

# The golden rule for career choices

## A contemporary approach of career guidance

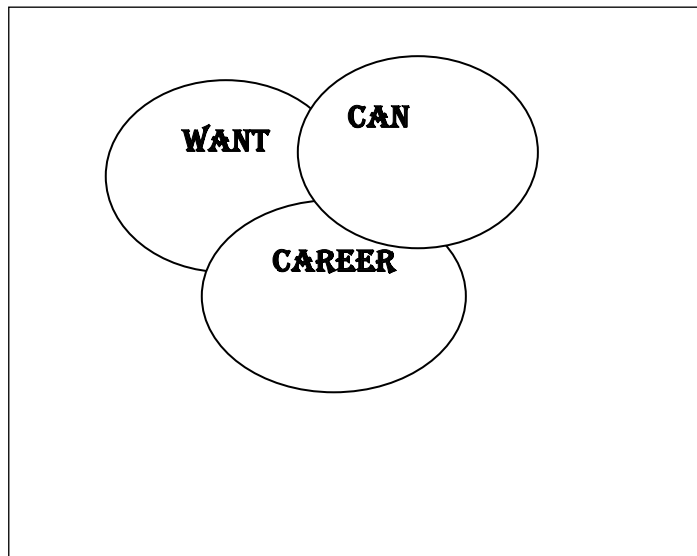
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### 1. The contemporary approach

The contemporary approach to career counseling derives from an interdisciplinary character, the mixture of different scientific fields and mainly of the psychology, the economics and the sociology of labour, and pedagogic. Elements from the fields of human resources, psychometrics, statistics and computer science are also included. Such a contemporary interdisciplinary approach, is considered to be the most common international trend in the specific scientific field which, especially the last few years, has undergone great developments. Under such a modern approach we introduce the golden rule for the proper selection of studies, occupations, career path. The basic criterions for such a process are :

1. Self-knowledge, including personal interests, preferences, inclinations, talents, abilities, will, and the matching of each personality with studies, occupations and career
2. Occupational perspectives in the labour market, working conditions and payments
3. Family and economic data
4. Educational factors
5. Random events and the never ending conquest of knowledge

The golden rule combines the above criterion and factors and ends up with the best possible answer. Such a selection process should focus on the above six criteria and factors in a basic frame of want, can, career as such:



The aforementioned factors constitute basic principles of the contemporary interdisciplinary approach for selection of studies, professions and career and are further analyzed. It is also alleged that, particularly the applied aspects of career guidance which is addresses to the wider public, if possible, must stay far from some scientists of the field who approach this institution with contradictory or indistinct opinions and assumptions. The basic need is to have specific, clear and comprehensive position and directions regarding the selection of studies and of profession. The scientific differentiations or even recriminations regarding issues of this institution can and should only interest the academics of this field. Similar practices when applied in the same area, can barely contribute to ones need for clarity and positive result. They create confusion and disorientate instead of orientating people, the wider public in order to make the right choices in selecting studies and profession. Career guidance can dramatically mark someone's life route and influence the development of economy and society in a country. This is a fact that even nowadays is not widely comprehended yet. These remarks and particularly the need for clarifications regarding the general and more specific directions of such an important institution which influences through counselors to the steps of the wider society, parents and young children – the hope and future of the world , can and should taken into consideration very seriously.

## 2 Self-Knowledge (personal interests, inclinations, talents, abilities, will, )

Following the career guidance and counselling procedure, valid information, instructions and assistance regarding decision making on studies occupations should be provided. For this reason, every interested person refers to career counsellors, follows career guidance and counselling procedures, takes tests of career guidance-career choices and is informed by valid sources. First concern when selecting studies and occupations is to have self-knowledge, to know who you are and what you want or can do<sup>1</sup>. People must learn about their interests, inclinations, preferences and talents. They must be sure about what they really are and not what they think they are.

After realizing what their interests and inclinations are, what suits them and what does not, they should explore the personal general and specific capacities in order to be better orientated towards the right direction and level of studies and career path. They should not only know what interests them, but also what they can achieve and where can they aim for at this first stage of preparation for the long journey to the future. Their performance in some lessons and generally at school, is the first criterion for the kind and particularly for the level of studies and professional hierarchy which they should be aiming for. Nevertheless, school performances do not constitute the absolute and unique criterion for a persons' future professional success. It is well known that, many great scientists were not very good students. If there exist a strong will, persistence and life goals for professional and social evolution, their performances might be enhanced radically. Regarding the issues discussed here, the power of will might be of more importance than any other personality element. Because *“When you want something very much, the whole universe conspires in helping you to achieve it”*<sup>2</sup>.

Abilities, aptitudes, ambition and specifically will, consist important criterions in selecting studies and professions. Together with the professional inclinations and interests, they constitute the core of the necessary self-knowledge, which the interested person must have during the pursuit of his professional future. Other personality features such as emotional intelligence and balance, diligence, perception, creativity, critical thought, logic, stamina, extroversion and introversion, ambitions, life values etc. are of less importance although they should not be ignored in particular cases. A complementary way to explore ones general abilities and special aptitudes, as well as other features of his/her personality, is through different types of ability and personality tests, which are considered necessary during the staff evaluation and selection stage for a job opening by a business firm.

### 3 Occupational perspectives, working conditions and payments

After gaining strong self-knowledge and getting to know well what they “want and can do”, strengths and weaknesses, as well as the special features of their personality, people should explore the world of work, with the help of career counsellors and after gathering valid information. In particular, they should gather reliable information about occupational perspectives on the local, national and international economic reality. They should be informed about the professions of the future and of the past, meaning which have positive perspectives and which appear to be degraded and begin to die out. They should check in which workplaces there is much or less competition and which specifications and difficulties might stand as an obstacle in the route s/he will choose to follow.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays that people face employment uncertainty and rapid post-evolution in technology, economy, employment and professions' content - occupational perspectives in the labour market, constitute a particularly important criterion. Generally, it is logical for average persons to choose from a variety of professions that suit them, those with better perspectives and to avoid those that are considered to be degraded and tend to die out in the labour market. Therefore, they choose to follow the way of the professions of the future and avoid those of

the past. According to recent research and many relative evidences, the majority of young people nowadays choose their studies or professions based on their perspectives and particularly on the security of guaranteed employment. The anxiety of finding a place in the present pale scenery of labour market is stronger than anything that can be said against this point of view. Nevertheless, regardless how strong this criterion is, it should not be the only one. It is necessary to quantify it with the other criterions and particularly with how much a personality suits to a profession. In this great life decision we discuss herein, if some professions do not suit ones character, his/her preferences and inclinations, these should not be selected regardless how good perspectives they have in the labour market or how good other facts such as family and financial situation are.

Working conditions and salaries, the kind of work, its content and the status of each profession, the working security as well as the hierarchical and career evolution perspectives, are other elements that also need to be explored when selecting studies and professions. These particular parameters are evaluated differently by every person according to their working values, personality and interests. They constitute part of gaining enough self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work that is required when selecting a job.

#### **4 Family and financial data**

Depending on the situation, family environment, family tradition and culture and economic background, are also important factors in selecting studies, profession, and career. Father's or mother's job or a family business is often a worthy and interesting perspective for young people in selecting their professional future. Nowadays in an extremely competitive world, it is wrong for children's personal interest to ignore the advantage given by family tradition, without letting this to lead to complacency.<sup>3</sup> Certain parents try to impose their desires and inhibitions to their children in reference with their studies and professions. Some young people are forced to study a science that is considered to be the vaulting horse for a social and financial development, such as doctor, engineer, lawyer or work in a family business. Nowadays though, such a pressure brings about completely opposite results from those expected. This means that the young people oppose against the older generations and particularly against those parents who are overprotective and sometimes oppressive. While in certain cases, parents might be right when they insist on the selection of a particular career for their children, they loose the fight due to their persistent and paternalistic way of acting.

Furthermore, even if it sounds unpleasant, according to the current standards we owe to be realistic on how much money can every family afford for the studies of their children. Relevant to this subject is also the place of residence or the country where young people think of working in the future. They first should investigate if the place is close to specific universities and if the local market offers career opportunities. The place where a university and/or college is based, plays a very important role in the selection of studies and this goes particularly to those families who have low income<sup>40</sup>. Of course, a young boy or girl can choose to study far from his hometown area as long as this choice is favoured by his/her character, family culture and financial capabilities. Generally, if such

choices are feasible financially, they should not be excluded. The perspective of returning to the home town can and should be encouraged. For this reason, in order to make a career choice, it is necessary to quantify the development of local market in relation to the national and international reality.

Regarding the financial dimension of the problem, it is pointed out that even though up to now the career guidance counsellors deal mostly with families that come from high or medium educational or financial level, the career guidance is more needed for people of low income. With an early and valid career guidance and counselling, consultants can offer young people the opportunity to develop financially and socially, therefore defeating any class and salary differences.

### 5 Educational factors

The structure of the educational system, its substructure, the educational directions, the study level, the examination systems, the selection procedure for other and/or higher studies, the influence of teachers in combination to the student performances, play also important role to the selection of studies, profession and career. When a student has very good performances at school it is logical to choose and enter a faculty with high admission grades such as famous medical or law schools. This should of course be in accordance with the fact that, this person wants to follow the particular profession and is well prepared for all the difficulties that s/he will face in such demanding career route. It is usually considered waste of human resources when a student has high student performances but ends up choosing studies of low admission grades.

### 6. Random events and the never ending conquest of knowledge

Random events, unexpected fortunate or unfortunate coincidences and chances, which everyone comes across, can play important role in career and personal life. It is crucial if a person is able to see when luck knocks his/her door in order to intervene correctly in his/her destiny and to ride on top of the waves. This of course should happen without harming other people. It also means that, one should not abandon the effort for constant self development, for conquering knowledge and skills required by the competitive world of current employment reality. It is well known that all *“goods are obtained with effort”* and that professional and life success is the reward for everyone’s efforts. This happens as it is not negated by the fact that, some means of mass media, focusing on a false and virtual reality, give hopes for easy and without effort conquest of success. The never ending conquest for knowledge is a life and joy source, the power of worthiness, success and creativity. During *“the journey to Ithaca the most important thing is the greatness of the journey itself...”*<sup>1</sup>.

### 7 The golden rule

The “golden rule” and the present contemporary interdisciplinary approach is a product of a perennial study of career guidance and counselling research and practice, in combination with the development and application of modern automatic career guidance tests (See [www.careergatetest.com](http://www.careergatetest.com)). The theory of the “golden rule” combines the aforementioned evaluations and leads to the

following basic ascertainment: *“people with high performances and strong will can choose from a wider range of professions that match with their personality, even from those that have negative perspectives or those that in their case do not include any positive factors such as family, financial and educational criteria. On the contrary, people with low performances, without any serious hopes of improvement and with weak will, is better to follow studies and professions that first of all match with their and secondly have good perspectives in the labour market or include other positive of the aforementioned criteria”*.

The higher student performances and level of will is, the wider is the possibility that the “risk” of selecting a profession represented by a negative mixture of the same factors. This means for example that, when a person with particularly high performances and talent in theatre and strong will persists in following the profession of an actor, in the end will probably succeed to have a satisfying career, even though the specific profession is a very antagonistic and with few job openings. If persons are sure about their choices, know what they want and what they can do, then they may be able to succeed. On the contrary, persons with low performances and not particularly strong will, whose parents or even they insist on becoming let's say a doctor (which is also a very difficult and competitive profession), probably they will end up in professional and personal dead ends. It is better if these persons choose professions that fit with their personality and have good occupational perspectives in the labour market or include other positive factors. Also, they should avoid professions that do not match their character even if they have good perspectives in the labour market (such as information technology), or include other determinative factors (as previously mentioned).

In the golden rule (which theory and practice of career guidance and counselling tries to enrich here), should be also added the ascertainment that, nowadays someone might be forced to change more than one profession in his/her career. Furthermore, today in the globalized and fast moving world, there is such a great range of professions that people can choose, without thinking one way or insisting on selecting only one profession. In reality, there is more than one profession matching to each person. If for any reason a person is not able to follow his/her first choice then s/he should not give up and move to the next preferable profession. *There is always the chance to find another profession passion if the first choice is unattainable*<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, under no circumstances s/he should choose one of those that repelled him/her from the beginning. . In any case what s/he should avoid (and this is a key point of the golden rule), is not to choose a profession or professions which is in complete contrast with his/her character and interests. To avoid a profession that does not match with a personality type of interests and inclinations is more important than choosing a profession that does. All persons should have an open occupational horizon and choose from a catalogue of professions that match with them.

They should also evaluate the importance of the other factors or criterions and definitely avoid professions which are completely incompatible to their character. In the last case professional failure is almost certain. While if they choose professions that stand second, third, forth etc., in his/her list, regarding



how much compatible are to their character, it is more possible to have a successful career especially if these professions include other positive factors or random events take place.

Many persons in their life journey might need to select different professions than their initial choice. This happens particularly nowadays, due to the rapid changes in current economic, social and labour surroundings. In any case though, they should not choose, it is pointed out again, a profession which is completely different from their personality or character. That is why, from an early stage, they must understand who they are and what they can do. What is their character, which professions fit with them and most important which ones do not. For example, if we assume that there are 1000 professions belonging to 17 large kindred groups, then they must draw a line until the sixth or probably the eighth category excluding everything underneath it.

Apart from the aforementioned elements, it is also noted that, in all professions of medium and particularly of high education and professional hierarchy, it is necessary to know how to use computers, to speak English and to constantly refresh general and special knowledge and experiences in a life long learning process. Of course we should never forget that an accomplished human being and successful professional is considered to be the person who has spiritual sensitivities and concerns, sticks to values and beliefs, searches education and knowledge, occupies himself with arts and literature or the protection of the environment, develops creative thinking, acts with dignity, morality and perception and performs positively for the general and his own good<sup>53</sup>.

## 8 The final decision for the selection of studies and of professions

After mentioning all these great steps, the conquest of self knowledge, the understanding of the world of work, of the occupational perspectives, the working conditions and rewards, family, economic, educational and other specific criteria, we move on to the next and most important step of everyones life: To choose the studies the profession and the career path they will follow, will mark them for the rest of their life, unless something changes completely. Having *“the brains and knowledge”*, one can *“take the responsibility of his/her own dreams, knowing that the best dreams are the ones that come true”*. The whole procedure, the steps taken until making this ultimate decision, must be accomplished with seriousness, cautiousness, deep thinking, with the help of valid career counsellors and by taking reliable, valid and contemporary tests of career selection.-guidance. Then windows will be wide open for anybody to become what s/he is and not what s/he thinks s/he is. To choose professions that really match him/her and which has requirements to be met. And with the combination of other circumstances and conditions, to have a successful career and a good life route<sup>14</sup>. *Because the future does not come on its own, if we do not do something about it.*<sup>6</sup>

## Footnotes

**5** *The saying “know thyself” is carved on a marble based in the Museum of Delphi in Greece. Initially it was mentioned by Chilon the Lakedemonios.*

**6** *«Humans are able to know themselves and become wise” Heraclitus. “Character and desires define the human actions” Aristotle.*

**7** *“You cannot obtain wisdom nor art if you do not obtain knowledge”, Democritus*

**8** *“All I know is that I know nothing”, Socrates*

**1** *“From all victories the first and best is to conquer yourself” Plato*

**9** *This is the well known saying of Paulo Coelho which complements the one of Confucius “When you know what you want everybody gives way”, or the one of Euripides “You chase your luck with great effort”, or of Winston Churchill “Never give up trying”, or that of an anonymous man “those who never try, never succeed”.*

**2** *“To forecast makes a man to be wise”. Epicharmos.*

**3** *“It is often more difficult to safeguard than to create the goods that you inherit” Demosthenes. “ You should work harder to safeguard the goods you inherit from your father”. Faust*

**4<sup>0</sup>** *It was once said that “If Bach was born in Congo and not in Saxony he would not have composed even one sonata, but he would have excel in a kind of local music”. Fernando Savater, Spanish philosophy professor.*

**1<sup>1</sup>** *“When you travel towards Ithaca, you should wish to have a long journey, full with adventures and knowledge.... Ithaca, the island of Odysseus, is an excellent poem by a great Greek poet, Konstantinos Kavafis and its main meaning is included in the above mentioned remarks. It may be also added here the common saying that “Knowledge is power”. “Knowledge is an end in itself and a window to work and life”, the Arabian saying “It is a mistake not to search for knowledge” and that of Karolos Koun, the theatre director. “Knowledge is the only catharsis”.*

**1<sup>2</sup>** *” If you do not have what you love the most, then you should try to love what you already have”.*

**5<sup>3</sup>** *According to Mahatma Gandhi, the basic life lines are that “you cannot have knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, politics without principle, pleasure without conscience and love without sacrifice”. According to Socrates, “Occupy yourself with music and have it as your mission”. “Even though first comes full stomach and then arts, life would be empty without arts”, Bertolt Brecht. “The development of humanity comes only by developing the spirit, Sigmund Freud. “It is only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself that you will realize your true potential”, taken from a letter written by Barak Obama to his two daughters, January 2009. John Maynard Keynes has said that “the best economist should have the sensitivity of an artist”, while Plato stated that “people should work and feel the music of life”.*



<sup>14</sup> *Do your vocation your vacation», Mark Twain said. “I look on that man as happy, who, when there is question of success, looks into his work for a reply.»*, said Emerson. *“Do your vocation a hobby and you will feel as if you have never worked»*, wrote Paulo Coelho.

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