

## Informing the Implementation of Career Conversations in Secondary Schools for the Building of Student Career Competencies: The Case of Portugal

**Authors :** Cristina Isabel de Oliveira Santos

**Abstract :** The study aims to investigate how transferrable and effective career conversations could be, in the context of general track Portuguese secondary schools, with the view of improving students' career competencies. It does so by analysing: 1) the extent to which students' perceptions of career conversations relate with their existing career competencies, 2) the extent to which each of the parameters; perceptions of career conversations and student career competencies, relate with student situational and personal characteristics, 3) how patterns in perceptions of headteachers and of teachers at a school, regarding the implementation of career conversations, correlate to the views of students regarding career conversations and to school contextual characteristics. Data were collected from 27 secondary schools out of 32 in the same district of Aveiro, in Portugal. Interviews were performed individually, with 27 headteachers, and in groups, with a total of 10 teacher groups and 11 student groups. Survey responses were also collected from 742 students and 310 teachers. Interview responses were coded and analysed using grounded theory principles. Data from questionnaires is currently being scrutinised through descriptive statistics with SPSS, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Triangulation during different stages of data analysis uses the principles of retroduction and abduction of the realist evaluation framework. Conclusions from the pilot-study indicate that student perceptions scores on content and relationship in career conversations change according to their career competencies and the type of school. Statistically significant differences in perceptions of career conversations were found for subgroups based on gender and parent educational level.

**Keywords :** career conversations, career competencies, secondary education, teachers

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