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# Factors that define professional guidance at university: assessment by professors and students

***Factores que definen la orientación profesional en la universidad: valoración del profesorado y alumnado***

***Factors that define professional guidance at university: assessment by professors and students***

***Fatores que definem a orientação profissional na universidade: avaliação dos docentes e estudantes***

*大学职业指导的决定性因素：教师与学生的评价*

العوامل التي تحدد التوجيه المهني في الجامعة: تقييم أعضاء هيئة التدريس والطلاب

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**Abstract**

Professional guidance plays a crucial role in universities, as it is one of the main stages that leads directly to the job market. Understanding how the professional guidance is conducted, is an effective means of developing programmes for its development and integration into the university study plans. This research aims to accomplish that by considering the perspectives of professors and university students from universities with very different typologies, giving the sample guarantees of diversity. A total of 841 professors and 2.264 students from the universities of Jaén and Granada in Spain participated in the study. The design was mixed, in which quantitative and qualitative techniques and instruments, such as scales, discussion groups and interviews, coexisted. The findings revealed a need for more training for professors to enhance the professional guidance provided to students during university tutoring. However, professors expressed a certain level of optimism regarding their current approach to professional guidance.

**Keywords:** professional guidance, training, university, professors, students

**Resumen**

La orientación profesional desempeña un papel crucial en las universidades, ya que es una de las principales etapas que conducen directamente al mercado laboral. Comprender cómo se lleva a cabo la orientación profesional, es un medio eficaz para elaborar programas para su desarrollo e integración en los planes de estudio universitarios. Esta investigación pretende conseguirlo considerando las perspectivas de profesores y estudiantes universitarios de universidades con tipologías muy diferentes, dando a la muestra garantías de diversidad. Participaron en el estudio un total de 841 profesores y 2.264 estudiantes de las universidades de Jaén y Granada en España. El diseño fue mixto, en el que coexisten técnicas e instrumentos cuantitativos y cualitativos, tales como escalas, grupos de discusión y entrevistas. Los resultados revelaron la necesidad de una mayor formación de los profesores para mejorar la orientación profesional proporcionada a los estudiantes durante las tutorías universitarias. Sin embargo, los profesores expresaron un cierto nivel de optimismo con respecto a su enfoque actual de la orientación profesional.

**Palabras clave:** orientación profesional, formación, universidad, profesorado, estudiantes

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**Resumo**

A orientação profissional desempenha um papel crucial nas universidades, pois é uma das principais fases que conduzem diretamente ao mercado de trabalho. Compreender como se processa a orientação profissional é um meio eficaz de conceber programas para o seu desenvolvimento e a sua integração nos currículos universitários. Esta investigação pretende atingir este objetivo ao considerar as perspetivas de docentes e estudantes universitários de universidades com tipologias muito diferentes, dando à amostra garantias de diversidade. No total, participaram no estudo 841 professores e 2264 estudantes das universidades de Jaén e Granada, em Espanha. O projeto foi misto, no qual coexistem técnicas e instrumentos quantitativos e qualitativos, tais como escalas, grupos de discussão e entrevistas. Os resultados revelaram a necessidade de mais formação dos professores para melhorar a orientação profissional proporcionada aos estudantes durante as tutorias universitárias. No entanto, os professores expressaram um certo nível de otimismo em relação à sua abordagem atual da orientação profissional.

**Palavras-chave:** orientação profissional, formação, universidade, professores, estudantes

**摘要**

职业指导在大学中扮演着关键角色，因为它是通向就业市场的重要阶段之一。理解职业指导的实施方式，有助于制定相应的计划，将其有效融入大学课程体系中。本研究旨在通过探讨大学教师和学生的观点，分析职业指导的现状与需求。研究涵盖来自西班牙哈恩大学和格拉纳达大学的不同类型的样本，以确保数据的多样性和代表性。参与者包括 841 名教师和 2,264 名学生。研究采用**混合**设计，结合定量与定性方法，包括量表、焦点小组讨论和访谈等工具。结果表明，教师需要更多的培训，以在大学辅导中提供更高质量的职业指导。尽管如此，教师对其现行职业指导方法持一定的乐观态度，认为其已经取得了一些积极成果。研究强调了在大学层面加强教师职业指导能力建设的必要性，同时为职业指导计划的改进提供了参考依据。

**关键词：**职业指导、培训、大学、教师、学生

**ملخص**

يلعب التوجيه المهني دورًا حاسمًا في الجامعات، حيث يُعد إحدى المراحل الرئيسية التي تقود مباشرة إلى سوق العمل. يُعتبر فهم كيفية تنفيذ التوجيه المهني وسيلة فعالة لتصميم برامج تهدف إلى تطويره ودمجه في المناهج الدراسية الجامعية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحقيق هذا الهدف من خلال مراعاة وجهات نظر الأساتذة والطلاب الجامعيين في جامعات ذات أنماط مختلفة تمامًا، مما يضمن شارك في الدراسة 841 أستاذًا جامعيًا و2,264 طالبًا من جامعات خاين .تنوع العينة واستيعاب مجموعة واسعة من التجارب وغرناطة في إسبانيا. اتبعت الدراسة تصميمًا مختلطًا يجمع بين الأساليب والأدوات الكمية والنوعية، مثل المقاييس، مجموعات النقاش، والمقابلات. كشفت النتائج عن حاجة ماسة إلى تعزيز تدريب الأساتذة لتحسين جودة التوجيه المهني المقدم للطلاب أثناء الجلسات الإرشادية الجامعية. ومع ذلك، عبّر الأساتذة عن درجة معينة من التفاؤل فيما يتعلق بنهجهم الحالي في تقديم التوجيه المهني

**الكلمات الدالة** :التوجيه المهني، التكوين، الجامعة، أعضاء هيئة التدريس، الطلاب

## Introduction

Today's world of work is in constant movement, creating insecurity, job precariousness, and unemployment among young people. This has not only reorganised different aspects of the life experience but also redesigned the work context and educational environments (Chhabra et al., 2022; Marqués & Hoerisch, 2019). In this respect, the universities have suffered several changes: on one hand, with the implementation of the European Higher Education Area and European credits, which modified different aspects of the teaching and tutoring function in universities (Pantoja & Campoy, 2009), and, on the other hand, with the approval of the University Student Statute (Royal Decree 1970/2010), which recognises guidance and tutoring as a students' right to guide them in their teaching-learning process (Guerra et al., 2016).

Guidance is a process that opens up opportunities to build relationships with the world to promote sustainable, ecological, fair, and equitable behaviours and societies (Carosin et al., 2022). Tutoring provides individual or group accompaniment to students throughout their formative process to favour their integral development. This accompaniment focuses on the systematic guidance of students, stimulating their potential for learning and future professional performance (Trangay, 2022). Moreover, it should be noted that tutoring is a tool that seeks to dignify educational practice, train students in transversal competencies, minimise dropout rates and help students adapt to the university environment (López-Gómez, 2017; Trangay, 2022). It is considered a tool that supports and responds to the demands of students (Carosin et al., 2022) because it occurs at three levels of intervention: academic, personal, and professional (Álvarez Pérez, 2012; Gonzalo, 2020). *Academic tutoring* is related to students' academic development and the strategies used by the professor in the teaching-learning process (Gargallo Castel et al., 2019; Véliz Salazar & Gutiérrez Marfileño, 2021); *personal tutoring* focuses on attending to personal problems that may influence learning (Gargallo Castel et al., 2019); and, finally, *tutoring in the professional* sphere focuses on work aspects, internships, and job performance (Kuijpers, 2019). As Schiersmann et al. (2012) stated, it is interesting to address academic and professional guidance in the classroom together, allowing students to associate theoretical knowledge with the practice of their chosen profession.

In the Spanish university, tutoring is organised through a document called the *Tutorial Action Plan* (TAP), which sets out its criteria, organisation, and operation, addressing the different modalities of guidance (Alonso-García et al., 2018; Casado Muñoz et al., 2014). The TAP aims to promote academic performance, comprehensive training, and help students make decisions (Muñoz & Gairín, 2016). In other words, "it aims to facilitate the formation of the student as a person, academically and professionally" (Pantoja & Campoy, 2009, p. 18). In the international context, the University Agustín Maza of Mendoza in Argentina and the University Michoacana of San Nicolás of Hidalgo in Mexico also have programmes to organise tutoring and respond to the professional, academic, and personal needs of students in a way that can be useful to them during their time at university (Pantoja et., 2022; Trangay, 2022).

### *Professional guidance at the university*

Nowadays unemployment has been occupying a significant place in society, and therefore we are faced with greater uncertainty and instability regarding labour market insertion. This causes university students to face their future with unease and with a need for professional guidance to improve their decision-making (Lo Pestri et al., 2022). In this sense, professional guidance plays an important role in enabling students, to develop skills that help them to be aware of their potential and develop a life plan that makes it easier for them to emotionally address the complexities of work (Romero-Rodríguez, 2022).

Different European organisations such as the OECD (2004) and European Commission (2010) have shown the need for the development of integral professional guidance systems. Therefore, higher education should encourage professional guidance for students from their entry into university until their integration into the world of work, thus facilitating their transition to the world of work (Haasler, 2020; Gil-

Albarova et al., 2013; López-Gómez, 2017; Pantoja, 2020; Rojas et al., 2022). In this guidance process, the professors, in their double role of professor and tutor, play an important role, hence the importance of having the necessary continuous and specific training in guidance and tutoring (Carvalho & Taveira, 2015; Pastor Andrés & González-Benito, 2023; Rojas et al., 2022). Connecting the university world and the work-professional world to improve the organisation of studies, the transmission of contents, and the development of vocational competencies is one of the main objectives of professors in the practice of professional guidance (Cortés & García, 2020; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2022). Thus, it is crucial for professors to critically examine the relationship between employability skills and job opportunities to advise and guide students in making career decisions (Brown et al., 2022; Mittendorff et al., 2010).

However, despite its importance, the university guidance and tutoring system is very slow to be implemented in university classrooms (Ursin, 2017), and is characterised by certain weaknesses that hinder the participation of both students and professors in tutoring (Álvarez González, 2017; Pérez Cusó & Martínez Juárez, 2015). A clear example is the role of professors in the field of guidance (Ferreira, 2021). Currently, professors have been taking on responsibilities, such as the role of tutor, and, to do this, some of them are registered in the university's TAP and others carry out their tutoring work in the subjects they teach, during the hours established for this purpose. Nevertheless, in many cases, professors have little time available to dedicate to tutoring and they are poorly trained because they lack the strategies and tools to carry out the tutoring function, and this makes it difficult for them to offer quality guidance to students (Álvarez González, 2017; Martín Romera et al., 2020; San Román et al., 2015). Other studies have highlighted that students are unaware of the university guidance system and its potential (Martínez Clares et al., 2019) or are not sufficiently aware of its benefits (Giménez et al., 2018). However, in other research where students have participated in the TAP, they value that it has a notable impact on their training, considering this university initiative positively (Alonso-García et al., 2018; Pantoja et al., 2022). More specifically, both students in their first years and those finishing university show a positive perception of tutoring, as they consider it necessary to improve their academic performance (Trangay, 2022).

In this respect, there is no doubt that the professors must be trained to be able to successfully develop guidance and tutorial work (Magee et al., 2021). Professors must consider that they must not only have the ability to teach but also be able to promote learning through their ability to guide, advise, motivate, encourage and moderate (López & Predes, 2017). Thus, it is necessary to detect their weaknesses in tutoring and to establish adjusted actions to improve student guidance (Gairín et al., 2015).

It is a fact that professional guidance is key to most people's lives; despite this importance, not enough time and effort are devoted to it at university (Lizana-Verdugo & Burgos-García, 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2018). For this reason, a section on professional guidance has been included in the main contents of the TIMONEL Project (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (Ref. EDU2016-75892-P) - www.timonel.net), research that aimed to design and develop a Recommendation System (RS) as a response to the guidance and tutoring needs of students, graduates and professors. The RS works with its users to elaborate their profile based on their guidance needs (academic, personal and professional) and to be able to receive, among other proposals, training courses, job vacancies, or even advice to work on personal aspects. Therefore, RS is a tool that can help the professors guide the students so that they can improve their time at university and their personal and professional projects.

According to the literature consulted and presented in this paper, the main objective of this study is to analyse the main factors that define professional guidance at university from the point of view of the professors and students. The specific objectives are a) To find out how the intervention of the professors in the TAP is taking place; b) To study the training of the professors in guidance and tutorial action; c) To investigate the participation of the students in the TAP.

## Method

The research had a mixed design, in which quantitative and qualitative techniques and instruments, such as scales, discussion groups and interviews, coexisted. Two scales were used for data collection, one for professors and the other for students. This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Vice-Rectorate of Research of the University of Jaén (Spain) with reference MAY.16/1.

### *Participants*

The study population comprised all the professors and students at the University of Jaén (UJA) and the University of Granada (UGR). Both universities present a very different typology, which gives the sample guarantees of diversity. In particular, the UJA, unlike the UGR, is much younger and has almost three-quarters fewer students, as well as a reduced number of services related to student guidance and tutoring. A stratified and proportional random sampling system was used to draw the sample, with a confidence level of 95% and a maximum estimation error of 5%. The professors study sample amounted to a total of 841. It should be noted that 45.2% of the professors who took part in this study had participated in the TAP, and 42.1% of the professors had not participated in any training activity related to guidance and tutoring. On the other hand, the student study sample amounted to a total of 2.264 students. The determination of second-year degree students was done deliberately in order to give the students a broader view of university life, to which we added fourth-year degree, master's, or PhD students in order to determine the extent to which the guidance received during the university period affects them (see Table 1).

For the qualitative study, a total of 22 professors from UJA and 36 from UGR were interviewed. Six individual interviews were conducted at UJA and five were conducted at UGR. Similarly, focus groups were carried out, taking as a reference the variable experience in tutoring at three levels: (1) less than 5 years of experience (4 UJA, 7 UGR), (2) between 5 and 15 years (4 UJA, 5 UGR), and (3) more than 15 years (4 UJA and 7 UGR). In terms of participation in the TAP, 4 professors from UJA and 12 from UGR participated.

Table 1. Participants in the quantitative part of the study

| Variables | Categories | Students n =2264 (100%) | | | | Professors n = 841 (100%) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | UJA (n= 1117) | | UGR (n=1147) | | UJA (n=366) | | UGR (n=475) | |
| | | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Gender | | 468 (41.9%) | 649 (58.1%) | 460 (40.1%) | 687 (59.9%) | 208 (56.83%) | 158 (43.17%) | 268 (56.42%) | 207 (43.58%) |
| Course | 2nd year | 168 (35,9%) | 225 (34.7%) | 151 (32.8%) | 225 (32.8%) | | | | |
| | 4th year | 157 (33.5%) | 232 (35.7%) | 140 (30.4%) | 234 (34.1%) | | | | |
| | Master's or PhD | 143 (30.6%) | 192 (29.6%) | 169 (36.7%) | 228 (33.2%) | | | | |
| ATP Participation | Yes | 67 (14.3%) | 95 (14.6%) | 12 (2.6%) | 3.3 (3.1%) | 119 (55.6%) | 94 (56.6%) | 95 (44.4%) | 72 (43.4%) |
| | No | 401 (85.7%) | 554 (85.4%) | 448 (97.4%) | 1112 (96.9%) | 89 (34.0%) | 64 (32.2%) | 173 (66.0%) | 135 (67.8%) |

*Note:* UJA= University of Jaén; UGR= University of Granada.

### *Instruments*

*Quantitative analysis*

For this research, we have used two scales that were created ad hoc and validated by the research team. The same process was followed for both scales (Morales et al., 2000), once the traits to be measured had been identified, such as the preparation of the instrument, obtaining the first data from a pilot sample, analysis of the instrument and additional analyses. Similarly, content validity is taken into consideration by expert judges from two Spanish, one Portuguese and one English university. Several versions of the scales are made until the final scales are completed.

The professor's scale, "Training needs in guidance and tutoring strategies (NFEOT-17)", has 61 items, 57 of which are Likert-type with five response options (1=totally disagree; 5=totally agree) and four items that correspond to global assessments of each dimension (from 0 to 10). The scale is organised into four dimensions which are academic, personal, professional and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) guidance, with a Cronbach's alpha of .79, KMO = .939 and giving Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2$ = 28169.969, p = .000. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis through principal components and Varimax rotation, extracting four factors through the Kaiser criteria, which math with the theoretical model proposed in the confirmatory factor analysis.

The scale for students "Guidance and tutorial practice in university students and graduates (POTAE-17)", obtained a value of .87 for Cronbach's alpha, KMO = .853, and Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2$ = 6701.698, p = .000 (Pantoja et al., 2020). The scale has 67 items, 63 of which are Likert-type items with five response options (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree) organised into four dimensions called academic, personal, professional and ICT guidance, and four items corresponding to overall ratings from 0 to 10 for each dimension.

Following the purpose of this study, the items belonging to the Professional Guidance dimension of both scales have been taken as a reference because they are the ones that can best respond to the study's aim.

*Qualitative analysis*

For the qualitative analysis, as mentioned above, focus groups and interviews with professors from both universities were carried out to detect good practices in professional guidance according to the testimonies of the professors who had been rated by the students as "excellent professors" and who had received a distinction from both universities rewarding their teaching work. Both techniques, focus groups and interviews, were designed according to the objectives of the research and to those items that stood out most in the scales, which led to a greater concreteness of the answers. The script for each of these techniques (individual and group) was developed based on the same themes and questions, facilitating the integration of the information gathered from them.

Both the focus groups and the interviews were aimed at collecting in more detail the professors' opinions on good practice in professional guidance. Both the interviews and the focus groups followed a semi-structured script, based on predefined questions, but with some freedom to open up new topics of interest as they emerged during the interviews. The questions and their answers selected for the development of this research were those that defined good teaching practices, specifically those that focused on the dimension of professional guidance such as: Do you promote student participation in professional development activities inside and outside the university? How do you advise students about the possibilities they have at the end of their degree studies? How do you advise students about their access to the world of work?

### *Data analysis*

The SPSS software version 24 for Mac was used to process the results obtained and perform the statistical analysis. Firstly, a T-test was performed to analyse the existence of statistically significant differences between the scores of the items that make up the

Professional Guidance scale and the variables participation in the professors' participation in the TAP and whether or not the professors have received training in guidance and mentoring. Similarly, Cohen's (1991) effect size was calculated for possible statistically significant differences. Finally, a chi-square test was carried out to determine the existence of a statistical association between the variables analysed above. On the other hand, a T-test was also carried out to analyse the existence of statistically significant differences between the scores of the items that make up the Professional Guidance scale and the variable students' participation in the TAP, as well as an ANOVA analysis of variance between the items that make up the Professional Guidance scale and the variable academic level of students.

For the analysis of the qualitative data, the Spanish version of the N-Vivo Partner 2019-2020 programme was used, coding on the basis of the variables established (see Table 2 for the coding of the participants for the qualitative analysis of the results). With this programme it was possible to collect the testimonies of the participants, establishing categories according to the frequency with which they appeared in the discourses.

Table 2. Coding of participants

| Variable | Description | Code |
|---|---|---|
| University | University of Jaén | UJA |
| | University of Granada | UGR |
| Faculty | Humanities and Education Sciences | HES |
| | Social and Legal Sciences | SLS |
| | Health Sciences | HS |
| | Social Work | SW |
| | Experimental Sciences | ES |
| | Higher Polytechnic School | HPS |
| Gender | Male | M |
| | Female | F |

## Results

The results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis are presented in the paragraphs that follow. Both the professors' and students' perceptions of professional guidance and the dependent variables such as participation in the TAP, training in guidance and tutoring and the students' academic levels are addressed.

### *Professor analysis: participation in the TAP and training in guidance and tutoring*

First, to determine whether participating in the TAP is a relevant factor when explaining the scale scores, a T-test was calculated to find out whether there is a relationship between carrying out professional guidance and whether or not the professors had participated in the TAP. As Table 3 shows, the mean scores of the different items are higher for those professors who had participated in the TAP. However, the test for differences between means indicates that such differences are not statistically significant in all cases. One can see that there is no relationship between participating or not in the TAP and supporting students in the process of making career decisions and advising them on how the labour market works (Items 2 and 8). In the remaining items, with statistically significant differences, this relationship can be seen, that is, the professors who participated in the TAP were more satisfied with the actions they carried out in professional guidance with students.

Second, in order to check whether having received training in guidance and tutoring is related to the way professional guidance is carried out, a T-test was used again. In this case (Table 3), the mean scores of the different items were higher for those professors who were trained in guidance and tutoring. We found that professors' training in guidance and tutoring was related to their willingness to carry out professional guidance with students, because for those who had received training, their mean score was statistically significant on all items of the scale.

In both cases, according to Cohen's (1991) indications for the interpretation of effect size, the significant differences can be considered as weak ($d < .80$).

Table 3. Means, standard deviation and t-test

| *Items Professional guidance* | *TAP participation* | | | | | *Guidance and tutoring training* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes $\bar{x}$ | No $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Sig. | Cohen's d | Yes $\bar{x}$ | No $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Sig. | Cohen's d |
| 1. I inform students about the transition to the world of work. | 3.96 | 3.66 | .29 | .04* | 0.14 | 4.01 | 3.64 | .36 | .01* | 0.17 |
| 2. I support the professional decision-making process. | 3.51 | 3.43 | .08 | .31 | 0.07 | 3.66 | 3.32 | .33 | .00* | 0.29 |
| 3. I help in the design of the professional pathway of my students. | 3.17 | 2.91 | .25 | .00* | 0.21 | 3.25 | 2.87 | .38 | .00* | 0.322 |
| 4. I develop competences for professional insertion. | 3.73 | 3.42 | .30 | .00* | 0.26 | 3.74 | 3.44 | .30 | .00* | 0.260 |
| 5. I inform students about the possibilities of entrepreneurship in the degree. | 3.22 | 2.82 | .39 | .00* | 0.30 | 3.25 | 2.82 | .43 | .00* | 0.332 |
| 6. I provide information on new sources of employment. | 3.16 | 2.83 | .32 | .00* | 0.24 | 3.20 | 2.82 | .38 | .00* | 0.297 |
| 7. I provide information on public and/or private job offers. | 2.74 | 2.50 | .24 | .01* | 0.17 | 3.17 | 2.91 | .26 | .00* | 0.199 |
| 8. I advise my learners on how the labour market works. | 3.10 | 2.95 | .15 | .09 | 0.11 | 3.01 | 2.68 | .32 | .00* | 0.233 |
| 9. I provide students with information about work placements in companies in collaboration with the university. | 3.05 | 2.62 | .42 | .00* | 0.30 | 3.01 | 2.68 | .32 | .00* | 0.233 |
| 10. I connect the contents of my subjects with their professional opportunities. | 4.11 | 3.89 | .21 | .00* | 0.20 | 4.18 | 3.85 | .33 | .00* | 0.334 |
| 11. I develop professional competences through simulations of real cases. | 3.78 | 3.55 | .23 | .01* | 0.17 | 3.86 | 3.50 | .36 | .00* | 0.276 |
| 12. I maintain professional contacts with companies and/or institutions related to the degree. | 3.26 | 2.89 | .37 | .00* | 0.25 | 3.23 | 2.92 | .31 | .02* | 0.217 |

*Note:* *p<0.05.

Given these results, in which participation in the TAP and previous training in guidance and tutoring are determinants of the values achieved on the Professional Guidance scale, the contingency table procedure was used to analyse the association between these variables. A statistically significant association was found between participation in the TAP and being trained in guidance and tutoring. The results indicate that professors who had participated in the TAP showed a greater tendency to be trained in this area ($\chi^2_{1df}$ = 126.20, p = 0.00). Thus, of the professors who indicated that they had participated in the TAP, 67.8% had received training in guidance and tutoring compared with 28.7% who did not have such training (see Table 4).

Table 4. Association between variables

| Variables | Chi-square test | Results |
|---|---|---|
| Participation in the TAP - Training in guidance and tutoring. | $\chi^2_{1df}$ = 126.20 p = .00 | Of the 45.2% of professors who had participated in the TAP, 67.8% were trained and 28.7% were not. |

*Note:* TAP = Tutorial Action Plan. *p<0.05.

Next, the qualitative analysis was carried out, first by categorising the responses, after analysing the interviews with professors from both universities and their frequency (table 5).

Table 5. Categories of the Professional Guidance dimension

| **Professional Guidance dimension** | **F** |
|---|---|
| Knowledge-experience in the professional field (Know_Expe). | 15 |
| Training_information on professional opportunities (Train_InforProfes). | **31** |
| Training in competences for labour market insertion (Form_Comp). | 11 |
| Relationship between the contents of the subject and the professional opportunities (Rela_ProfesOpport). | **26** |
| Information-transition on working life (Info_Trans_WorkLife). | **19** |
| Competence development through simulation of real cases (Comp_RealCas). | 2 |
| Guidance on professional development activities outside the faculty (GuiProf_OutFacul). | **21** |
| Construction of academic-professional itineraries and life project (Itin_AcadProf). | 10 |
| Construction of a life project | 10 |

*Note:* Frecuency (F).

Table 5 shows that, in relation to *Knowledge-experience in the professional field* (Know_Expe), the participants stated that it is essential to have teaching experience in order to be able to guide students in the world of work and lead them to knowledge.

In reference to the category *Training_information on professional opportunities* (Train_InforProfes), the contributions of the quantitative and qualitative data are in agreement. Extensive professor training in professional guidance in order to be able to provide the best vocational and employment advice to their students was valued:

(...) bring professionals to class, know how to guide them when selecting where they are going to do their internships and guide them according to their interests so that it is not a random choice or simply a matter of punctuation, the professor must be trained for this (UGR_HES_F9).

In consideration of the information provided to students in this same category, by way of example, one participant stated the need to "organise the virtual teaching platform, prepare links of interest for them on services that are most necessary for them, but with names such as library services with direct access, for example, for attention of special educational needs, volunteering, etc." (UJA_HS_M11).

*Training in competences for labour market insertion (*Form_Comp) is another of the resulting categories. Students must develop competences during their university studies that will allow them to access the world of work once they leave the institution, because "the important thing about knowing the content of a subject is that they then know how to use it in real life" (UJA_HES_F18).

Another of the most frequently mentioned categories is the fact of *Relating the contents of the subject to vocational opportunities* (Asig_RelaSalid) in order to offer vocational training. In this sense, one of the participants affirmed:

The starting point is that here at the university, for example, in the internships, it is important that they feel that they are already future professionals. So, they have to come with a gown or a nursing uniform when they are doing their internship (...). It is important that they see that they are already there, that they are professionals in training (UJA_HS_M13).

Another participant put this category into practice by questioning the students: "What have we got out of this subject, out of everything we've done for the whole year, what's the point of this? Then, their academic competences are grounded with the professional ones" (UGR_ES_M6).

*Information-transition to working life* (Info_Trans_WorkLife) is another category that was highlighted. In this sense, some of the participants mentioned the great need for the professor to know the different routes that lead students from their university studies to their future working life: "I work a lot with them on research into the labour market, what is required of them, that they begin to investigate these key words a little" (UJA_SLS_F12).

*Competence development through simulation of real cases* (Comp_RealCas) was relevant within professional guidance. The fact that students experiment with real cases that they may find once they are in the world of work motivated and developed them professionally:

The student has to put on and, if they get stained, it is what would happen to them in their workplace feeling as professional as possible. Even if it is a simulation, I put them in a situation as close to reality as possible (UJA_HS_M5).

Also, the category of *Guidance on professional development activities outside the faculty* should be emphasised (GuiProf_OutFacul). According to the participants' testimony, professional guidance should be provided even after the students have finished their studies:

In our faculty, we organise conferences, talks for all the graduates who want to come and tell us about their professional experiences. When they come, they always ask me for more questions that arise once they are out. It is very enriching feedback (UJA_HPS_F3).

Finally, the category *Construction of academic-professional itineraries and life project* (Itin_AcadProf) highlighted the importance of professors supporting students in the construction of itineraries that link the academic with the professional so that they leave the university with a solid life project:

(...) the construction of their academic itinerary (choice of optional subjects to build their academic curriculum). It is beneficial to put students in contact with professionals or groups of professionals, as students acquire information that it is useful for them to know the professional field: "what activities does the College do, where is it working, what are the lines, what is a Professional College for, etc." At least in our profession (Social Work) it is very necessary" (UJA_SW_M7).

The better tutored and oriented the students are, the sooner they will reach the goal, because the objective is to have a job linked to what the student studies at the university (UGR_SW_F12).

### *Student analysis: participation in the TAP and level of studies*

To determine whether student participation in the TAP is a relevant factor when explaining the scores obtained on the scale, we conducted a T-test to find out whether there is a relationship between participation or not in the TAP and the students' perception of the professional guidance received from the professor.

As Table 6 shows, in the mean scores, there are items where the mean is higher for students who participated in the TAP, and there are other items where the mean is higher for students who did not participate in the TAP. However, the test for differences between means indicated that such differences were not statistically significant in all cases.

We see that only in Item 9 there were statistically significant differences, with the means being higher for students who participated in the TAP. This means that the students who participated in the TAP were more satisfied with the professor having given them guidance on company placements in collaboration with the university.

However, for the rest of the items, there was no relationship between participating or not in the TAP and the students' perception of the professional guidance received from the professor.

Table 6. Student participation in the Tutorial Action Plan

| Items Professional guidance | Yes $\bar{x}$ | No $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Sig. | Cohen's d [*1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. They help me in the process of making vocational decisions. | 2.58 | 2.55 | .03 | .64 | 0.02 |
| 2. They guide me in the design of my professional pathway. | 2.41 | 2.33 | .08 | .19 | 0.07 |
| 3. I receive guidance on employability skills. | 2.36 | 2.25 | .10 | .08 | 0.10 |
| 4. I am informed about the possibilities of entrepreneurship in the degree programme. | 2.37 | 2.33 | .03 | .60 | 0.03 |
| 5. I have been guided about new employment opportunities. | 2.46 | 2.47 | -.01 | .89 | -0.01 |
| 6. I have been given help to create professional networks. | 2.16 | 2.17 | -.01 | .88 | -0.01 |
| 7. I have been informed about public and/or private job offers. | 2.02 | 1.98 | .04 | .53 | 0.03 |
| 8. I receive guidance on internships in companies in collaboration with the university. | 2.17 | 2.14 | .03 | .66 | 0.02 |
| 9. I relate the contents of the subjects to their professional opportunities. | 2.49 | 2.33 | .16 | .02* | 0.13 |
| 10. I develop professional competences through simulations of real cases. | 2.94 | 3 | -.06 | .36 | -0.05 |
| 11. I maintain professional contacts with companies and/or institutions related to the qualification. | 2.57 | 2.67 | -.10 | .14 | -0.08 |
| 12. They help me in the process of making vocational decisions. | 1.95 | 1.97 | -.02 | .70 | 0.02 |

*Note:* *p<0.05. [*1]d < .80.

On the other hand, differences were observed in the students' perceptions of the professional guidance received based on their academic level and type of study. This can be seen in Table 7, where statistically significant differences ($p$<0.05) are noted in all the items of the scale we analysed. The Tukey test, used in this case due to the need for multiple comparisons, showed more accurately the significant differences in each of the groups.

There were statistically significant differences between PhD students and students with a lower level of studies (2nd, and 4th years of bachelor's and master's degrees). PhD students scored higher on items stating that they are informed about the transition to the world of work, about help in the process of vocational decision-making, guidance in the design of a professional itinerary, advice on competences for labour market insertion, help in creating professional networks, information on public and/or private job offers, guidance on work placements in companies in collaboration with the university, the development of professional competences through simulations of real cases, and the maintenance of professional contacts with companies and/or institutions related to the degree.

On the other hand, there were statistically significant differences between 4th-year students and master's students, with 4th year students scoring higher on items stating that they are more informed about the possibilities of entrepreneurship in the degree.

However, there were statistically significant differences between master's students and 4th year and PhD students, with the master's students scoring lower when considering that they are oriented towards new sources of employment.

Finally, PhD students received the most professional guidance, perhaps due to their proximity to the world of work and their autonomy in this type of study.

## Discussion

Guidance and mentoring are undoubtedly a right for students, providing quality learning outcomes and future careers (Gargallo Castel et al., 2019; Guerra et al., 2016; Trangay, 2022). In the same way, professors must be prepared to carry out their tutoring work, advising and guiding students in their decision-making (Brown et al., 2022; Magee et al., 2021).

In the results obtained in this study, we found that the professors who have participated in the TAP are willing to carry out professional guidance on an ongoing basis. In other words, they connect the university world and the world of work-profession to develop vocational competencies in students (Cortés & García, 2020; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2022). On the other hand, the rest of the professors who have training in guidance and tutoring show their willingness to carry out professional guidance. The testimonies of the interviewed professors support this. These results are along the same lines already pointed out by Álvarez González (2017); Martín Romera et al. (2020); Rojas et al. (2022); Pastor Andrés and González-Benito (2023) and San Román et al. (2015) on the importance of adequate tutor training to offer quality guidance to students. In this sense, the results are of interest given that nowadays we are in a time of change in which unemployment occupies a significant place in society and students must have a professor who provides them with the necessary tools to be able to face their future employment in a secure manner (Lo Pestri et al., 2022).

Table 7. Students' academic levels

| Items Professional guidance | F | Sig. | G1 | G2 | G3 | G4 | Tukey (Post-hoc) Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. They help me in the process of making vocational decisions. | 2.58 | .05* | 2.56 | 2.53 | 2.53 | 2.87 | G4 > G1 .04*<br>G4 > G2 .03*<br>G4 > G3 .03* |
| 2. They guide me in the design of my professional pathway. | 5.65 | .00* | 2.34 | 2.36 | 2.23 | 2.69 | G4 > G1 .01*<br>G4 > G2 .02*<br>G4 > G3 .00* |
| 3. I receive guidance on employability skills. | 6.10 | .00* | 2.29 | 2.22 | 2.18 | 2.65 | G4 > G1 .01*<br>G4 > G2 .00*<br>G4 > G3 .00* |
| 4. I am informed about the possibilities of entrepreneurship in the degree programme. | 3.01 | .02* | 2.35 | 2.32 | 2.29 | 2.65 | G4 > G2 .03*<br>G4 > G3 .01* |
| 5. I have been guided about new employment opportunities. | 3.34 | .01* | 2.48 | 2.51 | 2.37 | 2.65 | G2 > G3 .03* |
| 6. I have been given help to create professional networks. | 4.12 | .00* | 2.19 | 2.20 | 2.06 | 2.40 | G3 < G2 G4 .03* |
| 7. I have been informed about public and/or private job offers. | 10.09 | .00* | 2.00 | 2.02 | 1.83 | 2.42 | G3 < G1 G2 G4 .00*<br>G4 > G1 G2 G3 .00* |
| 8. I receive guidance on internships in companies in collaboration with the university. | 5.01 | .00* | 2.10 | 2.17 | 2.13 | 2.58 | G4 > G1 G2 G3 .00* |
| 9. I relate the contents of the subjects to their professional opportunities. | 23.44 | .00* | 2.19 | 2.49 | 2.39 | 2.96 | G1 < G2 G3 G4 .00*<br>G4 > G1 G2 G3 .00* |
| 10. I develop professional competences through simulations of real cases. | 3.60 | .01* | 3.04 | 2.96 | 2.91 | 3.21 | There are no differences between groups |
| 11. I maintain professional contacts with companies and/or institutions related to the qualification. | 3.56 | .01* | 2.68 | 2.67 | 2.59 | 3 | G4 > G2 04*<br>G4 > G3 00* |
| 12. They help me in the process of making vocational decisions. | 23.78 | .00* | 1.84 | 2.03 | 2.05 | 2.81 | G1 < G2 G3 G4 .00*<br>G4 > G1 G2 G3 .00* |

*Note*: G1= 2nd course; G2 = 4th course; G3 = Master's degree; G4 = PhD. *p<.05.

Regarding the results derived from the analysis of the students' perceptions of professional guidance, it is obtained that the fact that students participate in the TAP does not guarantee a better perception of the career guidance received in tutoring, something that contrasts with the data obtained in the study of Alonso-García et al. (2018); Pantoja et al. (2022). Nevertheless, we agree with authors such as Giménez et al. (2018) and Martínez Clares et al. (2019) in considering that there is a lack of knowledge among students about tutoring, its potential and its benefits. Regarding the level of studies attained by the students, it can be seen that the PhD students had a different perception of the strategies carried out by the professors in terms of professional guidance, as they consider that the latter responds by informing them about the transition to the world of work, vocational decisions, job placement, and public/private job offers, not coinciding in this case with the results of Trangay (2022). It should be noted that master's students were the lowest in terms of their perception of the strategies implemented by the professor in terms of professional guidance, especially about new sources of employment. Therefore, it is clear that students need adequate professional guidance at all academic levels, and, to this end, the university must promote the development of professional skills that favour their transition to the world of work (Gil-Albarova et al., 2013; Haasler, 2020; López-Gómez, 2017; Pantoja, 2020). Students must be able to relate theoretical knowledge to practical knowledge as they find themselves in a society in continuous change and one that provides great uncertainty in terms of labour market insertion. Thus, professional guidance is key for students to be able to face their professional future with the necessary knowledge (Lizana-Verdugo & Burgos-García, 2022; Lo Pestri et al., 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2018; Schiersmann et al., 2012).

## Conclusions

In today's university, the training of professors in aspects related to guidance and tutoring is of the utmost importance as it is another of their functions as professionals to be developed and the progress of their students in the teaching-learning process and decision-making will depend on it. This study has analysed the main factors that define professional guidance at university from the perspective of the professors and students. It has been shown that participation in the TAP and training in guidance and tutoring are two factors to be taken into account in the performance of professional guidance, as they enable professors to acquire, on the one hand, a series of knowledge that improves the professional guidance process with students, and on the other hand, to receive and acquire the training and skills necessary to guide, advise, motivate and respond to the needs of students. Likewise, it is essential to inform students at all academic levels of the benefits of tutorial action in their academic, personal and professional careers. The results of this study demonstrated, through the analysis of the variables such as participation in the TAP and training in guidance and tutoring, that having the necessary knowledge improves the development of professional guidance with students since trained professors have the skills to guide, advise, motivate and respond to students' needs. Finally, it is essential to inform students at all academic levels of the benefits of guidance for their academic, personal and professional development.

One of the objectives of this study is to find out how the intervention of professors in the TAP is taking place. In this context, professors who participate in the TAP are more satisfied with the actions they carry out in professional guidance with students. One of the reasons for this may be because professors participating in the TAP have more specific and extensive training in guidance and tutoring, so their work is enriched and so is the progress of students, thus responding to the second objective of the study.

Referring to student participation in the TAP, we conclude that, from their perspective, participation or not in the TAP does not influence their perception of the professional guidance received from the professor, except for the fact that they consider that their professor informs them with greater knowledge about work placements in companies in collaboration with the university. Similarly, and considering the type of studies of the students, it can be seen that PhD students are the ones who receive the most professional guidance, perhaps due to the concern they have about the world of work, professional opportunities and autonomy in this type of studies.

### *Limitations*

This study has some limitations which, in turn, constitute new avenues for future research. Firstly, the study has been carried out in a specific context, specifically in Spanish public universities (Granada and Jaén) and it would be necessary to extend it to other public and private universities, as well as in other countries, which would allow for a comparative analysis of professional guidance on the part of professors and students.

Secondly, it is a study that has been carried out in universities, so it would be of interest to know the development of professional guidance in other educational stages, such as Secondary School. In this way, a comprehensive mapping of both students' and professors' perceptions of professional guidance could be developed.

### *Implications for practice*

There is a need to promote the training of professors in guidance and mentoring, as their training and the participation of students in counselling programmes are crucial aspects to improve professional guidance at university, as well as the need to inform students at all academic levels of the benefits of guidance in their academic, personal and professional careers.

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