

An example of career counseling with college students at a Brazilian private university

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The complexity and dynamism of the 21st-century labor market entails challenges for higher education in all countries of the world. Young people seek qualifications to help them start a career and enter the job market. To this end, they seek to pursue a higher education that can positively impact their social mobility and career building prospects. However, nowadays, having a college degree alone neither ensures a successful career, nor guarantees employability. The present report exposes the experiences of implementing a career counseling project for students from a private college in the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. This project will be referred to here as the "Careers Project." The aim of the project was to support and accompany college students by giving professional guidance, helping them plan their careers, and contributing to the development of skills that are valued in the context of the current job market. It was intended to facilitate exchanges between the academic and organizational environments, thereby making the job market more accessible to students. Anchored in a socio-historical approach, the Careers Project was implemented in 2012 and ran until 2017. Its main strategy was to provide individual assistance based on students' spontaneous demands. In this sense, it sought partnerships and support from teachers, course coordinators, and internship supervisors. In addition to individual assistance, actions performed in groups, such as integration activities with freshmen; stand out lectures on careers, employability, and the labor market; curriculum design workshops; participation in selection processes; and career guidance and planning also stand out. Among the main challenges faced, we highlight: the difficulties of disseminating the project among students and professors from the college itself, and the scarcity of human resources (the project team was composed of only one teacher and one intern). Among the main results of the project, we highlight the positive feedback from the students, with reports of them having been able to enter internships after the orientation. We also highlight the progressive increase in the number of students that benefited, for example, from 951 students in 2013 to 1,505 in 2015. Conclusion: The Careers Project made it possible to identify and understand the three significant phases that most students experience during their time at college: 1) initial phase, in which students' most frequent doubts reveal uncertainties regarding the choice of course and the "professional vocation" itself ; 2) intermediate phase, in which students' demands are focused on the need to undertake internships outside the university; and 3) final phase, in which students reveal their doubts and anxieties about their careers and professional futures. These distinct phases are interconnected, and each requires specific actions. In this sense, an analysis of the project's results reveals the importance of developing reflective and practical actions that achieve the admission of university students into the world of work once the students have entered college. The project was interrupted in 2017, but the university intends to resume it soon. In this sense, it is very important that this resumption does occur, based on a careful analysis of the results obtained previously and, primarily, aligned with the current research and practical experiences in the field of studies into careers, the labor market, and alumni.

Keywords: career counseling; professional destinations; professional trajectories; monitoring college students.