community, and the other towns in the Dolj County are considered small urban local communities*

Students sample:

- 400 students selected from the above mentioned school units (400 students from each region: the Dolj County-Romania and the Mersin Province- Turkey).
- The number of the questionned students is different from one school unit to another, in relation to the whole number of the students that the school unit has, and the education level too.
- Sampling procedure at the level of a school unit: the number of the questionnaires assigned to

a school is divided to the number of the classes that the school unit counts on ((grades 3rd – 12th are taken into account); the result is approximated and, thus, a sample per class will be obtained. The students selection in a class will be done by following a statistical interval/ measuring step of 7, starting with student no.3 in the students` register.

- *E.g.: a school unit can be assigned 30 questionnaires and it has got 15 classes. By dividing 30 questionnaires to 15 classes, the result is of 2 questionned students per class. In each class student no. 3 and no. 10 will be selected from the students register.*

Education institutions representatives Sample

5-8 education institution representatives selected in relation to the following criteria:

they must belong to 5- 8 different education institutions;

they must not take part in this project if the school managers have one of the following relationships: husband- wife/ relatives/ friends;

they must come from schools located in different areas (ideally: they should come from as many various areas as possible such as: cities, towns, villages or small villages; and, if this is not possible, they should come from both central and neighbouring/ peripheral zones of the same city);

if possible, there should be included 1-2 school managers within whose schools there is a Pedagogical Advisory Cabinet;

there must also be at least 2 universitarian representatives;

they must have different experiences as managers, i.e. beginners and experienced;

they must come from schools having a different level of educational performance.

Parents Sample

- 5-8 parents selected in relation to the following criteria:

- their children must come from 5-8 different schools;

- they must not take part in the project if they have one of the following relationships:

husband- wife/ relatives/ friends;

- their children must be students coming from schools located in different areas (ideally: they should come from as many various areas as possible such as: cities, towns, villages or small villages; and, if this is not possible, they should come from both central and neighbouring zones of the same city);

- their children must come from schools having a different level of educational performance.

Teachers Sample

- 5-8 teachers selected in relation to the following criteria:

- they must come from 5-8 different schools;

- they must not take part in the project if they have one of the following relationships: husband- wife/ relatives/ friends;

- they must come from schools located in different areas (ideally: they should come from as many various areas as possible such as: cities, towns, villages or small villages; and, if this is not possible, they should come from both central and neighbouring zones of the same city);

- they must teach in schools having a different level of educational performance.

Local community representatives Sample

- they must be representatives of different institutions;

- they must not take part in the project if they have one of the following relationships: husband- wife/ relatives/ friends;

- they must represent the public sector/ private sector for profit/ non-profit.

Establishing the research methods and techniques

The **sociological questionnaire survey** is one of the most complex methods of sociological research. It represents a research method of the social reality, based on techniques of data production, obtained through the questions asked by the researchers and the answers given by the subjects.

Mainly, there are two techniques used within the sociological survey: the interview and the questionnaire.

The sociological questionnaire, regarded as a research technique (i.e. questioning people in print) and a research instrument (the sheet of paper on which the questions are written), is the most common modality used in the sociological researches.

The sociological questionnaire represents a set of questions, probably images too, ordered logically and psychologically, which determines answers immediately registered in print, in order to solve a scientific problem. It doesn't represent a simple list of questions, but it has a logical order (all questions succeed themselves from the most general to the particular ones), as well as a psychological order (beginning with the "ice-breaking" questions, meant to make the subjects answer the important questions about the topic research).

Questions of a questionnaire can refer to four types of information:

State-of-facts, i.e. the personal situation of the questioned individuals (*age, sex, profession, income*), their background (*living place, working conditions*) or objective behaviours (*leisure activities, relationships with neighbours/ relatives, their vote option at the last elections, etc*).

- Opinions, namely judgements and appreciations that the individuals make in relation to their interests and problems. Their motivations, intentions and expectations fall into this category.
- Attitudes (permanent mental structures that sustain one's opinions). They are measured by an attitudes scale, with numerical values or qualitative intervals.
- Knowledge, i.e. the degree of knowing the problems or situations the questioned person interferes with.

The target-group is a technique applied especially in the practical qualitative sociological research, particularly developed after the WWII, in order to evaluate the audience's answer regarding the radio programmes. It is defined as an interactive group of individuals, who have some common interests and characteristics, a group gathered by the moderator and used by its interactions in order to obtain the necessary information about a certain problem. It can also be considered as a variant of the structured or half-structured group interview. In this case, the target-group is associated to the observation, and in relation to the survey, it is logically and temporally used within the pre-survey, co-survey and post-survey.

Projecting and shaping the necessary instruments- November 2013

- a students questionnaire;
- a target group- teachers/ school counsellors guideline;
- a target group- parents guideline;
- a target group- local community representatives guideline (public authorities, private background, the citizenry);
- a target group- representatives of different level education institutions guideline (secondary schools, highschoools, universities).

The questionnaire has got 10 questions reflecting the following dimensions:

- importance of the vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students in schools, in order to succeed in life;

- participation in counseling and career guidance activities;
- relationship between the vocational counseling and career guidance activity and the school objects taught in schools;
- suitable persons who should carry the vocational counseling and career guidance activity in school;
- impact of the vocational counseling and career guidance activities;
- students' needs to counseling and career guidance activities in schools.

The guideline destined to the school managers as well as the university representatives has got 5 questions reflecting the following dimensions:

- importance of the vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students in schools, in order to succeed in life;
- suitable persons who should carry the vocational counseling and career guidance activity in school;
- relationship between the vocational counseling and career guidance activity and the school objects taught in schools;
- types of activities which could facilitate students connection to a higher level of education;
- students' needs to counseling and career guidance activities in schools.

The parents guideline comprises 5 questions reflecting the following dimensions:

- importance of the vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students in schools, in order to succeed in life;
- relationship between the vocational counseling and career guidance activity and the school objects taught in schools;
- suitable persons who should carry the vocational counseling and career guidance activity in school;
- suggestions regarding the well-functioning of the vocational counseling and career guidance services within schools;
- needs in relations to students' counseling and career guidance activities in schools.

The teachers and school counsellors guideline contains 5 questions referring to the following aspects:

- importance of the vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students in schools, in order to succeed in life;
- relationship between the vocational counseling and career guidance activity and the school objects taught in schools;
- suitable persons who should carry the vocational counseling and career guidance activity in school;
- needs for enriching the students vocational counseling and career guidance activity in school.

The local community representatives guideline has got 6 questions referring to the following aspects:

- importance of the vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students in schools, in order to succeed in life;
- the employers contribution to the enrichment of the vocational counseling and career guidance activity in school;
- modalities of involvement/ familiarization of the students in relation to the working field;
- facilitating the students access to real information regarding the local/regional market offer and evolution;

- youngsters involvement in the local decisions;
- experience of the institution that you represent in the vocational counseling and career guidance services offered to students.

Collecting the information – done during the period December 2013- January 2014

It is recommended that before starting the research itself, a **pilot survey** should be carried, where the validity of the used research instruments is tested. This because the social life is permanently changing, and the instrument with which we collect the information is destined every time to distinct populations, having their own problems, interests, opinions, motivations, expectations etc, and capacity of understanding the meaning of the questions in the questionnaires, interviews or tests.

In the case of the **questionnaire survey**, collecting the information is done by giving students questionnaires (distribution, instruction, filling-in).

In the case of the **target-group method**, collecting the information will be done by:

- organising and taking-place target-group with teachers and school counsellors;
- writing a report on target-group with teachers and school counsellors;

- organising and taking-place target-group with parents;
- writing a report on target-group with teachers and school counsellors;

- organising and taking-place target-group with local community representatives (public authorities, private background, the citizenry);
- writing a report on target-group with local community representatives;

- organising and taking-place target-group with representatives from different levels education institutions (secondary schools, highschoools, universities);
- writing a report on target-group with representatives from different levels education institutions.

The results analysis

All the data obtained in the previous stage will be worked, combined and analysed, so that they permit the verification of the formulated hypotheses. At the same time, this stage refers itself to taking the following steps:

1. Verification and validation of the information which is about to be kept for pre-framing, i.e. reading each questionnaire in order to see if it is valid or not for the pre-framing. Generally, the questionnaires having a great number of unanswered questions or in the situation when the answers need some information regarding the objective characteristics of the questioned persons, are not considered valid.

2. Encoding the information (numerically or alphabetically)- the operation of conventional representation of a piece of information. The code establishes a rigorous correspondence between the qualitative nature of a piece of information and the numbers or letters given. After all the information in the questionnaire is encoded, a list (as a helping instrument) containing the codes is made and used by the researcher until the moment when the research report is written.

- For a rigorous analysis using statistical and mathematical methods is imposed.
- Analysis of the reports written at the end of the 4 target-groups.
- Correlation of the information obtained through the questionnaire survey and the target-groups. During this stage, the technical and creative aspects are combined, as well as the scientific analysis and interpretation.

Formulating the conclusions and writing the research report: February- March 2014

In this stage, advanced hypotheses will be accepted, refused or changed; at the same time, conclusions having a practical aim will be formulated.

A research report will be also elaborated, where the results of the research will be put into an accessible shape. In the research report there will be presented all the stages passed through and the used methodology in order to control the correction of the studied research

The report writing will be done in three languages (English, Romanian, Turkish).

The research report will be broadcast in the partner schools network and published on the project`s site.

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