Action-Guidance: an Action Research Project for the Application of the Informing Science in Educational and Vocational Guidance

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Model of traditional guidance actions (due to Psychology and Didactics)
Psychology’s perspective in guidance

**Guidance action** is the process leading the students to the development of project abilities and skills. It is based on:
- **self-guidance**, i.e. the behaviors induced by the psycho-sociological processes the subjects have to develop, for facing the problems they meet at school, at work and in everyday life,
- **interventions**, that operators and professionals can carry out to help subjects in developing their guidance skills and overcoming difficulties.

**Various approaches** are used (the global-interdisciplinary approach is today one of the most used)

**Instruments** to be used are: surveys, questionnaires and individual interviews.

**Transitions** (in school living) are the privileged phases for analysis.

**Assessment elements** are: program, people, results (at different times).
Guidance action is an essential part of educational work for didactics, because it is directly involved in students’ development of the skills letting them face the problems and changes imposed by everyday life. Students’ knowledge must be: meaningful, systematic, stable, basic and has to induce knowledge capitalization.

Approaches and instruments: curricular, concept and modular teaching planning (the ones teachers use in their everyday work)

Phases of school life involved: all

Evaluation and assessment: it is mostly only formal, because it lies on the correctness of the teaching plans and on the adherence of the teacher’s work with the planned one. Sometimes (once per year in the best cases) special assessment tests on literacy skills are made at a national level.
Pros and cons in the psychological approach

Psychological research produced a lot of materials for analytically studying cognitive, relational and affective individual spheres and for suggesting intervention and counseling strategies.

Limits of the psychological approach can be found in:
- students’ consensus on the results of the psychological tests,
- results of some follow-up analyses on correlation among students’ scores in the High School and their success in further studies (obtained by grouping students in merit classes): a) there is no correlation between the student’s belonging to a given group and the scores at university examinations, b) there is only a little correlation between the belonging of a student to a given group and the number of got university examinations; c) more clever students pass a greater number of examinations.
Pros and cons in the didactical approach

The **importance that didactics assigned to self-guidance** actions favored the planning and development of special activities for groups of students, school classes and whole schools.

**Limits of the didactic approach** clearly emerge from the results of national and international studies (IEA, IEA-SISS, IEA-SAL); they show the inadequacy of the school system in hitting the fixed targets (at least in Italy):

- students’ good results decrease with the rising of the school level,
- positive results no more decrease while passing from the North to the South of the Country but are irregularly distributed all over the nation,
- the same results seem no more depend on the social status of the students’ families (with respect to former inquiries), but a dependence can be found on the mothers’ degrees (it is especially true for degrees in human sciences).
The action-guidance project has the following features:

• it is based on a diacronic-continuous evaluation of processes with respect to a syncronic-ending one

• it means to continuously monitor didactic-guidance processes

• it is based on the adoption of the action-research methods and instruments

• it uses an Information System to be accessed from: students, families, teachers, principals, psycho-pedagogical staffs, public institutions etc. (each one accessing only special information sections)
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Fig. 1 - The Informing Science and the vocational and educational guidance process
The project is still in its early stage (consensus creation) but something can be said:

a. a first planning of school guidance actions was made in the school year 2003-2004 and it was experimented in three different schools,

b. the teachers involved in the project planned special activities in the first classes of their schools giving special attention to the following three moments (reception, school progress and leaving)

c. data collected with surveys and questionnaires were soon analyzed and induced changes in the planned activities

In the slides below the following situations are analyzed: welcome (reception), knowing themselves (school progress), preparing for transition (leaving).
Many questions were proposed to students to know: PC possession and use, TV seeing distribution, newspapers and magazines reading etc.

![Bar chart](image)
Welcome

Fig. 3 - Distribuzione percentuale degli studenti per n. di ore dinanzi alla TV

Fig. 4 - Distribuzione percentuale degli studenti per modalità di utilizzo di un PC
Knowing themselves

At the end of the first school period (half school year) the students were asked to answer another survey.

Together with make up courses in different disciplines new activities were planned to help students in overcoming their difficulties.
Preparing for transition

At the end of the school year the students were asked to answer further questions and among them if they confirmed their choice.

Fig. 6 - Distribuzione percentuale degli studenti in termini di soddisfazione della scelta effettuata