

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The Ways of Representation of Individualism in Compulsory Career Planning Courses in Türkiye

İsa Demir<sup>1</sup> , Türkan Akyol Güner<sup>2</sup> , Muhammed Macid Demir<sup>3</sup> 

### Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate how neoliberal individualist discourse is represented in compulsory Career Planning Courses added to the curriculum of every department in Turkish universities. For this purpose, the course contents are subjected to critical discourse analysis. As a result of the analysis, it was observed that generating career goals, self-development, self-investment, designing oneself as an enterprise, being employed, and being preferred in the market are turned into individual tasks. When reaching career goals is turned into a matter of individual success, unemployment or failure can also be explained through individual deficiencies, instead of individuals' socioeconomic backgrounds. This also serves to hide the structural problems embedded in neoliberalism. This process, called the institutionalization of individualization, individualizes both existing inequalities and market-based risks.

**Keywords:** Individualization • Neoliberalism • Career planning • Career guidance • The institutionalization of individualization

**1 Correspondence to:** İsa Demir (Asst. Prof.), Faculty of Health Science, Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Zonguldak, Türkiye. Email: isa.demir@beun.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0001-7555-9827

**2 Türkan Akyol Güner (Asst. Prof.),** Faculty of Health Science, Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Zonguldak, Türkiye. Email: turkanaguner@beun.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0003-0138-0669

**3 Muhammed Macid Demir (Res. Asst.),** Faculty of Health Science, Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Zonguldak, Türkiye. Email: m.demir@beun.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0002-2501-2599

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It is frequently emphasized that an individual-centered perspective dominates career development studies (Sultana, 2014; Sultana, 2018; Pouyaed & Guichard, 2018; Irving, 2018; Bengtsson, 2018; Hooley et al. 2018; Gutowski et al. 2021; Hooley, 2021; Robertson, 2021). It is also argued that individualization becoming a widespread value is a strategy of the neoliberal economy (Türken et al. 2016; Gough & Neary, 2021; Harvey, 2015). The subjectivity discourse that is created by neoliberal ideology points to the disengagement of collective bonds and the rising of an individualized society (Bauman, 2001). The new society, called “Liquid Modernity” by Bauman, individualizes responsibilities while it promises freedom (Bauman, 2000). This situation causes individuals to live in a risk society (Beck, 1992). In an era of institutionalized individualism (Beck & Beck, 2002), it is not possible to talk about classes, family ties, welfare policies, state assurances that reduce risks, and institutional support that provides lifelong job and income security.

The emphasis on self-development and the construction of individuals’ own career lines in career counseling services are the fundamental results of the individualization of production, consumption, and distribution relationships. Based on this idea, this article demonstrates how the career planning approach is affected by the neoliberal individualization discourse in Turkey. It points out the scarcity of research on the relationship of career management with the neoliberal labor regime. For this purpose, the Career Planning Courses (CPC) studied in the first year of universities are subjected to content analysis. The analysis of CPC, which can be an example of the institutionalization of individualization, will contribute to eliminating the deficiency in the research field.

### **Neoliberal Economy and Individualization**

Every historical era has notions that define itself. According to Hobsbawm (2005), the industrial society is characterized by concepts such as industrialist, factory, working-class, capitalism, socialism, railway, liberalism, and engineering. The neoliberal society is likewise identified by concepts of its own such as flexibility, liquidity, individualization, Start-Up, self-entrepreneur, precarity, insecurity, human capital, employability, deregulation, and financialization.

Neoliberalism emerged with a series of developments in the 1970s. It has adopted a flexible exchange rate regime, deregulation of industry and agriculture, and the curbing of the power of labor from this period. As a result of these developments, the theories of centralized state planning were abandoned. Strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade rose (Harvey, 2015). Restrictions on import and export were either canceled or reduced. Especially, developing countries have started to open their markets to trade and investment unlimitedly (Rodrik,2011). The state, which withdrew from the

economic field, only started to deal with military defense, protection of property rights, and maintaining justice. The liberalization and marketization wave expanded so much that areas such as health, education, social security, land, water, and environmental pollution, which are not private market investments, turned into paid services offered by the market (Harvey, 2015).

The developments after 1980 also transformed labor relations. The neoliberalism that has marketized whole human activity has voided collective bonds by reducing the capital-labor relationship to individual contracts or non-contractual working.

While the neoliberal economic model minimized the intervention of the state, it also eliminated union activities, work and income guarantees, the full employment target of the state, social rights, and social policies (Bauman, 2001; Harvey, 2015). Under these conditions, employees became disorganized and singularized. Neoliberal ideology has transformed people from citizens to be employed to individuals who have to prove themselves to be employable.

According to liberals, the free market is the foundation of individual freedom. However, this promise of freedom results in the powerlessness, loneliness, and vulnerability of individuals in the face of market forces. While capital's freedom of movement moves it to regions where costs and taxes are low, workers are exposed to precarious, temporary, fixed-term contracted or non-contracted, low-paid, and subcontracting forms of work. Precariat (Standing, 2015) and Multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2011) are concepts that have been used to describe the social forces and employees of this new era.

The most important concepts that define the neoliberal labor regime are flexibility and individualization. The increasing flexibility and individualization have brought temporary labor, self-employment, sub-contracting, gig working, independent/dependent constructor, and platform economy. The neoliberal economy has produced several value sets as well as created new working ways and fields: Being a micro-entrepreneur or having an entrepreneurial sense of subjectivity, increasing self-employability, being one's own boss, adopting a flexible labor market, boosting human capital, taking for granted the frequency of job changes and even seeing it as a virtue, transforming their life into a job, making career planning, maximizing personal competence, and investing in the self.

The withdrawal of the state from the field of employment and economy means the individualization of the setbacks to be experienced in this field. This is called the individualization of risk (Mills, 2004; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 2021). The risks that were suppressed by the state and unionized workers in the past have turned into individual problems because of the dysfunction of the state and unions. Hence, people who lost

their job must now look for the reason in themselves: if they had enough skills, they would probably be the preferred employee and would not be unemployed.

Individualization in terms of labor relations marks that employment is an individual responsibility, not the affair of the state and the right of citizenship (Bal & Docci, 2018). All forms of social solidarity constructed by the welfare state have been displaced by individualization, and then it has been replaced by individual responsibility thinking (Harvey, 2015).

The task of the individual, who is the entrepreneur of the self (Bauman, 2001; Zizek, 2014), is to make himself/herself ready for the market. But what this ideology ignores is the fact that individuals do not have equal opportunities to develop themselves.

### **Individualized Career Guidance**

The gap between abstract neoliberal values and concrete neoliberal practices determines the deepening and dimensions of commodification, marketization, and precarity of labor. Moreover, life is considered a personal investment by neoliberalism. While new market ideology builds individuals as subjects of success and performance (Han, 2019; Fleming, 2015) it also reduces them to human capital (Schultz, 1952; Fleming, 2017). Everyone has to prove themselves to the market. Career management discourse, also, has been affected by the neoliberal shift and has started to adopt the discourse that prioritizes individuality.

Much research on careers uses various concepts like career guidance (Hooley & Sultana, 2016), career development (Robertson et al., 2021), career counseling, career management, and career education. The common point of these concepts is the structuring of life, education, and occupation experiences of individuals before the job market, and the management of experiences, competence, opportunities, skills, and processes after employment. For this reason, the definitions of career (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022; Collins English Dictionary, 2022; Merriam-Webster, 2022; Bernardin, 2003; Woodd, 2000; Tanoli, 2016) cover the periods before, in-between, and after professional life. Thus, the definition of the OECD (2004: 19) includes all three periods:

Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers... Career guidance is provided to people in a very wide range of settings: schools and tertiary institutions; public employment services; private guidance providers; enterprises; and community settings.

According to Sultana (2017), this definition is politically biased, technocratic, not critical, and addresses wealthy countries. Moreover, as Hooley and colleagues argue, "It does not include any sense that career guidance can be addressed to social injustice nor that it can or should challenge the structures of neoliberalism that we have argued

hamper individual's careers and pursuit of the good life.”(2016). McCash and others (2021) state that like career guidance, career development is also mostly evaluated in an individualistic context and addresses the middle class. Instead, they propose an extensive and social-based career development system. “We make career decisions, but we do not make them entirely within circumstances of our choosing. Opportunity structures are shaped by the political economy. Career development is not just an individual series of choices, it is where the individual interacts with society.” (McCash et al., 2021).

Career development had focused on the working class, immigrants, school drop-outs, and other disadvantaged groups until the 1960s (Gutowski et al., 2021, p. 27). Later, it shifted its focus to career choices and middle-class issues (Bluistein, 2017). We can say that together with the neoliberal economic policies the protectionist career discourse has been abandoned. However, many scholars put forth opinions against the neoliberal invasion in the field of career development. These opinions claim that income, race, gender, education level, family background, and socioeconomic background are more effective than personal wishes, ambitions, skills, and desires in career choices. For this reason, Sultana (2018) proposes the “social reconstructionist” or “emancipatory” career approach instead of the “humanistic-developmental” and “social efficiency” perspectives. The social efficiency career development approach aims to ensure a smoother relationship between the supply and demand of skills for the benefit of the economy. The humanistic approach emphasizes self-improvement, increasing competence, self-building, self-discovering, and individual choices instead of career guidance that gives importance to the supply-demand balance. Fundamentally different from these, the emancipatory approach considers the advantages and power of capital. It looks for ways to empower individuals in social organizations and evaluates them by considering their disadvantages. It decodes systemic injustice and social inequality. This approach emphasizes collectivist solutions, not individual struggle and personal development. Instead of employing individuals according to the demands of the market or encouraging them to increase their personal development, it tries to produce collective solutions by problematizing social inequalities (Sultana, 2018).

Neoliberal career management, which ignores the emancipatory career development approach, prefers to offer a career guidance service that emphasizes the values of individuality like the humanistic and social efficiency approaches. Individualization, whether embedded or explicit, is presented as a value in the CPC in Turkey, too. The article aims to show how individualization is represented by CPC.

### **Neoliberalization in Turkey and the Logic of Individualization**

The economic decisions taken on January 24, 1980, in Turkey, were a turning point for the country's economy. Indeed, a coup was organized, with US support, to apply

these decisions (Van Zürcher, 2021, p. 319), as in Chile. The liberalization of the economy, in Turkey, started in the 1980s (Boratav, 2006, p. 145; Kepenek, 2012, p. 191–213). The Motherland Party (ANAP) played the most important role during this period. When a solid labor regime based on import substitution industrialization was abandoned, the Turkish economy opened up after the 1980s' and the country met new ways of working (Kazgan, 2006, p. 127–132, Koyuncu et al., 2019, p. 9). While governments adopted full employment and social security as a primary policy before 1980, employees began to be deprived of the guarantees that protect them, and being employed turned into an individual responsibility after the 1980s. Among the developments that can be cited as evidence of the spread of individualized labor relations are the following: The spread of temporary employment contracts, the shrinkage in public employment, the decrease in workers' wages, the establishment of private employment agencies, the reduction in unionization rates, the expansion of subcontracting, and the National Employment Strategy, which aims to increase flexibility.

Adaptation of individuals to the new job market created by these economic decisions is possible with the new working values (Independent Social Scientist, 2015). The contents of CPC, also, should be evaluated within this context. The courses serve the institutionalization of individualization ideology. The logic of neoliberal policies forms the logic of social space, and from here emerges the fantasmatic logic that enriches individuality (Glynos, 2008). According to Glynos, the sources that fuel individualism the most and make to form a belief in it are the fantasy of freedom, the fantasy of meritocracy which emphasizes that the good wins, and the fantasy of personal growth and progress. All three of these not only make the structural causes of unemployment, poverty, and inequality invisible but also cause individuals who suffer from them to see the problem in themselves. Individualization thus subjectivizes risks, responsibilities, and success.

Individual identities are shaped by subjective experiences, that is, subjects construct their subjectivity in the social relations they are involved in. Subjective experiences, on the other hand, are based on certain conceptual schemes or knowledge structures. The subject's relationship with a discourse determines its subjectivation process, and thus, individuals come face to face with a form of power. Individuals, who set up their subjectivity through the value system created by neoliberal ideology, begin to see the world with concepts specific to neoliberal discourse (Foucault, 1993; Foucault, 2000). Freedom, competition, self-development, and self-progress, which are named fantasies by Glynos (2008), are parts of the neoliberal power's subjectivization strategy. Accordingly, neoliberal discourse prefers to explain insecurity with freedom of movement and flexibility, frequent job changes with the pursuit of opportunities, being employed as a result of individual success, and being unemployed following personal inadequacies (Han, 2019). Thus, individuals also think according to these criteria when

interpreting their behavior, and use these concepts and knowledge structures in the relationship they interrelate with themselves. The institutionalization of individualization is actually the internalization of a power discourse by individuals. The relationship we seek in CPC is what knowledge and conceptual structures are included in the form of discourse presented to individuals who try to establish their subjectivity.

### **Method**

This article aims to reveal the implicit meanings of the CPC by subjecting it to critical discourse analysis (CDA) within the framework of the qualitative research method. In these courses, the ways of representation of the discourse of individualization specific to neoliberalism are aimed to be observed. Hence, the article seeks answers to two basic questions:

1. Are the values specific to neoliberal ideology represented in the CPC? If so, what are the indicators of this? Are the discourses in the video content constructed in a way that supports, affirms, and reinforces the neoliberal working regime?
2. Does the CPC individualize risks and responsibilities regarding working life? If so, in which discourse does it do this?

The above questions can be handled with some categories/codes that make individualization visible. We can categorize these codes as follows:

- turning career planning and being employed into an individual task,
- emphasis on personal characteristics,
- reducing the career journey to individual competencies or qualifications,
- individual achievement stories,
- explaining failure and unemployment with individual deficiencies instead of structural issues

CDA provides the opportunity to examine the texts of CPC using these questions. As Siho says, CDA “has been one of the most relevant and effective research methods for the critical politic economy” (Siho, 2020) and reveals how language helps maintain power structures in our society. Accordingly, CDA focus on “discourse within the social reproduction of relations of domination.” (Fairclough, 2020). Consequently, it has been used to evaluate how neoliberal career discourse has shaped undergraduates’ subjectivation experience through CPC. From the perspective of CDA, CPC not only ensures guiding and counseling services to undergraduates but rather produces consent for an individualized labor force market.

CPC consists of 14 weeks of video content. Each week contains a different number of videos. In the videos, trainers make presentations depending on the topic of that week. In the course content, experts from various professions, academics, sector representatives, non-governmental organization employees, volunteers, employees in international organizations, public officers, bureaucrats, high-level representatives from businesses, and career experts provide information to students. This article employs this course content to analyze the career planning mentality in exploring the questions presented above.

### **Findings and Discussion: The Ways of Representation of Individualism in CPC**

The purpose of the courses is stated by the Presidential Human Resources Office (PHRO) as “to guide students to determine their careers by their intelligence, personality, knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies”. The expected output is defined as “supporting the effort to know oneself and discovering one’s potential”, and “helping students make career planning compatible with their future goals by enabling them to gain awareness about their interests, personal characteristics, and values.” (Presidential Human Resources Office [PHRO], 2021). Besides these, the other purposes of the courses for the students are to increase self-awareness, help to discover career choices, improve their soft skills, and support them while they plan their careers.

These statements in the syllabus prepared for the lecturers who will give the course show that the courses are based on an individualized career approach. Accordingly, CPC guides undergraduates who will have to make choices about their careers in the future. These choices will be determined by the students’ personality, type of intelligence, skills, abilities, and competencies. As we say above, individualization is a concept referring to the fact that having a job is a personal responsibility. Individuals must develop themselves, increase skills, abilities, and competencies, and turn into persons who are preferred by the labor market. Employment is no longer a basic right; it is considered a result of competition between individuals. In the neoliberal era, subjects, regardless of their socioeconomic background, are accepted as free individuals who can act in line with personal interests, are equal to each other, are motivated by competition, live target-oriented, create a social network in a pragmatist framework, and make their own choices (Chadderton, 2020; Foucault, 2004).

Research on career planning in Turkey, as in CPC, is mainly aimed at identifying and establishing the relationship between education and employment. The future of professions, the motivation effect, the condition of the job market (Güldü & Kart; 2017), the professions suitable for personal characteristics (Esmer & Pabuçcu, 2019), the creation of individual career goals (Göz & Gürbüz, 2005; Cevher, 2015), career planning and the business belonging relationship (Ece & Esen, 2017) and the effect of making an individualistic career plan on student’s success (Acar & Özdaşlı, 2017)

are some of the topics discussed. However, Mutlutürk et al. (2012) detect that income level affects the career plan. Research on athletes has shown that low-income athletes have to work in different income-generating professions. According to the research, athletes quit sports due to economic insecurity and have to work in jobs outside of their intelligence, knowledge, skills, and competencies. While the neoliberal narrative advises individuals to pursue their desires, it also exposes individuals to risks. Groups that suffer from risks the most, on the other hand, are forced to cling to the first option they come across rather than planning their careers. In today's conditions where income inequalities have increased, making a career plan has become a privilege, and is class-based. As Brown (2003) demonstrated, opportunity costs can only be afforded by middle-class and upper-class families. Therefore, the relationship between education, jobs, and rewards is also unraveling (Brown, 2003).

The individualized career guidance model acknowledges individuals as competitors who compete in equal conditions. It takes no account of disadvantages leading to inequality and from the past such as income level, gender, race, residence, information, communication technology access, technology literacy, and socioeconomic background. This approach is apolitical and uncritical and unaware of social welfare and job security concepts. For example, Irving's (2013) study in New Zealand showed that career education and guidance are also built around neoliberal values. Besides, these values are reflected as if they are "truth", "neutral", "value-free" and "non-changeable" (Irving, 2013). The reflections of this mentality are explicitly seen in CPC in Turkey, too.

### ***Emphasis on personal characteristics***

The courses start with the Introduction of the Career Center present at every university. The following three weeks are devoted to establishing the link between individual characteristics and career. This is constructed through subjects like what is intelligence and personality, knowledge, skills, abilities and competence, and technical and soft skills in the second-third-fourth week. At the end of the fourth week, the relation of these concepts with career guidance or planning is explained. The fifth and sixth weeks cover the discourse of individualism based on theoretical information from the first four weeks. Firstly, we cite the expressions used in these courses, and then, reveal our evaluation.

*"The intelligence dimension that you are prone to at the point of career planning will help you in determining the suitable profession for you. For this, firstly, you must know yourself and be aware of your intelligence areas by knowing how you learn. Then you should determine the career fields that are suitable for you." (Week 2, Video 1, Minute 9.22)*

We have already mentioned the relationship between the concept of individuality and other dimensions of the neoliberal labor regime (flexibility, employability, human capital, and self-entrepreneurship). Here, we see that the right career journey is about

having some individual characteristics and heading towards professions that fit these characteristics. Rather than being citizens secured through some social policy, we are portrayed as subjects that should increase our competence, and enter the job market. Also, we are thought of as being alone but free while acquiring these traits. However, in circumstances where education is marketized, and certain economic, cultural, and social capital is required for acquiring many skills, the race is not waged fairly.

*“The individuals can form their career plans regarding verbal-linguistic intelligence, mathematical-logical intelligence, and social-relational intelligence dispositions. At the same time, the individuals can develop their different intelligence dimensions with sufficient repetitions and studies.” (Week 2, Video 1, Minute 11.04).*

*“It is very important to know your personality traits when setting your own career goals. In this way, you can determine the career paths that are suitable for you more accurately.” (Week 2, Video 2, Minute 10.30).*

Many different expressions similar to the ones mentioned above are included in the video content of the first 4 weeks. The message that comes to the fore in the first four weeks of the CPC is: Increase your level of knowledge and improve your skills in the areas you are interested in, with repetition and new experiences. Discover your innate abilities or let Career Centers help you discover them. Become a competent individual, attend career fairs, learn a foreign language, follow job postings, gain the features requested in these postings and become the preferred person. With these demands, neoliberal discourse assigns the task of the individuals to self-designation (Tommasi & Deggen, 2022; Saviskas et al., 2009). As a design, a person turns into a subject and projects from a human. At this point, subjectivation works on the mind, not only on the body (Han, 2019). This process creates “global economic subjects” (Irving, 2013).

*“Knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies are the features by which you evaluate the suitability of a job for you or your aptitude for a job.” (Week 3, Video 1, Minute 1.40)*

*“We can say that competence is the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics to gain a license to do a job well.” (Week 3, Video 1, Minute 11.11).*

*“These four concepts are very important to know ourselves and to draw the appropriate career plan for ourselves.” (Week 3, Video 1, Minute 13.00).*

*“A person can make a career plan in different fields by improving his/her skills in an area where he/she is not skilled. Therefore, talent does not necessarily have to be innate.” (3 weeks, Video 1, Minute 09.59).*

This insistent emphasis on increasing qualifications serves to turn success, employment, and unemployment into an individual problem. Not only in the courses in the first four weeks, but also in the other weeks, no emphasis is placed on any social policy, secure employment, or the state’s role as an important factor in employment.

### ***Turning career planning into and being employed as an individual task***

Interviews with people who have reached certain points in their careers, both in the private and public sectors (the whole of Week 10) discuss how individuals get to where they are. When we watch the videos, we encounter individuals who have constructed their careers correctly. For example, these people answer the question “What were your professional and personal characteristics that benefited you the most in coming to this position?” as follows: it is related to personal qualifications, having a strong personality, not giving up easily, technical and professional knowledge, investments made in university life, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, a wide social circle, and having an entrepreneurial spirit. Individuals who cannot reach this position have to face the fact that they do not have these traits. The courses also present the reasons for failure when viewed backward: Not investing in your career, not developing yourself, not participating in teamwork, not taking part in social responsibility projects, not developing technology literacy, not picking up a foreign language, not benefiting from student exchange programs, not having a master’s or Ph.D. degree from abroad, not having problem-solving skills, not having critical thinking skills, not having powerful psychology if you are an entrepreneur, not having a sufficient sense of curiosity, not having the courage to take risks, not dedicating every moment of your life to work, not keeping up with flexible labor markets, not working for low wages when appropriate, and not persevering. None of the courses mention economic, social, and political processes that cause unemployment, inequality of opportunity, lack of capital, and other structural factors that cause individuals to miss certain gains. The fact that successful individuals have always personal reasons to explain their achievements also causes individual reasons for failures to be used.

*“Guiding your career is highly personal research.” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute20.58). The stages of this research are presented as follows: “1. Self-knowledge, 2. Acquiring knowledge, skills, and experience, 3. Researching career options, 4. Getting support from career experts.”*

The expectations above, in addition to being far from seeing some facts, cannot answer some questions: First of all, do students have equal opportunities to acquire knowledge? Second, do students have access to opportunities and tools to develop their skills? Third, let’s say individuals have discovered their abilities, how many of them can work in suitable jobs for their abilities? How much does the labor market care about these skills and abilities, especially in a country like Turkey where the youth unemployment rate (Turkstat, 2021a) is 24.7 percent? Fourth, are individuals offered work and wage security in their career journey? Also, how does it make sense to plan a career in a job market where wages and job security are so low? And finally, will Turkey, which ranks at the bottom of the social justice indexes prepared by the OECD (Schraad-Tischler, 2011; Hellmann et al., 2019), adopt an individualized career guidance model leading to the fixation of disadvantaged groups in their current

positions? The youth unemployment rate, the gap between income groups -Gini coefficient is 0.410- (Turkstat, 2021b), and the marketization of education both reproduce economic and social inequalities and affect the career development opportunities and decisions of undergraduates in Turkey. The same problem is observed in Chile. According to McWhirter and McWhirter (2011), individualistic goals replace collective values, and market-based understanding displaces public policy in Chile. The guidance practice model also tends to explain success and failure with personal factors, ignoring socioeconomic and cultural factors (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2011).

### ***Reducing the career journey to individual competencies or qualifications***

Another form of the individualization strategy is to describe a career as a journey and investment. The 5th-week content is “What is a Career?” When we look at the answers, we see that individual effort, adventure, journey, self-discovery, making decisions, progress, and climbing the job ladder are mentioned. It is possible to see the projections of individualization in the career definition of a person working as a specialist in the Presidential Human Resources Office:

- *“Of course, a career is a professional journey with the usual term. But (...) the important thing is that the student should be able to take the right steps with the right qualities and reach the goal. I think of my career as mountaineering. (...) There is a peak, the student is holding it in various places while climbing that peak. These handholds can be variable for each student, but I consider it a career to find a suitable path for him and reach the top as the final result of that journey.” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute 01.43).*

A branch manager working in the Ministry of National Education defines his career as follows:

- *“Career is all the investments that a person has made while reaching his/her goal at her location: himself/herself, his/her future, his/her effort...” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute 02.34).*

A university student, on the other hand, defines a career by associating it with personal characteristics:

- *“In my opinion, a career is a profession in which people are aware of their characteristics and dedicated to both continuing their own lives and improving and educating themselves, and this continues throughout their lives.” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute 06.10).*

An academic, on the other hand, refers to personal qualities such as perseverance, diligence, and the ability to plan when describing a career:

- *“I think a career is a journey (...) an adventure where there may be some uncertainties from beginning to end, with a little determination and work, a little planning, research... actually, it can go well when planned.” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute 06.24).*

The trainer of the module, on the other hand, emphasizes personal activities, advancements, and experiences when describing careers:

- *“The concept of career basically means all of one’s activities, experiences, and advancements in business life.” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute 07.46).*

- *“A career is a lifelong journey where you build and use your skills, knowledge, and experience.” (Week 5, Video 1, Minute 09.05).*

### ***Individual achievement stories and individualization of failures***

Personal success stories hold an essential place in individualized career management. In this way, the discourse of equality of opportunity peculiar to liberalism is reproduced, and failures are explained by personal inadequacies. Likewise, in the video content of Week 10, examples of people (Anthony Davis, Michael Phelps, İdil Biret, & Murat Karahan) who have been successful in their careers are presented. Success stories give the message that if you work hard enough, have abilities, and improve yourself, you can be successful, too. Successful individuals are those who have planned and managed their careers correctly. The reason for failure also is not planning the career correctly, not working enough, not having enough patience, not discovering their abilities, and not doing enough repetitions to improve their skills. Under these conditions, neoliberalism, according to Han (2019), creates performance subjects who voluntarily exploit themselves. The destination of this is a burnout society (Han, 2015). Moreover, thanks to success stories, neoliberal ideology reproduces itself, and it creates its hegemony by ensuring the “consent of the governed.” (Gramsci, 2011). According to Geng (2021), the process of individualization and responsabilization is carried out in China, in the same way as in Turkey. In China, too, students are called on to take responsibility for the choices they make in their lives. The students live under pressure to prove themselves as the subject of success and performance.

To summarize, the individualization of working and employment is the liberalization of career guidance or career development. As a result of individualization, getting to know oneself as an individual to be employed, and discovering one’s knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies has turned into an individual task. As a result of this understanding, career management prioritizes individualization of work-related processes and results, rather than opening areas for individuals to work in and, ensuring that individuals reach these opportunities equally.

## **Conclusion**

When we consider the improvement of neoliberalism in Turkey, we see a structure of two consecutive periods. In the first period, the trade and finance sectors were liberalized, public corporations were privatized, and the domestic market was made open to foreign

capital. In the second period, corresponding social, cultural, and institutional arrangements were realized. “The new policies that left their mark on the period (...), legitimized through concepts such as social and human capital, are the cornerstones of this domination process.” (Bedirhanoğlu, 2013). Neoliberal career management intentionally or unintentionally has reproduced the asymmetrical circumstances in society, it has also served these circumstances to be adopted by the lower strata in society (Yıldırım, 2013). Therefore, CPC not only works as an extension of the neoliberal hegemony process but also creates the illusion that we live in an equitable and fair society based on values such as employability, human capital, self-entrepreneurship, individualization, and flexibility.

In this article, it is shown how the individualized career guidance approach, which has risen with the neoliberal economy, has been institutionalized in the context of CPC in Turkey. The CPC, which is taken in the first year of the department’s curriculum, makes employment an individual task and turns the struggle against market-related risks into the responsibility of individuals. Accordingly, the CPC emphasizes individual qualification issues rather than structural unemployment problems. For the neoliberal labor regime, there is no unemployment problem, only individuals who have not developed enough to be employed. According to neoliberal career management thinking, the individuals who develop themselves, plan their careers correctly, take the right steps in the education process, have an entrepreneurial spirit, can adapt to the flexible labor market, and work without giving up will be successful.

Prepared by the PHRO, the CPC has individualized employment relations through discourses such as self-knowledge, self-development, discovering one’s own skills, talents, and competencies, and making a career plan suitable for one’s intelligence and personality. At this point, the mission of the state is to guide individuals who need to choose their own career goals rather than generating employment or regulating the precarious job market. The content of this mission is to guide whether the individuals choose a job suitable for their intelligence and personality, to provide information about career fairs, to start an internship mobilization, and to create digital platforms that bring employers and employees together.

In addition to these discourses and services, there are some success stories in CPC. The personal characteristics of individuals who have reached high statuses are highlighted. The narrative of individuality leads people who cannot achieve their career goals to seek the problem of their inadequacies. Thus, the asymmetrical conditions in production and distribution of relationships are covered up, the structural problems in the labor force market are hidden, and the neoliberal economic system, which is the main reason for inequality and insecurity, is ignored.

Another feature of CPC is that it makes no mention of the risks, uncertainty, and precarity in the labor market. If individuals make a correct career plan, risks are

minimized, uncertainties are avoided, and flexibility is experienced as freedom and an abundance of choice.

Career education and guidance are suspiciously very important for the youth who are at a starting point in their career journey. Additionally, it is equally important to create a labor market that can provide job and income security to young people. International supply chains, shifting production to countries where labor costs are cheap, the absence of policies to restrain capital against labor forces, and temporary, flexible, and precarious work becoming a norm have frustrated emancipatory empowerment and career development approaches. When we think about recent economic circumstances, the discussion on how the career management of the future will look will be comprehensive, difficult, and multidimensional. This study does not aim to predict the future of career management. The quality of the answer to this issue, however, will determine the quality of life of millions of undergraduates and graduates in the labor force market.

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