

MOTIVATION OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER SELECTION

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ABSTRACT: *The problem of professional career motivation is a topical issue for contemporary society. However, the studies developed in this regard are far from sufficient, and there is, in fact, an increasing need for new justifications to come into contact with the accelerated changes of the contemporary world. Analyzes are far more profound when we discuss the motivation of higher education graduates to choose the future career path. The student's initial motivation for learning can be transformed into motivation for professional careers. Today's student, tomorrow's graduate needs information as accurate as possible regarding the labor market, this fact can't be accomplished only with their own resources it also requires career guidance services. In universities counseling is in a debut phase and tries to consolidate its status by various adequate informing and promoting actions focused on the beneficiaries of this type of counseling.*

KEY WORDS: *motivation, career, career orientation, career counseling, labor market*

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1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

1.1. Why is career and planning important?

Our life is the sum of all the choices we have made so far and of what we will continue to do. Since we are free to choose, we have the control of our lives and we can design it as we want or dream. Creating professional careers is a lifelong process, from early on with the educational path and continuing with the professional career. Career does not necessarily mean prestige or great material gain, but it means a balance between things that matter most to you, no matter what profession you have.

Profession is one of the main areas of life, along with family, friendship, etc. Satisfaction with work and life satisfaction depend on the extent to which the person

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finds ways to develop their skills and interests, personality and self-image. Therefore, choosing the profession is a decision that deserves all the attention.

There is not one single career suitable for a person. Each occupation has a flexible configuration of skill and personality requirements that allows for variability of people in relation to an occupation, and at the same time a variability of occupations relative to one person.

A decision and a good career plan increase your chances of success. But career choice is not an irreversible process. True performance is born from thorough preparations; people who have great success, regardless of the field, use much more time for training and planning than those who are less successful. Also, motivation has a decisive role in career development. "Motivation is the extent to which persistent effort is directed to achieving a goal." (Pânișoara I., Pânișoara O., 2005, p.150).

The complexity of the problem becomes even more evident when it comes to the functions of motivation, as they are found in the literature; M. Zlate (2000, p.154) lists:

- a) the diffuse activation function and the signaling of a physiological imbalance or psychological;
- b) mobile function or trigger factor of actual actions;
- c) function of self-regulation and behavior support.

Practically, these functions express a crescendo of involvement in motivated support actions. Maybe the action may be triggered by a need, which does not have the force to trigger an action. More motivational force is needed to move into a second, triggering action, corresponding to the second function. Throughout the course of the action there will be a regulation (emphasizing or diminishing the impulses that direct the conduct). If regulation works best, basically activity is sustained until the proposed goal is achieved.

1.2. Factors that influence career choices

a. Family. The modern practice of counseling and guidance requires in its actions and involvement of parents; they can contribute to the counseling act by supporting their children in their free career choices, finding a job, weakening stereotypes and prejudices about work, encouraging mobility for vocational training or pursuing a profession. Parental influence options are varied and can be translated into: Career choices in order to know their point of view, fears, hesitations, successes; offering suggestions, but without imposing the point of view; discussions with teachers; permanent encouragement; information on job offers, etc.

b. Friends Group is a significant source of influence on adolescent career plans. In a positive sense, it helps the young person to shape his own identity and social relationship.

c. School. School orientation and professional orientation are provided in school. For the student to become an adult responsible for their own career decisions, the school should focus on training the following skills: using the computer; solving problems; management of human, material, financial resources; personal planning and career planning; interpersonal relationship; making use of information.

d. The media has a growing share in informing the young generation about labor market dynamics, job mobility, promoting career success patterns (specialized sites, newspaper ads, job fairs).

1.3. General Aspects of Career

The career guidance, orientation and education services, regarding the organization, methods, structure, and human resources as well as the occupational structures available have evolved significantly in the contemporary society. The educational and vocational counseling and orientation supports the individuals in building their own careers, thereby helping them fulfill a dignified destiny in life. This process implies: competence, competition, selection, success, failure, assuming responsibilities etc. (Jigău, 2006, p. 5).

The educational and vocational counseling and orientation process regards aspects of the following nature:

- Cognitive - supplying information and training in job searching techniques;
- Affective - improving self-image and establishing a positive attitude towards work;
- Actional - decision-making, planning and implementing the action. (Jigău, 2001, p. 82).

The educational orientation activities precede the vocational orientation, but both of them are components of the career guidance. The educational orientation activities are focused on the ones that begin new stages of initial training. These activities are grounded on the idea that each person can achieve the maximum only if the training process is based on their strongest aptitudes or general personality characteristics. (Jigău, 2001, p.89).

Career guidance is the process of maximum synchronization between personal and social aspiration regarding work seen as a source of personal satisfaction and as a means of general economic progress. The main task of career guidance is to ensure the consistency between the characteristics of a certain person and the objectives of the formative process undergone by that person (Jigău, 2003, pp.55-56).

Career guidance is a social phenomenon that emerged in society, together with the multiplication of the social forms of activity, as well as with the growing personal liberty, in order to ensure the possibility to choose a career for the young generation. It aims at adapting the person to the working conditions, to the wide range of existing professions on the labor market in accordance to the abilities, skills, general personality characteristics, aspirations of the person and to the social necessities pursuing to establish a balance within the relationship between humans and social activities. (Szilagy, 2008, pp.98-102).

Counseling is also a form of socialization and/or social learning in that it offers individuals new experiences and information through which they can better outline and develop their identity and self-image, to successfully integrate and in a way that is satisfying for them or to facilitate overcoming certain critical contexts of their lives. (Jigău, 2005, p.94).

The process of career guidance and counseling elevates from aptitudes to personality, from task solving possibilities to satisfaction attaining possibilities, from the man that executes to the man that creates (Ghivirigă, 2006, p.89).

One of the important elements for career management is self-knowledge. Issues that are more relevant to career decisions are: student interests, personal values, skills and personality as an integrating element.

a. Interests are the crystallized preferences of a person for certain areas of knowledge or activity. These are essential motivational factors in career choice, so it is very important to investigate them in drawing up the individual career plan of the young person.

b. Values are basic beliefs of a person; they describe what is important in life, in work, in dealing with others. Along with interests, these are standards by which people relate to career opportunities. If work-related values (security, great gains, achievement, status, appreciation, power, etc.) are consistent with personal values, then they will guide the person in choosing their careers.

c. Skills represent the set of attributes that differentiate people among themselves in terms of the manner in which various activities are carried out, and especially in terms of their qualitative and quantitative yield. They form the basis of work performance and ensure the successful completion of various forms of academic and professional training.

d. Personality is the unique way to think, to feel, to act, to relate a person. The common sense says that personality is the central variable, decisive in choosing and adapting to careers ("Salesmen must be extraverted", "Accountants must be meticulous"), but the research did not confirm the direct relationship between certain personality traits and occupations.

Educational or work environments accept a variety of personality types; people with similar personality features can get good performances in different occupations, as people with different characteristics may prefer the same occupation or similar occupations.

It is important to know all these elements in the career guidance process so that the person's professional profile is built in full consistency between the possibilities and the requirements of an occupation.

1.4. Characteristics and trends of the labor market

Labor market refers to the specific configuration of existing job demand and supply at a given time. Currently, social change also influences the dynamics of the labor market as follows:

- a. changes in the weight of professions in the labor market;
- b. changes in the requirements imposed by different professions;
- c. changes in the required work habits, relationships within the organization;
- d. extensions of fixed-term employment;
- e. increasing the need for continuous training of the workforce.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SUBJECTS

The study was conducted between January and March of 2017 and the participants were students/graduates of the three faculties from the University of Petrosani, beneficiaries of the services of the Centre for Career Guidance and Counseling within the University. The research method used was the indirect survey based on a self-administered questionnaire. Through this research we intended to highlight the importance of a functioning career guidance and counseling center, meant to develop the beneficiaries' skills needed to find their own professional path. Also, research results represent the foundation of the next step namely the design of a counseling plan through which the future graduates can improve their skills and shape their attitudes in line with employers' expectations.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

The career counseling process is bidirectional. It is starting from the expectations of the beneficiaries in relation to the services that can be offered by a career guidance center. The need to use career counseling and guidance services throughout all school years is positively appreciated by more than three-quarters of the surveyed graduates, this measure being considered of key importance for a successful life. As primary milestones in building a career, more than 70% of respondents assign a crucial role to career counseling services for self-knowledge, professional exploration, decision-making and professional development as well as effective planning for the career development.

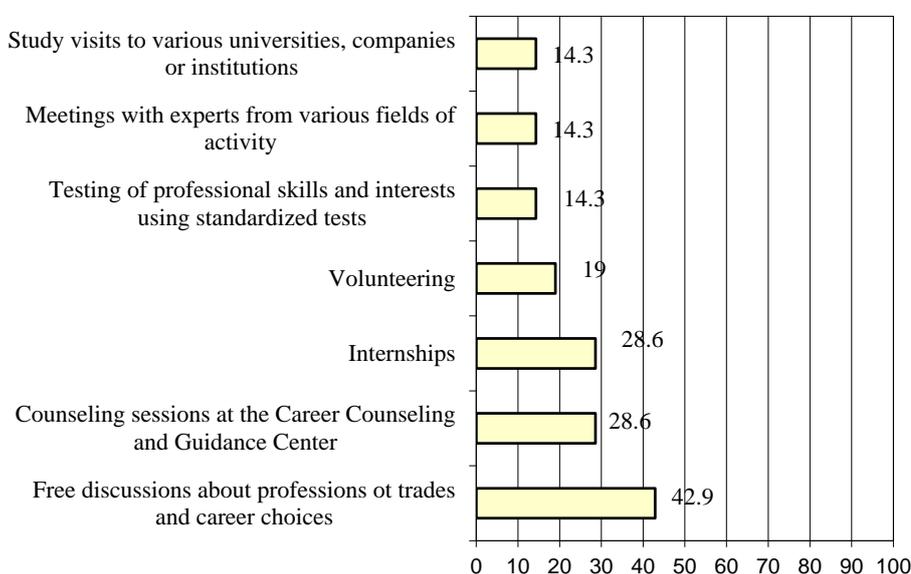


Figure 1. Counseling and Vocational Guidance (%)

As shown in Figure 1, specific guidance and counseling activities, attended by more than half of the study graduates, focused mainly on free / occupational career and career choices (over 40%), counseling sessions held in the Career Counseling Center, practice training at a firm / institution (both 28%) and volunteer activities (almost a fifth). The percentages are relatively small; a possible explanation is that activities intended to advise graduates on their professional path are in the debut phase.

It is already known that when graduating university life goals are loosely formulated and perceptions regarding the professional future is vaguely outlined. The graduates, being in a period of self-knowledge, will need tools, strategies and techniques to help them discover themselves professionally and to understand their individual resources, but also their limitations in order to be able to build medium and long term objectives starting from these personal assessments, to discover what their abilities are, but also the weaknesses that they have in relation to the career they want to build.

Figure 2 points out the wide range of areas and activities that the specialized career guidance and counseling services support.

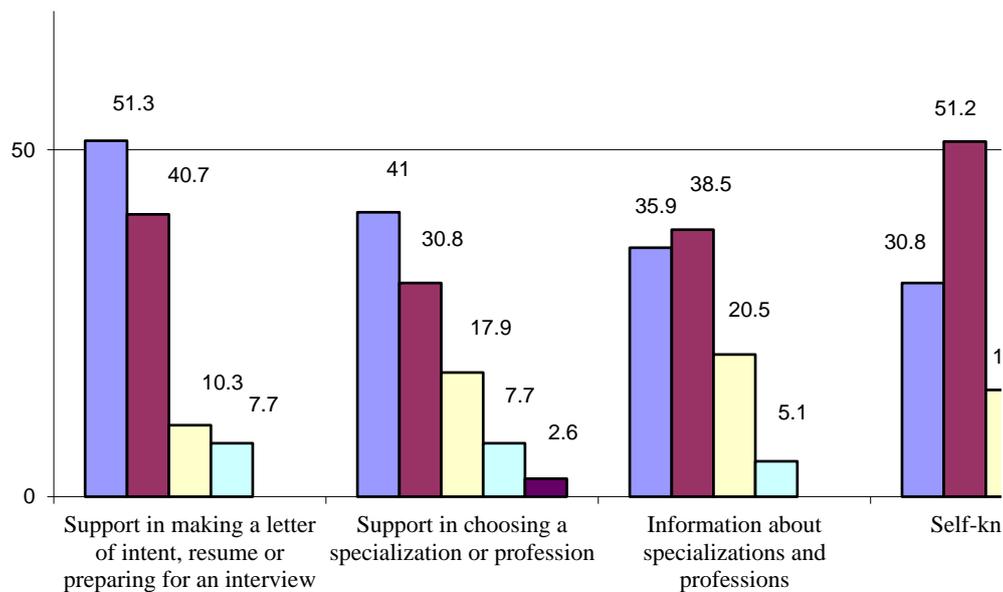


Figure 2. The Utility of Career Guidance and Counseling (%)

There is a close connection between subject matters studied in school and the chosen profession. The way that the subject matters studied in school are linked with the future professional developments depends on the choice of the young person to continue along the same area as the graduated educational level.

Good school performance leads to certain professions with a greater possibility and also it facilitates career achievements, or, in other words, being able to have certain professions implies certain abilities.

Realizing the connection between the career guidance and counseling activities and the subject matters taught in school is also reflected by the significant percentage (of about 90%) of respondents that declare that they support the cause and effect relationship that exists in between the two elements.

The need for these career counseling specialization services is also emphasized by the significant percentage (over two thirds) of those who stress the importance of continuing the guidance and counseling process in order to achieve performance.

Educational and vocational counseling and guidance as an activity aims at finding a job within a liberal model of market economy simultaneously with taking into consideration the individuals' skills, abilities and conceptions regarding themselves and work with all the psychological individual diversity, which differs according to the social structures and hierarchy in which they live in and with the particular way in which they represent the world through the information and messages that are offered and interpreted to them by individuals and institutions that possess the social authority to do so.

Out of all these information suppliers the educational environment occupies a leading place. Asked to evaluate the academic program that they attend or that they graduated almost half (48%) of the investigated subjects consider it to be "professionally oriented" fulfilling the requirements of the labor market, while 40% assess the educational program they attend or have graduated as being prestigious. But there is also the opinion of 30% according to who the educational program is excessively demanding.

Given the psychological and social characteristics specific to the graduate age segment, the information that comes to them, the trust in the sources of information, as well as the critical thinking, the way information is handled are important factors in the career decisions they take.

Figure 3 outlines the sources of information that the graduates will use to find the first job, from where can be seen the top positions occupied by the job fairs, the information obtained through the media / internet, but also the data received from the family, friends.

We wanted to highlight the information sources of the graduates, their direct experiences with these and the perception and trust allocated to different sources of information. All of the information sources contribute positively towards reducing the lack of information regarding the chosen career field. This was declared by more than two thirds of the respondents.

Graduates had the opportunity to choose from a variety of sources of information, all of which could be a starting point for choosing a job. Among the items allocated to information sources, to which graduates declare that they have called for information, three refer to the direct contact of the graduate with factors of influence in deciding over the future profession. Thus, job fairs are preferred by approximately 85% of the subjects, direct contact with the employers (38%), but also Public Placement Agencies (28%). Mainly the internet but other types of mass-media also are used by more than three-quarters of graduates and more than half of them also call upon their families, friends and acquaintances to find out information about possible jobs.

The Career Guidance and Counseling Centre is considered a source of information by only a fifth of the respondents. This can be justified by the fact that only 51% of them ever had any contact with a career management center. These answers are a pertinent indicator regarding the popularizing of career management centers and familiarizing the students with the services that they can benefit from.

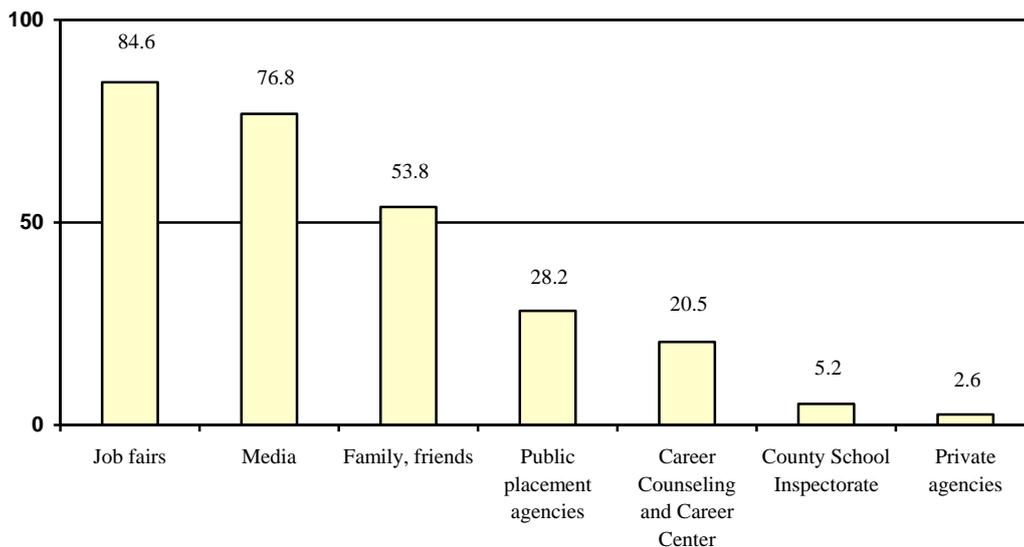


Figure 3. Sources of Information Used to find the First Job (%)

An important issue for addressing the materials and methods of popularizing career guidance services is the student's perceived impact of the information sources and the trust placed on different sources when faced with career decisions. The career guidance materials for students should demonstrate the opening of career management centers to collaborate with private or state institutions. Job opportunities or internships need to be presented, the importance of direct contact with employers should be mentioned as such services are considered important and are therefore sought after when students or graduates call on career counseling services. At the same time, students and graduates need to be informed that career management centers can offer more than mediation between them and potential employers.

Despite the increased interest in searching for information on finding a job, there can be found a lower level of engagement in actions that could result in finding a job, hence the rather low importance given to these sort of activities (Figure 4).

Although graduates say that they appreciate discussions with employers as revealing for their future career path, but, at the same time, they do not seem to exploit the opportunities to get in touch with them by attending career fairs or other events where they can come in direct contact with potential employers, such as company presentations.

Taking part in training courses and workshops in the field of interest appear to be of a rather low importance in the evaluation of the graduates, which may be due not only to the lack of interest but also to the lack of information on these services. The low usage of the active information sources regarding the career can be a plausible explanation for the fact that most of the graduates turn to their families, friends, support groups to determine their professional paths to the detriment of the specialized services.

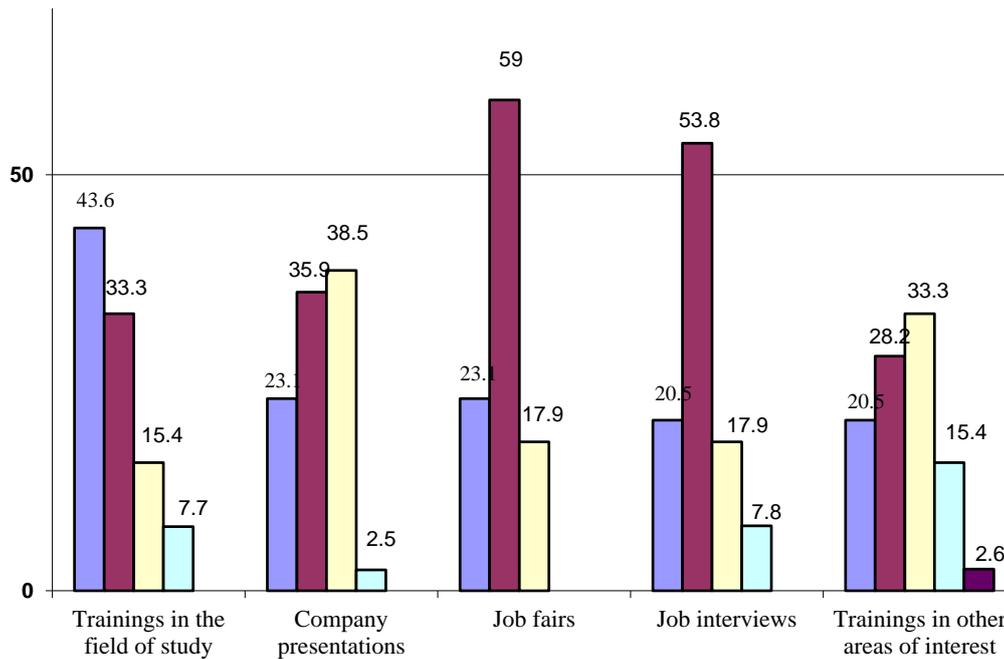


Figure 4. The Importance Given to the Following Sources of Career Information (%)

The lack of the self-knowledge process, the exploration of employment opportunities, the predominant focus on identifying a possible employer, without balancing their own interests or values, makes the whole decision-making process deficient. To this it must be added that the majority of graduates place the responsibility of developing professional skills on the university and not on their own person. The fact that they are supported on their professional pathways through their academic studies is a tangible gain for students because it meets the manifested needs and expectations.

At the same time, however, we need to keep in mind that there is a great risk of turning the students into simple recipients. It is necessary to maintain the responsibility and trust attributed to the academic environment and, at the same time, to encourage the development and assumption of the students' own responsibility by providing practical exercises that can be done outside of the academic environment, by guiding them towards the labor market through the support given in order for them to develop

personal brands and engage in social networking to help them on their professional paths.

Even if they did not have a long-term contact with the labor market, the interests of the graduates are important, especially in terms of their connection to the labor market reality and the skills demonstrated in the professional field by them. The context of work is important for young people, showing preference for certain characteristics of a potential job.

Following the evaluation of the motivation, we found that the main motivating factors in the evaluation of a job by the respondents are represented by (figure 5):

- Possibility to acquire new knowledge in the field of interest;
- The career advancement opportunities available to the company;
- Good communication between departments and colleagues.

The main factors opposite the motivator, if young people are confronted with them, are:

- The lack of interactivity that might exist within the department;
- An environment where the possibility of professional development is reduced;
- Eventual poor team organization.

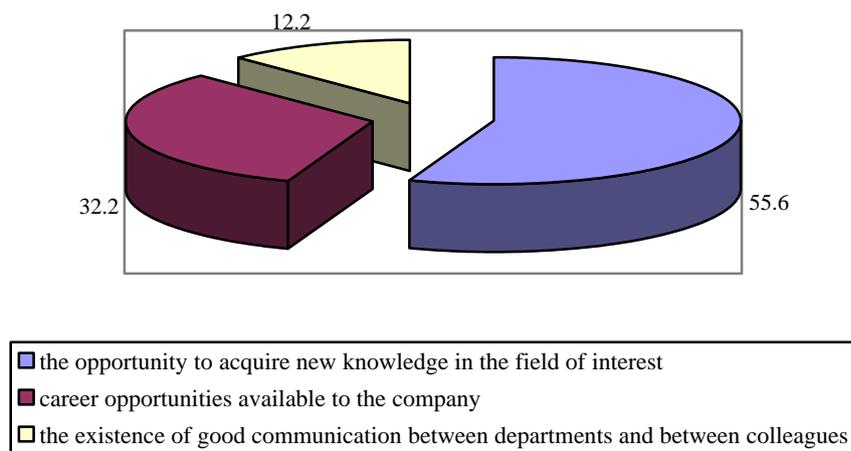


Figure 5. Motivating factors for keeping a job

We have offered to choose a list with some possible expectations that graduates could exert on their desired job. Of these, the recognition of professional merits is preferred to 43% and incentive conditions for improvement and promotion, in just over 40%, and material advantages are preferred in the proportion of one-third of the elections. Such an approach supports the idea that higher education graduates do not consider employment as something immediately and therefore do not assign interest to the values associated with a possible job.

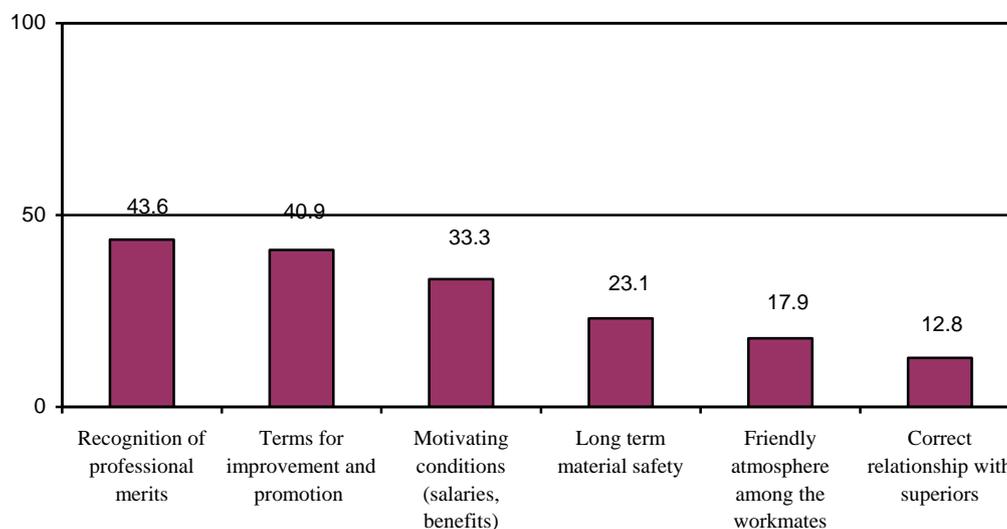


Figure 6. Graduates' expectations for the selected job (%)

Looking for a job, both young graduates and employers have a number of expectations, some of them realistic, relevant, others less realistic. Depending on the requirements and expectations of employers, the stability of the labor market is determined, while some employees remain, are even promoted, others leave the company.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The challenges of the contemporary world call for a series of restructurings of various educational aspects, especially those concerning the balance between formative and informative, the permanence of educational action, the equalization of chances, the enhancement of the prospective character of education, the need to prepare young people for socio-professional insertion. In this context, youth career guidance is a pillar of resilience of effective education by ensuring continuity by extending school and professional orientation to all levels of training through sustainable curricular empowerment with digital tools by adapting the curriculum to student needs through ensuring adequate methodological resources.

Choosing a profession is an important moment in every individual's life, being one of the major prerequisites for social inclusion, but it takes place in a wider context in which personal, educational, economic, contextual factors are involved. For this reason, career planning involves steps such as: school orientation, professional orientation, career counseling, each with its own specificity.

Such conclusions urge us to think up vocational guidance counseling programs that firstly raise students' awareness of the importance of active engagement at all stages of building a career, assuming critical perspectives regarding the information obtained and developing practical skills for their chosen field of activity.

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