

Career Planning

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ABSTRACT

Career planning consists of four stages: self-assessment, research, decision making, taking action. Enhancing the qualification of part-time students through the development of education is part of the career planning and is carried out through the same stages. A study carried out among the part-time students of the fourth year of the UCTM examines the issues of their career development and the motives for increasing their educational qualification are sought. The results show clarity, awareness and personal motivation of choice.

Keywords: Career Planning, Career Development, Career Goals, Career Paths, Personal Development.

Career planning

In theory and practice, there is still a different understanding of the meaning and definition of careers. The lack of conceptual clarity maintains ambiguity over a long period of time, making it difficult to develop theoretical understanding. Since Parsons [1], the terms career, vocation, and profession have often been used synonymously [2], although some authors emphasize that the current literature provides many realistic distinctions of contemporary understandings of terms of work, career, and vocation [3 - 5]. Traditional definitions have been criticized for limiting careers to working life, and later, some

researchers propose extending this conceptual definition to include new social, life-spanning roles and contexts.

This expansion is reflected in the career definition proposed by Super in 1974: "The sequence of the main positions occupied by a person throughout his pre-professional, professional and post-professional life; includes job-related roles such as those of a student, employee, and retired, along with additional professional, family, and civic roles" [6].

The shorter definition of M.B. Arthur, Hall and Lawrence described her career as „a growing series of work experiences of a person“ [7],

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again highlighting the centrality of the themes of work and time. The term „career“ is criticized for the Western middle class and because of the lack of relevance in cultures of less developed countries [8]. Over the past two decades, in this area of human behavior, the term „work“ has been applied to bring a more inclusive and less conceptual and culturally complex term [9 - 12]. Edgar Shine, widely recognized as one of the founders of modern organizational psychology, suggests that each one of us has a job orientation and that we are all approaching this work with a set of priorities and values [13]. Modern career outlooks also convey the notion of „unlimited career“ [14], defining it as a career without borders, which is a personal responsibility of individuals and based on their knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes [14].

In taking a professional future, career planning implements strategic planning and marketing concepts to achieve strategic efficiency. Career is a continuous process and needs to be constantly assessed. According to D. Hall, „Career planning is a continuous process in which a person determines their career goals and identifies the means to achieve them“ [15].

It is a particularly important process as it gives the necessary direction and clarity where a person wants to be in the future. This makes people aware of their strengths and weaknesses, skills and knowledge that are needed to achieve their goals in the future.

Much of human life goes into the effort to achieve the career goals set, so it is very important from the outset to make sure that the right steps

are taken, as well as the right planning. Although this is a well-known fact, marking it here is necessary because research shows that very few people have a clear idea of what they can and a clear vision of what they want to achieve. The majority of people are not sure what they want from life, and they do not plan their careers as they have no explicit goals. Here again, it is confirmed that career planning is the starting point of the career and gives life the true meaning and purpose.

The career planning process is seen in both literature and practice as „career development stages“ (Fig. 1) and „career development model“. Regardless of how the process is formulated, it consists of four main steps:

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is the first and most important step in choosing a profession or career planning. Formulating interests, skills, achievements and values is critical to self-assessment.

Hall offers two broad skills or “metacompetencies” [15] that relate to the modern, varied career identity - self-awareness and adaptability. He refers to them as metacompetences, as they allow the career actor „to learn how to learn“ [15]. The sense of identity and understanding are considered to be a key to the value of careers and to provide a secure personal base from which to experiment on the basis of changing external conditions. Adaptability involves the ability to change career and work behavior in a way that allows a person to succeed in a variety of potential contexts without the constant need for career

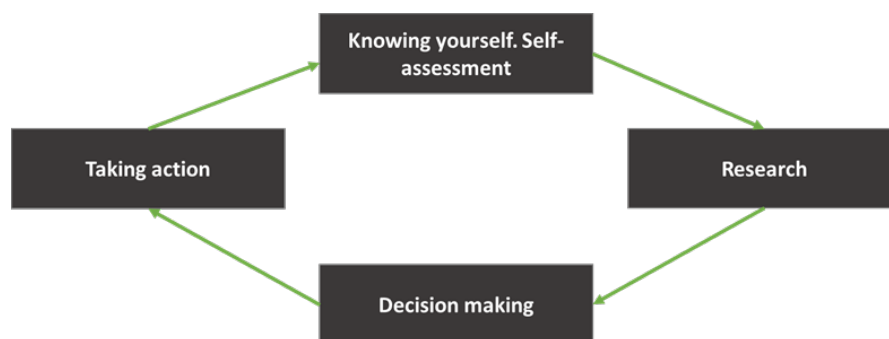


Fig. 1. Career planning stages.

development directed from outside.

With the skills of identity and adaptability, continuous reflection is seen as the necessary „fuel“ that evokes and develops the identity, values, assumptions and skills of an individual in the course of his career. In this way, reflection itself can be considered a necessary skill in the process of modern career conditions [15].

Study/Research

After self-assessment, one is informed about himself - about the skills, experience, attitudes, etc. that he possesses and on the basis of this information he can carry out his study of the opportunities offered by the labor market. In this regard, it is necessary to study the attitudes of the employers or economic counterparts to whom the individual is oriented; to examine whether its strengths adequately meet the requirements and the extent to which it is necessary to invest in the weaknesses through various trainings or other methods. It is also very important at this stage to look into the future of this profession - whether it will generate the expected earnings and what changes are anticipated in the short, medium and long-term borrowing requirements and any other assessments that are needed for making a decision.

Making a decision

After studying the opportunities and the factors they are associated with, it goes to the stage of

formulating the solution itself. This step requires the creation of clearly formulated concrete steps to achieve career development. Prior to this, however, good targeting is needed, and short-term goals are essential at this stage.

Taking action

One of the most difficult steps for people is to take action. At this stage, careful follow-up of the formulated activities is needed to track progress.

Upgrading of the qualification as part of the career plan of the students at the University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy in Sofia

Enhancing qualifications is one of the main levers with which people are moving towards the ultimate goal in their careers. It can be planned in advance or need to be realized in the career development process of the individual due to changes in the internal or external environment.

A study conducted among 45 part-time students in the fourth course at the University of Sofia University in 2017 found that the increase of the qualification is clearly realized and is part of the career plan of the students.

The survey results (Fig. 2) show that 83 % of respondents have clear professional goals that they seek to follow, and only 6 % have no clarity about their professional goals.

The undergraduate students from the UCTM

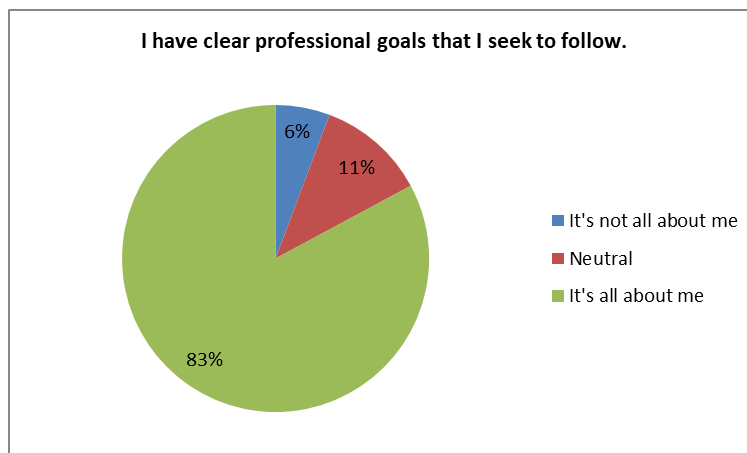


Fig. 2. Clarity of professional goals.

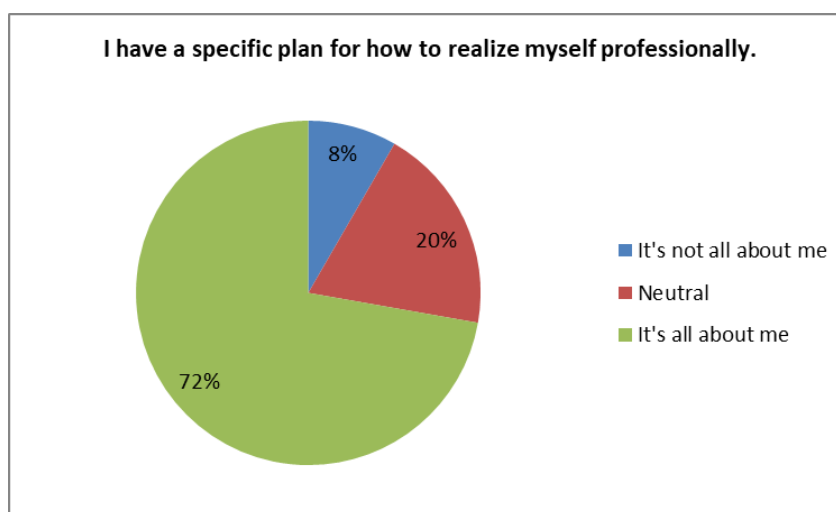


Fig. 3. Availability of a career plan.

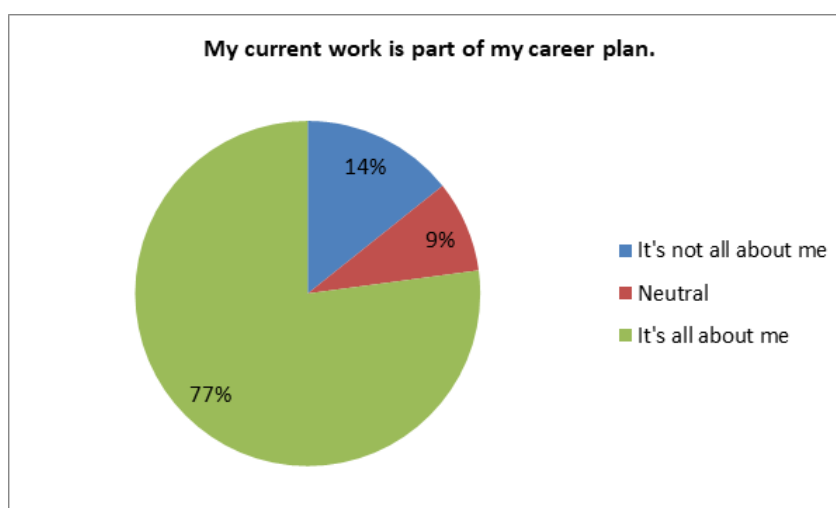


Fig. 4. Actuality of the momentum commitment to the professional realization plan.

have a specific plan for professional realization - 72 % of the respondents (Fig. 3), except for clear professional purposes. Only 8 % do not have such a plan, and 20 % of respondents cannot judge whether they have one.

An interesting point in the survey results is the high percentage (77 %) of respondents for whom they work, and upgrading are part of their career plan (Fig. 4).

The absentees are aware of what they have to accomplish in order to be satisfied with their professional realization (Fig. 5) - that is the case for 78 % of respondents.

A significant share of survey respondents (89

%) are constantly striving to raise their knowledge and skills so they can compete on the labor market, (Fig. 6).

Occupational students from the UCTM are also striving for a stable career - 86 %, (Fig. 7).

Analysis and conclusions:

The study carried out amongst the students in the UCTM established:

The tendency of clarity of career goals, the necessary efforts to achieve them and the striving for a stable and sustainable career. This is the main reason for increasing their qualification by building up the training.

The improvement of the qualification is clear

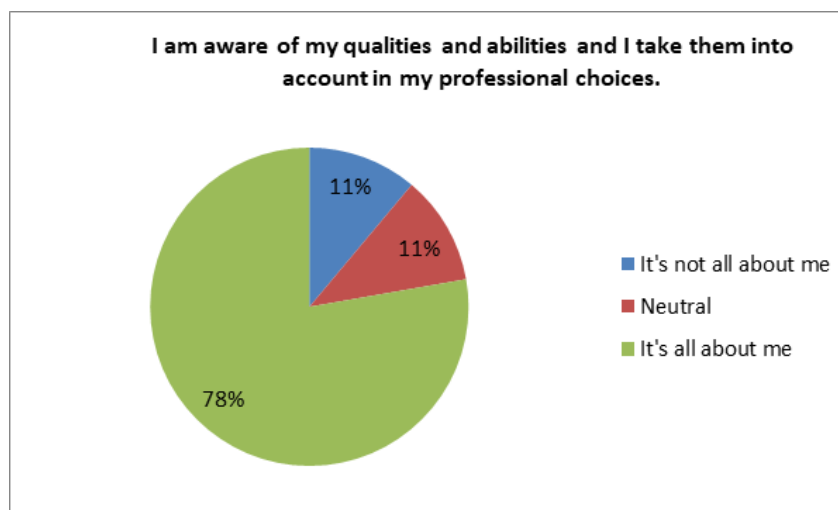


Fig. 5. Clarity of achievements needed to meet professional realization.

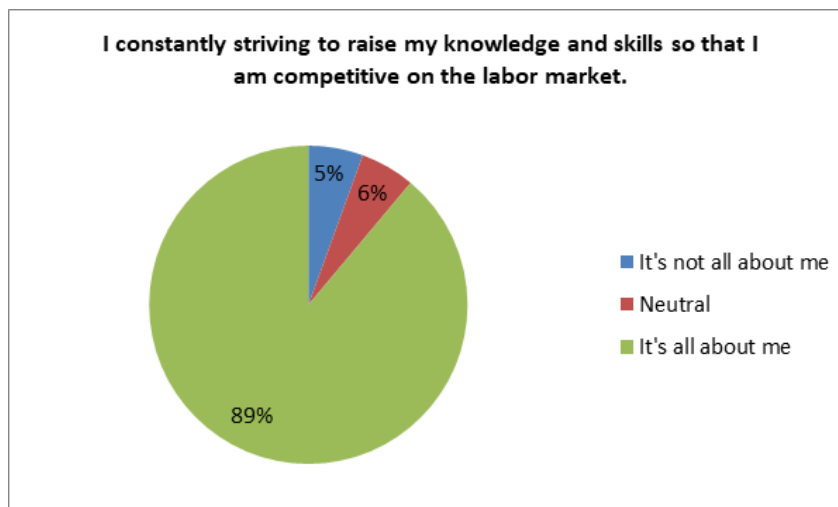


Fig. 6. Attempting to increase knowledge and skills to compete on the labor market.

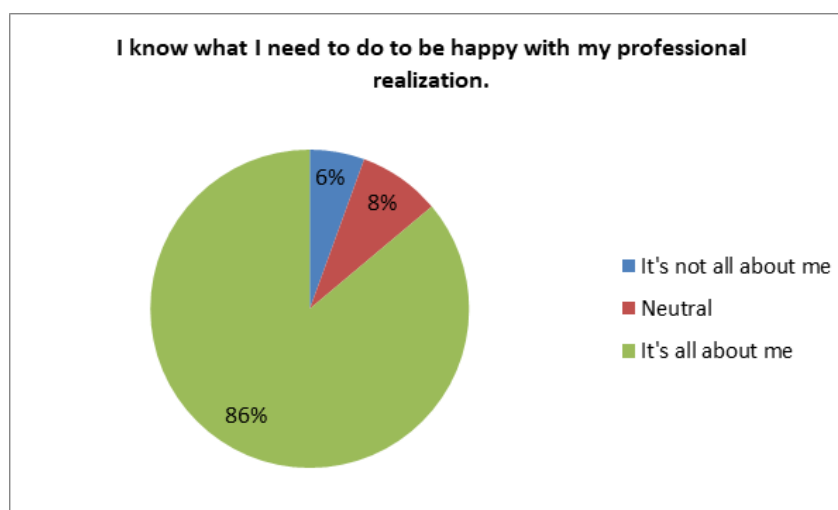


Fig. 7. Striving for a stable career.

and conscious. It is part of a pre-drawn career path.

The increase of the qualification of the part-time students from the UCTM is a means of achieving pre-defined goals for professional realization.

CONCLUSIONS

In a more in-depth analysis of the situation of part-time students, some additional conclusions can also be drawn:

First, the undergraduate students already have a professional background behind them, on the basis of which they can better identify their career opportunities and needs.

Secondly, this experience gives them feedback on the need to upgrade the qualification.

Thirdly, raising their qualifications is a solution that is taken as a result of the already acquired professional experience and the availability of personal motivation for development in the specific sphere and/or profession. This is one of the conditions that distinguish part-time students from ordinary students - professional experience.

The increase of the qualification of the undergraduate students in the UCTM through further education takes place simultaneously with the professional realization, ie. there is firstly an unmet need or unfulfilled requirement related to the achievement of the professional goals that gave rise to the motive for overcoming them. This is the main reason for the clarity of the need to take concrete actions in the career plan.

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