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Assessment of learning outcomes of a career-learning program

PR4. Training - module 4

Responsible partner: University of Valladolid.

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Introduction

We understand career learning as the comprehensive process that seeks to measure and assess the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes related to the professional career of primary school students. This evaluation has as its main objective to provide meaningful feedback on the progress and growth of students in their preparation for the world of work.

This process is based on the idea that education should not only focus on academic learning, but also on the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge that are relevant to professional success. This evaluation focuses on aspects such as self-knowledge, career exploration, the development of professional skills and preparation for the transition to the world of work.

Through the career learning assessment developed in the PRIME project, students can reflect on their interests, strengths and professional goals, and use this information to make decisions about their future. In addition, this assessment provides valuable information for educators and guardians, who can tailor and enhance educational experiences and professional learning opportunities to meet students' needs.

To carry it out, different methods and tools have been involved in the evaluation, such as questionnaires, interviews, performance evaluations, work portfolios and feedback from professionals in the labor field. These approaches allow obtaining a holistic vision of the progress and competences developed by students in relation to their professional career.

Purposes of the Career Learning assessment

Evaluating the learning outcomes of a project based on career learning is crucial to determine the effectiveness of the activities and ensure that students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their academic and professional future.

This process allows us to determine if the program is aligned with the intended goals and meets two main requirements: if students are achieving the desired results and if the program is designed and implemented effectively.

Once the two requirements of the program have been met, the evaluation processes provide highly relevant information for educational professionals:

- Provides information on the strengths and weaknesses of the program and activities that take place in the classroom to achieve professional learning development.

- It helps to identify areas in which students excel and areas in which improvement can be made. This information can be used to make decisions about curriculum improvements or instructional strategies in future courses.
- Evaluation data allows project implementers and tutors to make evidence-based decisions to improve the program. If specific learning outcomes do not consistently meet standards, adjustments to the curriculum, instructional methods, or assessment strategies may be made to address identified areas of improvement.
- The evaluation of learning outcomes should be an ongoing process, allowing for continuous improvement of the professional learning program. Regular assessment cycles and data analysis allow educators to monitor trends, track progress over time, and make adjustments as needed to improve student learning outcomes.
- We can assess individual student performance and progress throughout the project. This also allows students to be identified who may need additional support or intervention to ensure their success, not just issues related to future orientation, but learning issues.
- Become aware of responsibilities to stakeholders such as accreditation bodies, employers, and students themselves. It provides evidence that the program meets the necessary standards and produces graduates who possess the required knowledge and skills.

Theories and approaches related to the evaluation of Career Learning

There are various theories and approaches related to the evaluation of "career learning" within the educational field, they provide us with conceptual frameworks to understand and carry out this process in a holistic and systematic way. Here are some relevant theories and approaches:



Donald Super's Theory of Vocational Development

This theory holds that career development is a process that occurs throughout life. Super (1953) identified different stages of development and factors such as interests, abilities, values, and personality that influence vocational choices and satisfaction. In this way, he identifies the phases through which the person develops a self-concept, the translation of the self-concept to a vocational self-concept and, then, the relationship with himself through working life:

1. Exploration Phase (subject's relationship with the context that produces individual behaviors).
2. Self-differentiation phase (as the individual develops, it leaves
differentiating from objects and people).
1. Identification phase (approach of the individual to objects and people that
produce gratification).
1. The performance of functions (the performance during the life of the subject of different
functions that develop an image of himself).

1. The evaluation of the results (confrontation with reality for a verification of the self).

In terms of assessment, this theory emphasizes the importance of understanding students' individual characteristics and needs to help them explore and make informed career decisions.

Results-based approach

This approach focuses on the evaluation of the results and achievements achieved by students in terms of goals and learning objectives related to their career. The degree of mastery of specific skills and knowledge is evaluated, as well as the impact generated in the workplace. This approach seeks to measure and demonstrate the effectiveness and value of students' career preparation. Among the studies that support this approach, Astigarraga, E., & Mongelos, A. (2020) established milestones to take this approach into account:

- Defining clear goals: These goals must be measurable and oriented towards the results you want to achieve.
- Identifying Indicators of Success: Define indicators that help you measure progress toward goals. These indicators can be quantitative or qualitative and must be specific to each goal.
- Gap Analysis: Evaluate the gaps between current skills and knowledge and those required to achieve your goals. Identify the areas in which you need to develop and improve to close those gaps. This will allow you to focus on the specific skills you need to acquire or strengthen.

Professional orientation

It is a support and counseling process that helps individuals understand and develop their vocational identity, explore different career options, and make informed career decisions. This approach is supported by reports such as the one published in 2021 by C Percy, A Amegah, N Chambers "Building the foundations for success". The authors of the study confirm how children under five years of age and older already present established stereotypes about the jobs that a person could perform based on their gender, ethnicity or social origin. In addition, they stress that not supporting academic and professional guidance in Primary School in a systematic and sustainable way can lead to a difficult entry into the labor market.



Among the scientific evidence issued in the report that shows that career, guidance produces positive results.

- 82% of some 9,300 children agreed, "I now understand how learning math/English/science can be useful in many jobs" after participating in a career-related learning event.
- 78% of some 1,200 children in schools of economically disadvantaged students stated that "now I know that there are many jobs available for me when I grow up"; and 74%, "I feel more confident about what I can do after today's activity."
- 25% of some 7,900 children declared that they had changed their minds about their professional future after a series of activities during a day.
- A study of 5,000 children aged 9 to 10 in the United Kingdom found benefits in career aspirations, school attendance and achievement, especially among more disadvantaged children.

Among the conclusions of this report, we find:

- Increases motivation and educational results. Boys and girls discover the importance of learning for their academic and professional future, and develop more positive attitudes towards school, especially in the case of minors from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Expand professional horizons. The academic and professional orientation guarantees that the little ones do not rule out professional options beforehand, since the details and benefits of all the opportunities they have are explained to them.

- Improves social mobility. Students meet real role models who inspire them and show them that a person's past does not determine their future.
- These theories and approaches provide conceptual foundations and methodological approaches for the evaluation of career learning. It is important to select and adapt the approaches that are most relevant and appropriate to the characteristics and objectives of the educational and professional context in which the evaluation is applied.

Types of assessment for Career Learning

There are several types of evaluation that can be used to evaluate these types of projects.



It is important to use a combination of different assessments to get a full picture of primary school students' professional learning and development in the context of Career Learning.

Each type of evaluation provides valuable information and serves different purposes in the evaluation process.

- **Formative evaluation:** This type of evaluation is carried out during the learning process and aims to provide continuous feedback to students. It is used to monitor your progress, identify areas for improvement, and provide opportunities for adjustment and development. Formative evaluation can include comments, project reviews, feedback activities, and group discussions.

- **Summative evaluation:** This evaluation is carried out at the end of a learning period or of a project and its objective is to determine the level of achievement of the students in relation to the objectives of the career learning. It is used to make decisions about the proficiency and overall performance of students. Examples include final exams, final presentations, project evaluations, and evaluation rubrics.
- **Self-assessment:** Self-assessment allows students to reflect on their own learning and professional development. It gives them the opportunity to assess their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and set personal goals. Students can use quizzes, reflective journals, portfolios, and other methods to self-assess and self-regulate their learning.
- **Peer Assessment:** This approach involves students evaluating the work and performance of their peers. Peer evaluation encourages collaboration, the exchange of ideas and the joint construction of knowledge. Students can use rubrics, feedback forms, or group discussions to conduct the peer assessment.
- **Portfolio-Based Assessment:** Portfolios are collections of work, projects, reflections, and evidence of learning that students have completed during their career learning experience. The evaluation is carried out through the analysis of the elements included in the portfolio, which can be reviewed by the professors or external evaluators. This evaluation allows a comprehensive view of student development over time.

Career Learning Assessment Methods and Techniques

There are various evaluation methods and techniques that can be used to evaluate Career Learning in educational projects that take place in the classroom.

- **Interviews:** Individual or group interviews allow obtaining detailed information about students' experiences in the work context and their related learning. Questions can focus on skill development, knowledge acquisition, and practical application of learned concepts.
- **Questionnaires and surveys:** Questionnaires and surveys are useful tools for collecting quantitative and qualitative information on the perception and satisfaction of students in relation to their learning in the workplace. Closed questions (multiple choice) and open questions can be used to get more detailed answers.



- Direct observation: Direct observation involves witnessing the performance of students in real work situations or in simulations. It allows to evaluate practical skills, professional attitudes and behaviors in an authentic environment.
- Portfolio analysis: Portfolios are collections of work and evidence that students have done during their learning in the workplace. Evaluators can analyze the projects, reports, reflections, and other types of evidence included in the portfolio to assess the progress and level of proficiency of the students.
- Performance evaluation: This approach involves evaluating the performance of students in real work situations, using predefined criteria and standards. It can include the evaluation of specific skills, the fulfillment of objectives and the quality of the results obtained.

- Feedback from supervisors or mentors: Feedback provided by supervisors or mentors who work directly with students is a valuable source of evaluation. Your feedback and evaluations may focus on student performance, professional growth, and areas for improvement.
- Metacognition Activities: Students reflect on their own learning process, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and effective learning strategies. This helps them develop a greater sense of awareness and responsibility for their own learning.

It is important to select the assessment methods and techniques that are most appropriate for the Career Learning context and specific assessment objectives. Combining different assessment approaches can provide a more complete and accurate picture of student learning and professional development.

Instruments for effective evaluation



To carry out an effective evaluation of the learning service, various instruments and tools can be used to collect relevant information about the learning process and results. Some common instruments used in the evaluation of service learning are mentioned below:

- Questionnaires or surveys: These are used to collect quantitative and qualitative data about the service learning experience. They may include questions related to student satisfaction, the perception of the impact on the community, the development of skills and competencies, among other relevant aspects.
- Projects: Students carry out a project related to the subject studied, applying the knowledge and skills acquired. They can be presentations, reports, research, modeling, among others.

The projects allow evaluating critical thinking, creativity and the ability to apply what has been learned.

- Interviews: Individual or group interviews allow you to collect detailed and in-depth information about the service learning experience. Open-ended questions can be used to explore student perceptions, challenges, and achievements, as well as elicit testimonials about impact in the community.
- Evaluation rubrics: These are structured tools that establish clear and measurable criteria to evaluate student performance in specific areas, such as teamwork, communication, critical reflection, among other relevant competencies for service learning.
- Portfolios or Evidence Folders: Students can collect and present a selection of service learning related work, projects or reflections in a portfolio. These portfolios provide concrete evidence of the learning and impact generated during the service.
- Direct Observation: Teachers or evaluators may conduct direct observations during service learning to assess student performance and interaction with the community. They may use checklists or rating scales to record and rate specific aspects of the service.
- Analysis of products or results: The products or results generated through the learning service can be evaluated, such as reports, presentations, projects or solutions to real problems. These products can be reviewed and evaluated according to previously established criteria.

It is important to adapt the evaluation instruments to the objectives, needs and specific characteristics of the service-learning project. In addition, confidentiality and ethics must be considered when collecting and analyzing the information collected. The combination of different instruments can provide a more complete and accurate evaluation of service learning and its results.

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