

Chapter 8

From University to the Labour Market: Assisting Students Through Personal Career Maps

Elena Ramona Richiteanu-Nastase

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0105-1697>

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

Monica Elisabeta Paduraru

Bucharest University of Economics Studies, Romania

ABSTRACT

Adjusting to university life is a challenge for many students, who find it difficult to cope with academic demands and complete their studies. Preparing for a career can generate anxiety, stress, maladjustment, vulnerability. At university level, students' counselling can be a solution to help students adapt to the demands of this environment and their future career. This chapter clarifies concepts such as academic adjustment, career counselling strategy, and institutional support. Furthermore, the authors will present the Personal Career Map as a specific theory and instrument that can be used in counselling students. The structure of the career map, the career profiling questionnaire, the benefits, and limitations of this approach will be highlighted. Personal Career Map offers suggestions for student's counselling plan, detailing concrete steps that can be taken at personal and university level to enhance students' academic and professional insertion. Discussions and recommendations on the use of this approach at university level will be addressed.

INTRODUCTION

Adjusting to university life is a challenge for many students, who find it difficult to cope with academic demands, complete their studies, and prepare for a job. Preparing for a future professional career can generate anxiety, stress, maladjustment, and vulnerability (Zhang, 2022; Jungbluth et al., 2011). A

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survey conducted by the National Union of Students Scotland on 1872 students from 19 colleges and 15 university campuses shows that examinations were found to be the biggest concern for students. An overwhelming 90% of students reported this caused them more stress than expected” (Paduraru, 2019, p. 65). Studies show that adjustment disorder has a calculable incidence of 5–21% in psychiatry consultation services for adults (Glenn, 2011).

Students can overcome these negative states if they manage to adjust psychologically, develop appropriate coping mechanisms, or if they are helped by universities, through different counseling services to identify these difficulties and challenges, and are assisted in a smooth transition to their chosen career. At the university level, career counseling for students can help them identify their gaps and suggest different routes that will facilitate a better insertion into their chosen careers.

The purpose of this chapter is the following:

- 1) To analyze the current context of the difficulties faced by students emphasizing the need for various counseling activities;
- 2) To offer a capable integrative theory and tool taking into consideration different career factors;
- 3) Formulate a coherent counseling strategy that can be used by universities and student career counseling centers to facilitate better integration of students in the university and the workplace.

To meet these objectives, the authors propose this chapter, which can be a real guide for career counseling specialists at the university level or other career counseling specialists interested in a better insertion of graduates.

This chapter is structured into three parts.

In the first part, the background clarifies concepts such as academic adjustment and career counseling activities as a way for universities to support students in adapting to academic demands and facilitate professional insertion. Theories and approaches used in counseling are mentioned, to highlight the need for a complex, integrative theory.

In the second part, Assisting Students Through Personal Career Maps the authors present the Personal Career Map as a specific theory and instrument that can be used in counseling students. The structure of the career map (career facets), the career profile questionnaire, and the benefits and limitations of this approach are highlighted. The authors present the Personal Career Map counseling strategy detailing concrete steps that were taken at the university level to enhance students’ adjustment and insertion.

The last part of the paper will address *discussions* and *recommendations* on the use of career counseling for students to assist them in their transition to the labor market. Issues of the usefulness of this approach at the university level are addressed by the authors, as well as ways for future development.

BACKGROUND

The academic demands, especially for the first year of college, and later adapting to a career, are serious challenges for many students to overcome. Students experience several problems when transitioning from high school to university, such as the failure to undergo a suitable orientation regarding academic expectations and social integration.

A key factor in determining whether students remain and succeed in postsecondary education is their ability to adapt to an often-complex environment (“postsecondary adjustment”) (Lipka et al., 2020).

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