

## **Comprehensive vocational professional orientation for naturopathic students in the Higher University Institutes of Ecuador.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Vocational guidance has long been considered an essential task in the training process; the psychological, educational and pedagogical sciences have shed much light on this subject. A documentary study was carried out, using the historical-logical, historical comparative, analysis and synthesis, theoretical systematization method, with the purpose of analyzing the situation of the subject of vocational guidance in Latin America and in turn, in Ecuador to see how it would be possible from these theoretical references to configure a process of comprehensive vocational guidance in students of Naturopathy in the Higher University Institutes of Ecuador.

**Keywords:** Vocational professional orientation; Formative process; Technologists; Naturopathy.

## **Introduction**

The training of professionals is considered a task of the highest order from the social and political point of view, it has to do with the development, level, evolution and balance of the professional pyramid of a country, it emphasizes above all, in one of the most

elementary human rights: Education, and this in turn, becomes the main indicator of human development, but it also allows us to assess the direction of socio-cultural and economic development in the light of scientific-technical advances and the pedagogical and social model in question, which justifies why it is not only a concern of the state, the government, but also of the family, the school, and the students themselves.

The technological and scientific advances of the current world of the 21st century show that the labor market is facing serious difficulties in terms of training and professional preparation in many careers, both technical and university, and that it is a central requirement to access more and better paid jobs, although some positions require special requirements that are achieved by obtaining certified degrees for technical performance.

One of the careers that needs an adequate vocational professional orientation process is the Naturopathic Technology in Ecuador, precisely because of the large number and variety of conditions and pathologies it addresses and above all, because of the preventive therapeutic work from an early age, hence the need to train a very well prepared technologist with a broad technical background.

On this basis, the following scientific problem was outlined: how to contribute to the development of professional-vocational orientation in students of the Naturopathy career?

The objective of this research is to evaluate the current state of the professional-vocational orientation for the adequate application in the integral formative process of the students who enroll in the Naturopathy career in the Higher University Institutes of Ecuador.

One thing should be clear, due to the scientific-technological development of this subject in the world today, it is not possible to design any work system of professional-vocational guidance if the main historical background and theoretical references that can guarantee credibility and scientific certainties are not taken into consideration when taking them as theoretical-methodological platforms of the pedagogical work in the subject of professional guidance.

For Latin America, it must be recognized that in the 20th and 21st centuries, theoretical-methodological studies on the subject of professional-vocational guidance have advanced a lot, thanks to which it is possible to design a coherent plan of action in synergy with the socioeconomic, cultural, scientific-technological conditions, from which the Naturopathy career is nourished.

## Development

Orientation is a vital need of the human being, it facilitates the development of cognitive, affective, volitional and motivational processes in the subjects, leads to subordinate motives and determine the structure of the future tendency, which includes the satisfaction of needs and stabilizes the motivational sphere of the subject, since he/she orients his/her behavior towards the dominant motives.

"Motivation in the adolescent and young person is more selective, and develops as a process in relation to values, needs, ideals and others" (Torres, 2003, p.34), but when it comes to motivations towards a career, a better planned and organized orientation work is imposed towards the achievement of the education of the subject's vocation, therefore, it is an educational task prioritized in the pedagogical process.

The researchers, Cuban and Angolan respectively Matos Columbié and Yoba Clever (2018, p.21) in their research highlight that "(...) for any analysis on vocational guidance, it is necessary to first assess some theoretical-conceptual elements on a discipline from which it stems, which is Educational Guidance". It is worth clarifying that previously, another specialist in this area of knowledge, Recarey Fernández (2005, p.1), quoted by Matos Columbié (2003), had already stated that:

*"Educational guidance (...) is considered a discipline and a professional field, but it cannot be analyzed without taking into account its historical evolution, which has by no means been linear, since it has been affected by social conditions, by the specificities of the countries and by the scientific and technical development achieved by mankind".*

Recarey Fernández (2005, pp.1-3), quoted by Matos Columbié, (2003) who has studied the phenomenon of educational guidance and its relationship with vocational and professional issues, makes it clear that

*."In its beginnings, Guidance was very much marked by vocational aspects, so much so that its limits were not very precise (...). In the 30s of the twentieth century Counseling emerged, a term used to define the psycho-pedagogical*

*process aimed at helping the subject in the proper understanding of vocational information in relation to their own aptitudes, interests and expectations (...)"*

These ideas are of great methodological value, since it is clear that the objective of guidance went beyond the vocational limit and entered the educational process in general as a task. In 1932, the works of Brewer appeared, and this author was able to identify two independent and systemic categories, and these were guidance and education. Suffice it to say that both categories are intertwined within two different processes, but with similar objectives and goals, and hence the systemic interrelationship often allows one process to be seen as diluted in the other, which allowed the Spanish researcher Gabaza, (1994), to identify the two categories. Gabaza, (1994, p.3), affirmed that "by guiding one educates and by educating one orients" quoted by Matos Columbié, (2003)

This conception of Gabaza, (1994) is intertwined in our opinion with the conceptions of Recarey Fernández (2005); Matos Columbié and Yoba Clever (2018) assume that educating is a more general process, it is much more than instructing; but they emphasize that teachers and professors are considered pedagogically speaking natural agents of guidance; logically it is that they also consider that the curriculum is the expeditious and natural way through which the guiding objectives and goals of education are achieved, and the guidance process covers the different educational stages, so in each of them it must be developed as an educational objective of incalculable value.

Thus, it can be concluded that vocational guidance became an independent branch of educational guidance and, given the boom acquired, it strengthened educational guidance, given that it became independent as a scientific discipline with its own objects of study, tasks, methods, theories, and gave strength to educational guidance, which then began to function as a general discipline that integrates aspects such as sexual, educational, educational, educational, psycho-pedagogical.

Currently, in this stage of scientific and technological development achieved by the educational, psychological and pedagogical sciences, there are many and varied criteria around the definition of career guidance, which is really the interest of this work. There are many terms that are sometimes used independently, differently, or to name the same phenomenon, for example in the USA, "it is called career guidance; in Europe (Spain and France) career orientation and career education, in Latin America, Africa the term career guidance is used". A. Simoes Andre (2019, p.10), but Rodriguez Moreno (2004, p. 1),

cited by Matos Columbié and Yoba Clever, (2018) offers her arguments for understanding this problematic,

*"(...) Both in Europe and in other transcontinental countries, vocational training came first and then, as an adjuvant discipline, vocational guidance emerged as a tool and instrument for directing students of technical studies towards the world of work (...). It is therefore clear that there was a difference in quality and depth between vocational guidance and career education".*

González Bello, (2008, p.1), points out that in Latin America:

*"Career guidance and guidance professionals in Latin America have had a trajectory, although short, quite significant and transcendent in the development of our peoples. It is appropriate to point out that this First Latin American Congress of Guidance Professionals in Brazil coincides with the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the creation, in 1947, in Rio de Janeiro, of the National Institute of Vocational Selection and Guidance, by the renowned psychologist Emilio Mira y López (Gavilán, 2006; Melo-Silva et al., 2004). At this point it is also fair to recognize that in 1931 the first state service of Professional Orientation was created in Sao Paulo by Lourenço Filho (Carvalho, 1995; cited by Melo-Silva, 2004)".*

Venezuela, which has devoted studies to career guidance, has long shown interest in the subject and has developed a formal pedagogy for the training of guidance counselors, Vera (2003). Chile, emphasizes the idea that changes cannot be faced only with attitudes and technical roles. Guidance requires generating people with "critical awareness, self-reflective, emancipatory, focused on daily action" Olivera (2004, p.2). Brazil, according to Melo-Silva et al. (2004, p. 35. Cited by González Bello, (2008) states that:

*"(...) invite to face some weaknesses of the Guidance and of which we can mention: 1) lack of clarity in the definition of the competences of the educational professional counselor in the field of Pedagogy and Psychology careers; 2) absence of effective public policies that make more effective the implementation of services destined to the majority of the population; 3) absence of professional training programs in Professional Guidance; 4) insufficient research of evaluative nature on the intervention procedures and their results".*

Mexico, in its studies and contributions, clearly bets on putting an end to the developmentalist model of guidance, which only intends to turn "vocational guidance into an instrument at the service of the productive apparatus" (López Cardoso (2004, p. 23. Cited by González Bello, (2008), this is a function of the individual being at the disposal of the economic development policies proposed by the rulers in the different governments, but also, it is a way of putting the individual in tune with all the scientific development that from the theoretical-methodological point of view, psychology and pedagogy contribute today to this subject.

In the studies of González Bello, (2008, pp. 3-5), he points out -which we agree with and assume in this research because we consider it to be of great value in this thematic area- that in Latin America professional orientation possesses:

When consulting the bibliography on this subject in America and the Caribbean, Cuba appears, where apparently this field of research and action has acquired a great theoretical and methodological development, vocational guidance and vocational training are conceived, many authors such as González (1986) González Maura (1993); Del Pino (1993) Matos Columbié (2003 - 2023), S. Recarey, (2005) and many other authors who investigate this subject, have raised their own definitions based on the conceptions but the following stand out: J., Del Pino (1993 - 2017) and V. González Maura (1993 - 2009), who are the two authors that are commonly cited in this thematic and are cited by Matos Columbié, (2003). The conceptions of these two authors together with those of Matos Columbié (1995 - 2023) form, in our opinion, an important triad, which will be assumed in our conceptions on the development of professional orientation in the Naturopathic career in Ecuador. González Maura, (2004, p.4) defines that:

"(...) professional guidance is a specific educational process aimed at achieving the professional self-determination of the human being, it is a process aimed at ensuring that the guidance counselor directs the guidance process to the development of the motivational and cognitive sphere of the student's personality (knowledge, skills, motives and professional interests), and to the development of the subject's self-esteem (independence, perseverance and flexibility), which will facilitate his/her professional performance. It is a process that takes place throughout a person's life, beginning in childhood and culminating in the individual's insertion in the labor market".

For Del Pino (1993, p. 14) quoted by Matos Columbié, (2003):

"(...) professional orientation as the "Relation of help established with the student to facilitate the process of development of the student's professional identity, through different techniques and ways integrated to the general educational process, according to the evolutionary stage and the specific situation in which he/she finds him/herself".

When studying the conceptions of Matos Columbié (2003, p. 53), who was trained under the aegis of Del Pino, and of González Maura, from the theoretical systematization carried out in his doctoral thesis and in later research and published works, he identified a single concept, which he called Vocational-Professional Guidance (VPO),

*"A multifactorial process aimed at vocation education, to establish a helping relationship whereby the learner is offered ways, methods and procedures for searching and finding a suitable place within the system of professions and learns to choose one in a self-determined and conscious manner in line with social needs."*

It should be noted that for Matos Columbié (2003, p. 26), having unified criteria and categories, marks a new route in this theoretical studies platform, as he leaves with meridian clarity three things of great value, for example:

1. He assumed as referents aspects related to the fact that *"(...) vocation is not born, it becomes, the subject needs socialization through a process of activity-communication, related to the world of professions. Any orientation towards professions under certain circumstances is aimed at educating professional interests"*.
2. Matos Columbié (2003, p. 22) emphasizes the need to work on professional orientation towards careers considered social priorities: *"Those careers that define the socioeconomic development of a territory and that are not always among the first choices and are even rejected for enrollment (...), but become indispensable careers in society"*.
3. It offers a new approach which Matos Columbié (2003, p. 26) the sociopersonological approach conceived as

*"(...) the general methodological orientation of the VPO process, which starts from educating from the formative process in the pre-university the socio-political motivations towards professions considered as social priorities, as a condition that allows the student to self-determine and consciously choose one of them. That is to say, to personalize these needs to contribute to the territorial socio-economic development, which also satisfies his professional interests but as a personality involved with society, so that the vocation is attributed its historical-social determination. It is therefore to attribute socio-educational utility to the VPO process."*

This analysis leads to assess how this phenomenon is being approached in Ecuador, where there are a variety of study, but the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2015, p. 7) in the Vocational and Professional Guidance Manual for Counseling Departments makes it clear:

*"Vocational and professional orientation (VPO) is a dynamic, continuous and progressive process, which is carried out during all stages of formation of the student body. The VPO is based on two components: vocational and professional. The life project is a personal construction that takes into account the vocational and professional decisions made by a student".*

Vocational and Professional Guidance (VPO) in Ecuador is conceived as *"(...) a practice carried out in the educational field that has evolved in recent decades. If we stop to think about how this process was carried out when we were students, we will surely find important differences between what used to be done years ago and what is being done nowadays".* Ministry of Education (2015, p. 8)

According to the Internet University, Unir (2021) in Ecuador, the beginnings of vocational and professional orientation date back to the 1950s. The most relevant legislative dates in its evolution are the following:

- 1967: Resolution 2030, of June 13, of the Ministry of National Education, providing for the organization of educational and vocational guidance services in middle-level centers.
- 1977: Education and Culture Act, which provides for the creation of development plans aimed at vocational qualification.



- 1990: Approval of the General Regulations for Educational, Vocational and Welfare Guidance.
- 1996: Organic Functional Regulations of the Ministry of Education and Culture, modifying the name of the Department to National Division of Educational, Vocational and Student Welfare Guidance.
- 2007: the Model of Educational, Vocational, Professional and Student Welfare Guidance for Basic Education and High School is issued.
- 2011: issuance of the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (OLIE) which includes that guidance must be managed through the Student Counseling Departments (SCDs) of each educational institution.
- 2015: SCDs and their objectives are reformulated giving greater relevance to human development in a comprehensive manner. The Vocational and Professional Guidance Manual for Student Counseling Departments is published.
- 2017: the Ministry of Education brings out the Interpretation Manual of the IPPJ Youth Vocational Preferences Inventory.
- 2018: the Ministry publishes the document Tools to guide the construction of students' life projects.

That is to say, the conception that is being defended in Ecuador regarding vocational guidance is according to Unir (2021) is that of conceiving that vocational guidance "(...) *focused from different areas, from a multidisciplinary perspective in which issues such as personal well-being, interculturality, the relationship between generations, psycho-pedagogical guidance, psychological guidance, the economic and social situation of the country, etc. are taken into account*".

For the researcher Toala Vera; et al. (2021, p.3407) propose that

*"In Ecuador, guidance practice has been circumscribed to secondary education, where its applicability has been limited by the absence of psychometric tools adapted to the national context, the lack of knowledge of the strengths it has in the construction of protective factors in children and adolescents, the historical invisibility that this discipline has had in the country. In 2018, the same Ministry of Education made available to the educational system the document Tools to guide the construction of student life projects. This publication presents a number of playful and reflective activities aimed at accompanying the construction of life*

*projects of children, adolescents and adults (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2016)".*

Important theoretical and methodological analysis is offered by these authors, Briones Palacios, (2020), Toala Vera; et al. (2021, p. 3408) when relating that the process of vocational and professional orientation

*"(...) is a fundamental pillar to reach the correct choice of the person's future; therefore, it has to be planned, programmed, executed and evaluated JARRIN, P. (2002). There are two kinds of factors that affect it (...) Internal factors: They are part of the personality of the human being and help to discover what is the inclination, liking, interest, vocation, attitude and aptitude of the learner in front of a profession and occupation FELDMAN, R. (2007). For these factors to be discovered, they have to resort to the application of personalized techniques to the vocational reality, interviews, group dynamics exercises, experiential exercises. They give the guideline to discover vocational interests and to be able to pursue university careers. External Factors: They have great importance in the process of vocational and professional orientation, thus we have the family and the environment where it is developed (...)"*

The interest of this research is in configuring a working system of professional orientation towards the career of Naturopathic Technology studied at the Higher University Institute Dr. "Misael Acosta Solís", located in the city of Riobamba, capital of the Province of Chimborazo, Ecuador. The model of the professional of the career of Technology in Naturopathy (CES, 2022) has precisely defined the following aspects:

**The mission of the career:** To train competent professionals, with humanistic vision and ecological thinking, articulating the academic component, research and linkage with society; through the application and promotion of naturopathy for the improvement of the quality of life of the community.

**The vision of the career:** it is projected towards national and international academic recognition, allowing its professionals to integrate in multidisciplinary health teams and generate enterprises that contribute to the development of the productive matrix.

**The graduate profile of the career:** Recognizes the structure and function of the human body determining the pathophysiological processes; applies the elements of nature,

manual and energetic therapies, psychophysical techniques, yoga and psychoprophylaxis of childbirth to ensure physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

**The object of study** of the Naturopathic career is to train professionals capable of applying the knowledge of Naturopathic techniques and methods to treat the patient in an integral way through alternative assessments, from the emotional, physical and spiritual part, seeing the human being as a whole, complementing from the Trophology and Trophotherapy; always focusing on working with quality standards based on the ministerial agreement that allows us to perform alternative and complementary therapies therefore, the naturopathy student will have all the knowledge to recommend Manual Therapies and the Development of Natural Products for treatments to the various conditions of the human being, and applying non-invasive therapies such as: Iridology, Reflexology, Entrepreneurship and Administration in Health, Botany, Psychophysical Therapy and above all highlighting the Andean and Ancestral Values from the Andean Cosmivision. Research is the fundamental basis for updating Naturopathic knowledge to innovate the complementary treatment in the health area.

For the admission of new students to the Higher University Institute, Dr. "Misael Acosta Solís", who want to study the Naturopathy career, must meet **the following profile**: Analytical ability to perform a diagnosis and naturopathic treatment. Knowledge of research methods and techniques to perform a critical analysis of innovation. Co-responsible citizenship within health and community service. Social commitment to recover the patient's health in an integral way. Predisposition and positive attitude towards change. Ability to make decisions in their area of knowledge. Ability to adapt to the intercultural environment. Respect for Andean and other cultures' knowledge. Interest in natural medicine and alternative and complementary therapies.

The career guarantees the relationship between theory and practice, school and life from the curricular work and pre-professional practices, however, we want to achieve a competent technologist in a specialty with high socio-medical demand.

It is valid to clarify that the occupational field of the career: Recognizes the structure and function of the human body determining the pathophysiological processes; applies the elements of nature, manual therapies, energy, psychophysical techniques, yoga and psychoprophylaxis of childbirth to ensure physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Evaluates nutritional requirements, executes health promotion actions, elaborates natural

products knowing the active principles and properties of medicinal plants for the treatment of common pathologies; uses different instruments, equipment and technology tools in support of Naturopathy. Executes research processes for the development of projects aimed at the solution of various health problems with a scientific approach in correspondence with the native cultures of the country in the field of healing and alternative therapies that allow comprehensive and inclusive care of the community.

The career has a high demand and what it is about is that in the first year there is a strong work of professional orientation to educate professional interests in order to achieve stability and development of professional skills in a socially necessary profession because it is a profession with a high demand.

*"Naturopathy," according to Millstine (2023), MD, Mayo Clinic. It is based on the notion of the healing power of nature and emphasizes the following aspects: Prevention and treatment of disease through a healthy lifestyle. Treatment of the whole person. Use of the innate healing abilities of the organism". Naturopathy uses a combination of therapies, including the following: Diet. Nutritional supplements, often through infusion. Medicinal plants. Acupuncture. Physical therapies (such as heat and cold therapy, ultrasonography, and massage) Mind-body therapies. Exercise therapy (kinesiotherapy or kinesitherapy). Hydrotherapy (moving warm or cold water applications)."*

Therefore, there is a need for personnel who are not only competent clinically, but also from a therapeutic and human point of view. For Ruales Jiménez (2023), lead author of this work,

*"At present there are professionals in Naturopathy who would like to increase their knowledge, elevating their title to another level, that is, fourth level. For all these reasons it is necessary to propose a program to improve education in this area, this will help future professionals feel confident that they can specialize in more areas related to Naturopathy. Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM)".*

By means of the research, it is intended that in the first year a professional orientation process is thoroughly used to deepen the development of professional interests towards the career, so that through the different substantive processes of the Higher University Institute, activities of curricular, extracurricular, extensionist and investigative content

are balanced, where a Technologist is profiled widely undergraduate and professionally and vocationally ready to develop the work in any part of Ecuador, for this it is necessary a prepared pedagogical group and an orderly and planned formative process to achieve such pretensions.

It is of great value to conceive the Naturopathy career as a social priority career, due to its purpose and its impact on people's health, which justifies the importance of an adequate professional orientation process that guarantees the knowledge-skills-values typical of this career and the application of valid pedagogical principles in the training process, such as: linking school with life and linking theory with practice.

The pedagogical work that is deployed in the Higher University Institute "Dr. Misael Acosta Solis" of Riobamba, Chimborazo, Ecuador is directed to achieve that professional-vocational orientation is a primary task of the pedagogical process to ensure not only the professional preparation, but, that a citizen capable of helping in solidarity to their fellow citizens carrying any pathology that can be treated by the way of Naturopathy is formed. Therefore, we work in the curricular, extracurricular and extension with emphasis on social service projects that teach what, when, how and with what to influence from any of the treatments of Naturopathy.

## **Conclusions**

Career guidance is considered a task of the formative process, whose actuality is constant due to the fact that students are passing from generation to generation to be formed as technicians, professionals who must leave prepared in the professional and vocational order that has an impact on their personal and professional life project.

Latin America in its different countries has been evolving in the theoretical and methodological studies of vocational guidance, in the different countries there is already a scientific tradition that translates into research, projects, articles, books, resolutions, which highlight this work in order to consolidate educational intervention strategies to ensure better preparation for the entry and exit of students in careers of different types.

For Ecuador, this research is of vital importance as it is about validating the character of social priority of this career of Naturopathy for all the problems it solves from the clinical and therapeutic point of view and from the social point of view for the city of Riobamba and its surroundings.