



COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND ITS MULTIPLE ASPECTS: DEVELOPMENT OF AN ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT TO FAVOR STUDENTS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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Abstract

This work presents a study whose main purpose was the development of simple, concise, fast and affordable assessment instrument that favors the decision-making process about the areas of the students attending the 2nd cycle of studies of the Communication Sciences, of the Catholic University of Portugal. The development of the instrument was based on the Theory of Vocational Personality (Holland, 1958, 1959), one of the most important contemporary career theories, which aims to explain the relationship between the different personality types and the professional environment chosen by each individual. Initially, interviews were conducted with the coordinators of the degree and of the master's degree in Social Communication, as well as a current student from each of the 6 possible areas of choice and alumni who were already in the work environment. Some official documents were also analyzed on the objectives, structure, contents, and competencies related to each of the different areas. Based on this data collection, we constructed some items that focus on interests (what the person knows/wants to learn), skills (what the person does/wants to learn how to do), and in future professional contexts (where the person intends to integrate his/herself into the labor market). A pilot study was carried out with these items, in which a set of students with their choice of area already completed was invited to fill out this experimental version, to verify the calibration of the instrument in the identification of the respective area. After, the final version of the assessment instrument was developed and administered to a new sample of students, confronting their options of choice before completing the questionnaire with the final result obtained by it. All of these different phases and outcomes from qualitative and quantitative studies will be presented throughout this work, and implications will also be drawn on the importance of developing assessment tools that respond to the specific needs of people and contexts.

Keywords: assessment instruments; interests; skills; professional contexts; communication sciences.

Study 1 – Development of the assessment instrument

Interviews were organized to collect information related to the objectives, interests, necessary competences and working contexts of each academic strand;

Method

Interviews: four students of the undergraduate degree, one of each strand (Social/Journalistic, Organizational, Cultural and Visual), five Master's students, one from each strand (CMA, COL, MJ, INM and CTC), as well as to the coordinators of the two study cycles. It was not possible to interview a student of PC, since the course has not opened for the last two consecutive years.

Results

A detailed documental study on the Degree in Social and Cultural Communication (DSCC) and the Master in Communication Sciences (MCS) was done (objectives, curricular plans, programs of curricular units of each strand and possible working contexts);

The items of the questionnaire were elaborated for three distinct sections: Interests (what the person knows or wants to learn), Competencies (what the person does or wants to learn how to do), and future professional contexts (where the person intends to integrate into the job market).

Study 2 – Reflexive conversation

The main purpose of this study was to verify the calibration of the assessment instrument in the identification of the respective area/strand.

Method

The method of reflective conversation was used, that is, while some students who had already made their choice regarding the field of Communication Sciences proceeded to complete the questionnaire, they commented on its instructions, as well as the items that constitute it, to see if it was necessary introduce any changes in order to make it more understandable. As no change was suggested, we proceeded to the pilot study.

Results

The results obtained by four of the six participants were congruent with their personal preferences in terms of pursuing studies by certain strands of Communication Sciences. - The other two results did not coincide with what the participants were studying but rather with the result that they indicated in second plane: One is in INM and had as first result MJ, but he wanted for his future online journalism in the area of digital games. The other is in MJ and as first result obtained PC, but in the future wants to take a PhD in political journalism.

Study 3 – Pilot study

Method

* QICC-CC online is organized in four sections: - **Preferences:** place in order of preference the variants of the area of CS (CMA, COL, MJ, INM, CTC and PC), from 1 (his/her preference) to 6 (his/her lower preference). - **Interests** (29 items): assign the score of "2" to the statements that are very true to themselves, "1" to statements that are relatively true to themselves, and "0" to statements that do not describe them. - **Skills** (35 items): "2" means that they consider the competencies crucial to the strand they want to follow; "1" if they are not sure if skills will be needed; and "0" if they consider the competences irrelevant for the strand that intend to follow - **Professional Contexts** (24 items): "2" means that the contexts are of interest; "1" that contexts may be of interest; and "0" that contexts do not interest for professional future * Quotation was made, generating the three areas with the highest scores (the results of the questionnaire can be compared with the Preferences part)

Results

There were 20 participants whose first result is the first preference they pointed out at the beginning of the questionnaire; Five participants obtained the first three results equal to their preferences (same sequence); 13 participants already attend the master's degree, of which seven obtained as the first result the one they had indicated as the first Preference.

Conclusion

Most of the participants obtained, in the results, the strands indicated in their Preferences, even if not in the order they indicated or in their entirety (the three highest results). This allows us to verify that the instrument developed for the accomplishment of this study really measures what we intend to measure, and so it can become very useful for the decision-making process of the students of Degree in Social and Cultural Communication of the FCH-UCP. Even if students already know what strand they want to pursue in the Master of Communication Sciences, this instrument can help them to confirm their choice. It is possible to highlight as a limitation of this study the fact that the number of participants in this study is not the most adequate, since we were only able to obtain six participants in the study of reflective conversation, and 47 participants in the online pilot study

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