

UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL: NEXT GENERATION PROJECT

UNIVERSIDAD Y ESCUELA SECUNDARIA: PROYECTO NEXT GENERATION

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ABSTRACT: Introduction: The orientation process is undoubtedly a critical and strategic component of education. In Italy, too, attention has shifted to the school orientation problems, both at the secondary and university levels. The orientation process is so highly structured that it needs adequate and in-depth learning of educational options and the awareness of the different dimensions and capabilities that compose the human being. **Method:** This descriptive contribution aims to disseminate the Italian NEXT orientation project involving all Italian universities. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP) envisages reforming the guidance system and allocates 250 million euros of investment for 'active guidance in the school-university transition'. The investment aims to facilitate and encourage the transition from upper secondary school to university and, at the same time, to address university drop-outs in later years, helping to lay the foundations for achieving the strategic goal of increasing the number of graduates. We recount the experience of the Università Roma TRE, the methods of the working group and the initial conclusions. **Results:** The findings also indicate that educational advisors play a crucial role in providing career guidance services to students in their final years of secondary school. **Conclusions:** An integrated approach among all stakeholders, with the help of digital communication, can become a strategic asset not only in economic terms (justify the European funds invested), but above all in terms of social change and pedagogical intervention methods for people among organisations.

KEYWORDS: Next Generation; transition work; work skills; university; school; stakeholders.

RESUMEN: Introducción: El proceso de orientación es sin duda un componente crítico y estratégico de la educación. También en Italia se ha prestado atención a los problemas de orientación escolar, tanto en la enseñanza secundaria como en la universitaria. El proceso de orientación está tan altamente estructurado que necesita un adecuado y profundo aprendizaje de las opciones educativas y la toma de conciencia de las diferentes dimensiones y capacidades que componen al ser humano. **Método:** Esta contribución descriptiva pretende difundir el proyecto italiano de orientación NEXT, en el que participaron todas las universidades italianas. El Plan Nacional de Recuperación y Resiliencia (PNRR) prevé una reforma del sistema de orientación y destina una inversión de 250 millones de euros a la «orientación activa en la transición escuela-universidad». La inversión pretende facilitar y fomentar la transición de la educación secundaria superior a la universidad y, al mismo tiempo, abordar el abandono universitario en cursos posteriores, contribuyendo a sentar las bases para alcanzar el objetivo estratégico de aumentar el número de titulados. Relatamos la experiencia de la Università Roma TRE, los métodos del grupo de trabajo y las primeras conclusiones. **Resultados:** Los resultados también indican que los asesores educativos desempeñan un papel muy importante en la prestación de servicios de orientación profesional a los estudiantes de los últimos cursos de secundaria. **Conclusiones:** Un enfoque integrado entre todas las partes interesadas, con la ayuda de la comunicación digital, puede convertirse en un activo estratégico no solo en términos económicos (justificar los fondos europeos invertidos), sino sobre todo en términos de cambio social y métodos de intervención pedagógica para las personas entre las organizaciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Next Generation; trabajo de transición; competencias laborales; universidad; escuela; partes interesadas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Orientation is actually one of the main topics of the educational policies of the EU and of all technology-advanced countries. Orientation is of critical relevance for improving the performance and the productivity of the educational and training institutions and is consequently crucial for democracy, innovation and the competitiveness of the countries involved. In Italy, as well, there has also been a focus shift on problems concerning school orientation, both at primary and secondary school level and at university level.

Several regulations introduced in recent years, like the regulations included in the 271 Guidelines on the national system on lifelong guidance, require orientation and counselling activities during the training and education processes and retraining and re-orientation work activities that are increasingly required (OECD, 2019).

The orientation phase is certainly a strategic and building component of learning. The trend orientation discussion has been opposed by the proponents of an analysis of the individuals' attitudinal and personal characteristics and the proponents of an awareness approach based on socio-economic and entrepreneurship as the framework for school and professional choices (Bizzarri, 2022). The process of orientation is so highly structured that it needs adequate and

in-depth learning of educational options and the awareness of the different dimension and capabilities that compose the human being (Morin, 2002). In that context, an individual's skills, knowledge and abilities interrelate positively in the long-term learning processes, like primary and secondary school, characterized by various didactic and instructional experiences that also draw on the family's involvement instead of the stronger orientation strengths of the young person's decisions.

If in schools' skills have a basic global pedagogical significance, then within the school framework we need to wonder which kind of skills students need to acquire in order to be oriented and able to address best the host of challenges raised by the constant change and the climate for uncertainty that characterize this complex society (ONU, Agenda 2030). It is evident that in order for the subject to be supplied with the useful skills that will enable them to cope with the many requirements of a job scenario, it is imperative to encourage knowledge, skill and competences that are significant.

The process of orientation founded on a theoretically grounded perspective is able to encourage and foster interest and skills, and to change interests between and within the individuals into items of value for the individual and for society. In order to achieve this objective, the orientation model must provide a series of progressive tools, over a long period of time, capable of integrating some crucial factors for the development of the subject's potential capacities, so that he/she is able to move independently.

2. ORIENTATION NEXT GENERATION

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP) envisages a reform of the guidance system and allocates 250-million-euro investment for 'active guidance in the school-university transition'. The investment aims to facilitate and encourage the transition from upper secondary school to university and, at the same time, to address university drop-outs in later years, helping to lay the foundations for achieving the strategic goal of increasing the number of graduates.

The Ministry for Universities and Research has allocated resources to universities for active orientation actions in the school-university transition, through the implementation of orientation courses for students of higher education institutions to be carried out in the period 2022-2026. Orientamento Next Generation is the joint project of all the Universities of the Lazio Region, in which Roma Tre also actively participates, designed to support students in our Region in making an informed choice of their post-school education pathway, as well as to define their personal and professional trajectory. Project objectives: a) know the context of higher education and its value in a knowledge-based society, learn about the different educational proposals as opportunities for personal growth and the realisation of sustainable and inclusive societies; b) experience active, participative and laboratory-based subject teaching, oriented by the learning methodology of the scientific method; c) self-evaluate, check and consolidate their knowledge in order to reduce the gap between what they possess and what is required for the course of study they are interested in; d) consolidate reflective and transversal

skills for the construction of their training and professional development project; e) get to know the job sectors, the possible job outlets as well as future sustainable and inclusive jobs and the connection between these and the knowledge and skills acquired.

3. METODOLOGY

Orientamento Next Generation is a modular training package of a total of 15 hours in presence to be delivered over 5 consecutive days (subject to different agreements with schools) covering the following contents by way of example. The schools, in agreement with the other universities in Lazio, have been selected by Roma Tre to participate in the initiative. The school headmasters received a communication to which they replied indicating the number of participants and the classes attended (with preference for class III). An agreement was subsequently signed between the school and the university.

Several working groups were organized in order to structure the orientation interventions in 5 different training courses with evocative titles and distinctive intervention tools.

¿Why study is needed? To «get to know the context of higher education and its value in a knowledge-based society, to find out about different educational proposals as opportunities for personal growth and the realisation of sustainable and inclusive societies».

How does one study at university? Through «an active, participatory and laboratory-based disciplinary teaching experience, guided by the learning methodology of the scientific method».

How can I best prepare myself for university studies? Through «self-assessment, verification and consolidation of one's own knowledge, in order to reduce the gap between that possessed and that required for the course of study of interest».

Who am I and who will I be when I grow up? Through the «consolidation of reflective and transversal competences, the construction of the educational and professional development project will be facilitated».

What professions can I aspire to? Through «knowledge of job sectors, possible job outlets, as well as sustainable and inclusive future jobs and the link between these and the knowledge and skills acquired».

4. RESULTS

Roma Tre reached 2638 upper secondary school students in the first year, delivering 132 courses and signing 15 inter-institutional agreements. A total of 13 universities in the Lazio region participated in the project, the total target number of students was 22,120 and the number of inter-institutional agreements signed was 172.

The recent literature and this experience conducted at Region Lazio poses several issues within the debate on school orientation policies and more generally assigned to public

education and training systems. The critical reflection that we report here is the result of the organization that the working group has given itself. A person in charge was identified for each module, several meetings were held to produce the content after the sharing of objectives. The material was jointly constructed using a digital space for sharing project writing. After the final sharing, the group travelled to the assigned schools and individually conducted the orientation session.

After each meeting, feedback, anecdotes were shared, and the school climate was assessed in the presence of the referring teachers, the availability of the administrative staff, as well as the elements of organizational culture visible and shared by the organization.

From the initial reflections that emerged during the first year's work, having obtained funding for the second year, the need to define the aims and sense of orientation. Orientation as a process within the functions and visions assigned to the public system of secondary and tertiary education and training; the change in the orientations assumed by the normative project of contemporary society from inclusion to political citizenship (inspired by the principles of political rationality following the French revolution) to that of individualized economic rationality typical of the individualistic and performance-based affirmation of contemporary neo-liberal societies (an idea of competitive participation in the market and meritocratic). It is believed that in relation to the new assumptions that redefine the process of orientation are involved the paradigm processes that imply the transition from democracies to conscious and active citizenship, to the centrality of active life in sense professional/entrepreneurial respond to the production and realization of the autonomous life project.

The second theme, deriving from the assumption of the perspectives and purposes of education, concerns the methods, contents and timing of guidance. It identifies the need to move from the skills-centered view to that of competences as outlined in the EU guidelines. The OMS guidelines imply the training of transversal competences, life skills as crucial for more educational and work orientation systems. The third relates to the centrality assigned to the choices of the subject who is mainly represented as a resource, human capital, which alludes to the semantic shift to career guidance, which loses sight of the elements of citizenship and active political inclusion of the subjects emphasizing instead the elements of engagement in the competitive market.

These are educational philosophies that shift the center of gravity of interventions, their organization, content and orientation, towards the experts of soul management. A direction that shares the assumption of the human as exclusively oriented towards inclusion in the mechanisms of the globalized market, without providing elements of knowledge and awareness of the real dynamics of the contemporary labor market (polarized between precarious and undignified work and a few creative and prestigious jobs) and more generally of the challenges of complexity that the neo-liberal society poses to the new generations and to the education and training systems.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings also indicate that educational advisors play a very important role in providing career guidance services to students in their final years of secondary school. Therefore, in order for students to have a brilliant career in the future, school counsellors should improve the quality of the vocational guidance services and plan comprehensive guidance programmes (Caggiano & Ragusa, 2023). On an operational level, this translates into a series of new inputs and insights. The need to plan with schools that have managerial and didactic autonomy, and that value transition processes to work, such as orientation, as a functional overload of the school and its operators.

The tools outlined according to the age and year of study of the student, in relation to the type of school attended and the territory where it is located. Redesigning the skills of the university teacher as an orienteer, identifying his or her communication style and knowledge of the students' languages. We are certain that the enthusiasm shown and the relationship shared with colleagues are an important added value to the results and conclusions of the first version of the Next Project.

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