

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN CAREER GUIDANCE: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND BEST PRACTICES

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Introduction and Background

Accelerated digital transformation, platformization of work, and the emergence of technology-mediated professional roles challenge the epistemological foundations of traditional career counseling. The directive-diagnostic paradigm, grounded in trait-factor theory, conceptualizes career choice as a static matching process between stable individual traits and predefined occupational profiles. Such an approach proves increasingly inadequate in contexts characterized by digital disruption, algorithmic recruitment, and recurrent career transitions. Within this framework, higher education institutions assume strategic responsibility in redesigning digitally integrated guidance services, as reflected in the UPGRADE project – Enhancing Graduates' Employability Tracking in Moldova (Erasmus+ KA2), aimed at modernizing university career systems through digital monitoring and data-driven interventions. This study seeks to comparatively examine dominant counseling paradigms and to theoretically and empirically substantiate the superiority of the developmental (activating) model in cultivating digital career adaptability and professional self-determination competence.

Material and Methods

The research employs critical literature analysis and comparative paradigm evaluation across five counseling strategies: directive-diagnostic, educational (behaviorist), psychoanalytic, humanistic, and developmental. Empirical findings from post-Soviet counseling practice and institutional career services were analyzed using reported longitudinal satisfaction and stability indicators. The methodological framework integrates conceptual synthesis, cross-paradigmatic comparison, and interpretation of documented outcome data.

Results

The directive-diagnostic model reveals three structural limitations in digitally transformed labor markets: disregard for occupational digital dynamism, a static conception of individual characteristics in rapidly evolving competence frameworks, and marginalization of the client's decisional agency in algorithmically influenced environments. Longitudinal evidence indicates that only 30–40% of individuals maintain their initial career choice, undermining the predictive validity of one-time assessment models. Comparative data demonstrate significantly higher three-year professional satisfaction rates for developmental counseling (89%) compared to directive approaches (68%). The developmental paradigm enhances decisional autonomy, reflective capacity, digital literacy, and adaptability by positioning the client as an active constructor of vocational identity in technology-rich contexts. Institutional applications within digitally oriented employability projects further validate its operational feasibility and systemic relevance.

Conclusions

The developmental paradigm represents a paradigmatic shift from prescriptive digital matching toward sustained competence formation and adaptive career construction in technology-driven environments. Its integration into higher education digital guidance systems constitutes a strategic lever for strengthening graduate employability, long-term satisfaction, and resilience in volatile, data-driven labor markets. The findings support reconfiguring counselor training, ethical governance of digital tools, and institutional policies toward activating, process-oriented models of professional accompaniment in the era of digital transformation.

Keywords: *digital transformation, career adaptability, developmental counseling, professional self-determination, vocational guidance, employability analytics*