

## CAREER GUIDANCE IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY IN AFRICA



### INTRODUCTION

In Africa, youths represent a rising part of the population and economies are facing difficulties to absorb their influx into the labour market because of the low level of qualifications that they offer. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems, which are one of the main elements of the potential response to this demand, are limited in terms of matching labour market needs with the supply of trained persons with good capacities.

In reality, the post-primary formation essentially consists of learning a job within small and micro enterprises according to learning methods termed “traditional”. Apprentices rarely have the opportunity to be oriented towards the choice of the profession they actually want to learn.

Finally, in many cases, a vicious circle persists: vocational training is considered as a last resort solution to prepare for employment or as a “last chance school”. For this reason, vocational training is mainly proposed to students in socio-economic difficulty and/or who have faced challenges to succeed in their education.

### DEFINITION OF CAREER GUIDANCE

Career guidance is an activity which consists of proposing opportunities in various professions and sectors to individuals of school age and to adults looking for a career change. Such opportunities are centred on training in accordance with the student’s interests, abilities, educational background and personality.

### UNDERSTANDING THE PHASES OF INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Understanding the development phases of a person is a prerequisite for any career guidance action. The development of a person’s professional identity starts from childhood. The first learning contacts with the environment consist of direct learning, familiarization and socialization (family, school, place of worship, collective games, etc.). This process is really started during the school path through a perspective of progressivity and continuity. According to Bandura’s theory<sup>1</sup>, regarding the educational development of the person, one may distinguish three (3) phases of questioning which the training/education candidate should pass through before choosing a professional career.

	<i>Phases / Progression</i>		<i>Questions ?</i>
1	Identity development	➔	Who am I, what are my values, my strength, my interests?
2	Exploration and information	➔	What are my possibilities of formation and career?
3	Decision	➔	What is my choice?

This approach leads the trainee candidate to question him or herself about his or her path, which will make

<sup>1</sup> Albert Bandura (born in 1925), is a Canadian psychologist known for his theory of social learning and his concept of « self-efficiency ». His works are directed to the actors of teenagers’ education, their feelings of efficiency and their professional orientation.

it possible for him or her to analyse the various available opportunities through numerous psycho-technical tests and to thereby possibly set training and career goals coherent with his or her motivation, abilities and interests.

Bandura proposes some « orienting » activities which take into account the phases of professional development and the candidate's situation during the training/education.

	<i>Phases</i>		<i>Themes</i>
0	Exploration	➔	Awareness leading self-knowledge; exploration of professions
1	Crystallization	➔	Linkage between personal interests and professional choices
2	Specification	➔	Consideration of one or two professions in a more serious way
3	Realisation	➔	Elaboration of an action plan in order to confirm the choice made

## INSTRUMENTS OF CAREER GUIDANCE

Choosing a profession is an important step in life. The instruments of career guidance that can help candidates to make their choice and find a job in which they could achieve personal fulfilment and develop their competences are numerous. The usual services that various institutions of career guidance and training offer are to support the individual to become informed and experiment, while providing counselling throughout the process.

Four key instruments may be used for career guidance.

### 1. Professional Trials

In order to better choose, the best way is for the individual to try things out. A professional trial in a TVET Centre is a good way to check if the preferred choice of the profession is the right one. Through practice in the centre's workshop, candidates may, for example, try 3 different professions over the course of 5 days, then explore 1 of the 3 professions in more depth during an additional 5 days.

### 2. Discovery Internships

Discovery internships aim at discovering 3 different potential jobs in the same sector through the practice in the TVET centres' workshops. For example, candidates try 3 different jobs during a period of 3 to 4 days.

### 3. « Job itinerary maps »

The « job itinerary map » is a document listing the active companies in a determined geographical area. These companies, labelled as "job itinerary companies", volunteer to present their jobs and activities to candidates looking for information on a specific profession.

### 4. Interview with a career advisor

The role of a career advisor is to help candidates make a career choice, through individual or collective (with other candidates) interviews and/or orientation tests. Depending on the affinities of the person, his or her professional and educational background, his or her life project, his or her expectations, his or her assets and abilities, the career advisor ensures to provide the best advice to help him or her in a key moment of life.

## EXAMPLE OF ORIENTATION TEST

Orientation tests are numerous but here, just one simple and efficient example will be taken into consideration: the model of professional profile's determination according to the typology HOLLAND<sup>2</sup>.

This orientation test consists of two questionnaires. The first one is the "interest-focused self-knowledge" form. This short document (1 page) is a reflection instrument, which aims to help the learner to better know him or herself. The second questionnaire addresses the question of the «skill-focused self-knowledge ».

The result of these two questionnaires are reported in a table, named RIASEC<sup>3</sup>, which means: Realist (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E) and Conventional (C).

Next the person adds the results of the two sections and reports the result in the appropriate space on the form. Finally, he or she determines the three (3) more dominant types and underlines the words which better describe him or herself.

## CONCLUSIONS

Numerous career guidance instruments are available to support youths and others: professional trials, discovery internships, job itinerary maps, interview with a career advisor, not to mention orientation tests.

However, it should be underlined that in Africa, for example, these instruments are not frequently used. Even if international best practices have been identified, it is not easy to simply import them: significant adaptations should be made in relation to the local socio-economic and cultural context.

## REFERENCES

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- Council of Education and Formation. Adults and Youths' orientation in the framework of professional insertion and formation. Toward a supporting structure to the professionals of orientation. French community of Belgium, 2007:

[http://www.cef.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx\\_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/sites/cef/upload/cef\\_super\\_editor/cef\\_editor/Avis/CEF\\_Avis\\_097\\_DI.pdf&hash=e4c6d7d0a831b7ce15e9a353f04e85eb966306eb](http://www.cef.cfwb.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=fileadmin/sites/cef/upload/cef_super_editor/cef_editor/Avis/CEF_Avis_097_DI.pdf&hash=e4c6d7d0a831b7ce15e9a353f04e85eb966306eb)

## IESF TEAM SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- <http://www.ifapme.be/formations-a-un-metier/de-l-aide-pour-choisir-un-metier.html>

- <http://www.test-emploi.com/test-orientation.html>

- <http://www.orientation.qc.ca/>

- <http://orientationpourtous.blogspot.com/2012/04/bonjour-vous-je-vous-presente.html>

## CONTACTS

[Eric HUBY](#)

[ehuby@yahoo.com](mailto:ehuby@yahoo.com)

**Opinions and recommendations in this present Thematic Brief engage just the author ( the authors) and do not necessarily reflect the position or the opinion of the European Commission.**

<sup>2</sup> John L. Holland (born in 1919) is an American psychologist who has invented the Holland code, also called RIASEC code.

<sup>3</sup> According to Holland, the majority of people can be split according to their degree of resemblance with the six (6) following personality types: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C).