

# Pedagogical Foundations of the Technology of Vocational Guidance for Students

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**Abstract:** Today, considering professional specialists' needs, the content and technology of training in career counseling from the perspective of practice are not sufficiently developed. Thus, a search for new forms, methods, and means of conducting career guidance with students is necessary.

This article offers a broad range of technologies and their optimal combination in career guidance work with pupils in the integrated system "School – University."

A leading approach to the study of this problem is an integrative approach that leads to the necessity to use traditional and innovative technologies that contribute not only to effective assimilation of knowledge but also an early social adaptation of the prospective adolescents to university conditions.

The present study consists of a needs assessment of students' career guidance and career counseling programs in the university. The research is based on a survey developed on a sample of 120 students from the Almaty schools. The collected data has been both qualitative and quantitative. The students have been inquired about their professional path, about their career decisions, personal and professional values, abilities and competencies, intentions for the future, etc. The study's most relevant results show that: students are poorly informed about job opportunities, their expectations for the future are not connected with their own knowledge and abilities, they do not have a coherent career plan, and they encounter major barriers in the career decision process. The results are important for career counselors as they can be used to develop career guidance programs in the university environment.

Purpose of the research: to theoretically substantiate and experimentally test the pedagogical conditions of vocational guidance for senior schoolchildren in the context of specialized education.

The article is valuable for teachers and faculty of educational and vocational institutions to organize and conduct career guidance with students, applicants, and students.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical, foundations, technology, vocational, guidance, adolescents.

## INTRODUCTION

The national educational strategy, the concept of modernizing Kazakhstan education for the period up to now, and the concept of specialized training at the senior level of general education provide for an increase in the socio-economic efficiency of general secondary education, the implementation of the principle of variability and differentiation of education, considering local changes in the labor market. Choosing a profile for an in-depth study of the material, the student, based on personal interests, inclinations, and competent advice, is guided by a certain direction of his future profession [1].

In recent years, the attitude towards the professional self-determination of schoolchildren has changed significantly, which is associated, first of all, with the introduction of pre-profile training and specialized training of students at the senior level of

general education. The transition to a specialized school makes professional orientation multi-stage: choosing a training profile, checking the correctness of choice, and, as a result, choosing a profession. The introduction of specialized training has a positive effect on students' orientation in the field of future professional activities, contributes to the establishment of equal access to full-fledged education for different categories of students in accordance with their desires and needs [2].

As Kavale found out, youth and adolescents' career counseling needs were often approached in terms of attitudes, beliefs, potential solutions to the problems, faiths, satisfactions/dissatisfaction, level of aspiration or desires.

Among the studies that have addressed this issue more objectively, there is the study offered by Fouad, who investigated the needs of awareness and use of counseling services among students [3].

The authors of the study analyzed counseling needs in terms of three dimensions: the need for assessment,

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the level of awareness, and the degree of utilization of services offered. Based on the data obtained, the research team found that students have shown counseling needs both in career decision-making and on issues related to stress caused by this stage. Dogar, Azeem, Mehmood, and Latif conducted a study on 60 final-year students to identify the main counseling needs. Of the five main assessed needs categories (educational, vocational, emotional, social, and behavioral), the vocational needs occupied the largest proportion, namely 45% [4].

A study of a much larger complexity was conducted by Raduleț on a sample of 724 students, aiming particularly at the way they make a career decision. Starting from the identified data, the author found that students are somewhat confused than career-oriented, highlighting the urgent need for vocational guidance and counseling services that assist young people in the process of clarification of their own interests, abilities, skills, values on the one hand and the other to help them understand the many factors having an active role in their career planning, which also influence their decision [5].

Therefore, the assessment of counseling needs must always be proactive, indicating gaps between the current situation and the desired situation being followed by identifying optimal solutions to improve the factual situation [6].

This implies a constant comparison between what is and what should be. According to UNESCO's definition, career orientation can be defined as the process by which an individual is assisted in the discovery, acceptance, and proper use of their abilities, skills, and interests in accordance with their aspirations and values [7].

According to Tanveer-Uz-Zaman Choudhary, But, career orientation is both a concept and a product. Analyzed in terms of a concept, career guidance aims for optimal development of the individual, while viewed from a process perspective, it seeks the guidance of the individual in their own process of self-knowledge (identifying strengths and limitations, interests and personal values) and self-direction (ability to make decisions, solve problems, make choices) [8].

Therefore, career counseling is an educational construct where the individual is supported in knowing oneself and then use this information to become useful and effective inside the society to which one belongs [9].

This implies from the individual's side, the development of one's capacity to explore one's own vocational profile and potential, but also one's limits, the problems one faces, and the identification of realistic and rational solutions to solve them under the supervision of a specialist. Numerous studies indicated that counseling and career guidance offered to young people and adolescents in order for them to discover their abilities, skills, interests, and values significantly correlates with academic and professional satisfaction and implicitly with career success [10]. So, the issue of career guidance directly impacts the youth employability phenomenon. As Martinez and Danalache mentioned, "current reality shows that the main problem of young people is not finding a job, but rather getting a job as stable and appropriate for the individual concerned" [11].

By appropriate and timely identification of career counseling needs, appropriate, more sustainable, and at the same time, at a much lower cost, solutions can be offered. Consequently, exploratory action of assessment needs should be considered a first and unavoidable step in planning interventions in career guidance and counseling in an educational system focused on the individual's needs and interests [12].

Our research has shown that the improvement of educational activities in the indicated direction implies the need to resolve the following contradictions:

- the personal capabilities of high school students and the requirements of the profession to a person;
- professional self-determination of senior schoolchildren and the lack of demand for their chosen professions in the modern labor market [13];
- high school students' choice of a promising professional field of activity and the possibility of obtaining an education in accordance with individual preferences.

These contradictions necessitate the purposeful implementation of the formation of vocational guidance for senior pupils in the context of specialized training. The real state of the sphere of vocational guidance of schoolchildren does not fully correspond to modern educational requirements: there is a serious weakening of attention to the issues of social and professional self-determination of students in all types of educational institutions and, above all, in general, education

schools, correlated links between the education system and the market are underdeveloped labor [14].

Thus, there is an objective need for the scientific development of this problem, namely, the definition of the pedagogical conditions for the formation of vocational guidance of senior pupils in the conditions of pre-profile training and specialized training, the creation of an educational network for the effective implementation of this process [15].

In accordance with the goal of the research, the following objectives are formulated:

1. To clarify the content of basic research concepts.
2. To determine the specifics and possibilities of vocational guidance for senior students.
3. To establish the criteria and indicators of the success of vocational guidance of schoolchildren in specialized education.
4. To develop a model of vocational guidance for senior schoolchildren in the context of specialized education.
5. Prepare scientific and methodological recommendations for vocational guidance of high school students in the context of specialized training [16].

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

Our research was conducted on a sample of 120 participants, with ages ranging between 13-14 years ( $M=20.3$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ), 41 males and 79 females. All participants were students in Almaty school.

Demographic data offer us an image of the 120 students. Almost half of them are 9th grade ( $N=60$ ), 46 – 10th grade, and 14 – 11th-grade students.

120 students participated during the entire study, and 22 agreed to participate in a focus group or an interview. Participation in the investigation was voluntary and anonymous. Participation agreements, data confidentiality, and other ethical aspects were assured.

### **Measures**

The self-administered questionnaire consists of 47 questions. The main investigation themes include:

academic choice motivation, students' abilities, and competencies, interests and values, factors influencing the career choice, decisional style, academic and professional experience, career decision information sources, and students' future intentions and objectives. For the qualitative approach, we conducted 2 focus groups and 5 interviews. Twenty-two students agreed to participate in this part of the study. During discussions, we approached 10 major themes: the motivation for studying in the current field, major factors influencing career decisions, professional experience, the field of future, work, exploratory strategies for career, personal branding, career counseling needs.

### **Research Design**

In the first stage, all participants were informed about the purpose of the present investigation and the instruments used to collect it. To avoid any measuring error that might have been due to the data collection procedure, all participants were given a collective briefing before questionnaire completion. After this stage ever, the participant had individually completed the form in a paper-pencil format.

The participants completed the questionnaire individually at the faculty. For any questions, there was a person able to help them understand the questions. It took 30 minutes for a student to complete the questionnaire.

It was anonymous, and all answers were collected in a database. Using email, we invited students to participate in focus groups and interviews. Twenty-two of them agreed to participate in focus group meetings.

### **Procedure**

In the first stage, all participants were informed about the purpose of the present investigation and the instruments used to collect it. The participants completed the questionnaire individually.

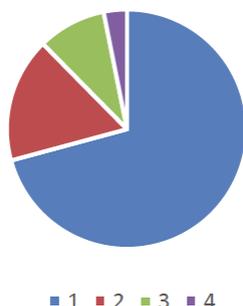
For any questions, there was a person able to help them understand the questions. One meeting was for one hour and was conducted by 2 researchers. Also, 5 persons agreed to participate in individual interviews conducted by one of the researchers. Each interview was semi-structured, and the discussions took place for half an hour.

## **RESULTS**

Data interpretation allowed us to have a better image of our group. We looked into students'

professional status, and we have seen that most of them are inactive, as seen in the pie-chart below:

Professional status



Graphic 1: Professional status.

Inactive in the fieldwork, active on the fieldwork, occupied person, employees Even if only a percentage of 17.11 students have declared themselves as active on the labor market, almost half of them have had several contacts with the employers, such as:

Employers

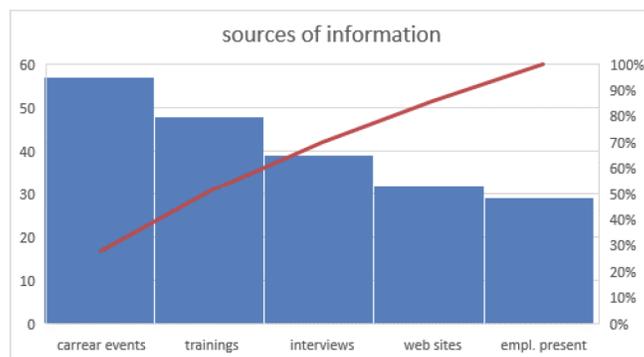


no work experience state inst. domestic comp. foreign comp. NGO other

Graphic 2: Employers.

Students' main information sources are the internet, television, written media, family and friends, as well as career centers. Not surprisingly, according to their age specifications, the great majority place internet as the most important source of information used when confronted with career decisions. This can be both an advantage, due to the quick access to wide information, and a disadvantage, because of their lack of training in selecting relevant and veracious content. We have identified a small impact of career centers, almost half of the students declaring that they haven't received any career counselors' assistance. There are two main reasons for this situation. First, students are uninformed about the existence of the Career Center, and second – they have no idea about their activity at the University, nor about the services offered. Students place great importance on family and friends' information, indicating a low level of autonomy in making career decisions.

Despite their declared high interest in finding relevant job-search information, we have detected an extremely low engagement level in actions that might lead students to regular employment. Therefore, the graphic below shows the percentage of students who have not benefited from active sources of information in career counseling. Students find the discussions with the employers as the most useful for shaping their vocational path, but, at the same time, they fail to exploit the opportunities to contact the employers at job fairs, company presentations in university, or other networking events.



Graphic 3: Sources of information.

Few of the students have attended training and workshops related to their university major, which can be explained in terms of lack of information on this kind of services, not necessarily as low interest on behalf of the students. Low usage of active career-information sources could also explain the fact that most of the students rely on family, friends, and support groups when making career-related decisions, rather than consulting specialized career counselors. Bill posters seem to be the most useful source of information for students. Ninety-six out of the total, 120 students, use bill posters when looking for information concerning job opportunities. Along with internet ads, these are the most frequently used sources of information by students. But it is not necessarily a wise decision, as these are both passive sources of information, as the student reads the information without critically analyzing the content, therefore he is simply exposed to the content but does not filter it.

Half of the students place themselves in the self-knowledge stage of career, only 11% are looking for a job, and 10% are developing a career that has already started. 24% of them are either exploring career options or making career decisions. When asked whether they have a career plan, 1/3 of the respondents declared that they do not have one. Only

6% of the students say they have a career plan for the next five years or 10 years. This clearly shows that they are not future-oriented, have no clear objectives for the future, and they postpone the decision as much as possible. More so, an impressive percentage of the respondents (88%) show interest in a master's degree, usually in the same field of study as their bachelor's degree.

Students place their career indecision on the lack of information concerning the possible alternatives or on the contradictory interest for different domains, showing that they do not have an active interest in making career decisions. They do not hold the necessary information to make career-related decisions; either do they have the necessary tools to decide between different options.

## DISCUSSIONS

Career maturity refers to the individual's readiness to make informed, age-appropriate career decisions, and cope with career development tasks. Through this study, we aimed to identify the level of career maturity of our students in order to develop proper career counseling programs in the university. We have identified high levels of career immaturity, passive involvement in the career decision-making process, and limited acquisition of information about the world of work. Students pass through the emerging adulthood phase, placed between adolescence and young adulthood, an age of exploring identity, instability, concentration on self, and the feeling-in-between and multiple possibilities [17].

This is a stage of exploration possibilities concerning education, social activities and relationships, professions, etc., a period of trying new experiences, gathering information, improving abilities, developing competencies, crystalizing identity, and implementing occupational options. The results showed poor abilities in career explorations and also in the decision-making process. The majority of our respondents are in a self-knowledge face, trying to identify their strengths and their career limitations. We found out that they enter into a decision-making faze without understanding themselves or about the career field [18].

They are orientated to find a job in their study-related field, without knowing their career abilities or interest. Going further, we discovered that the internet is the main source of information for them, but they are not using specialized websites or career platforms [19].

They have a passive approach toward career exploration, which can result from poor information and an incomplete image of them as job candidates. They own a social network profile showing their career interest and applying for jobs, but don't have a long-term career plan and focus only on decision factors as many and personal development [20].

All these aspects have determined us to design career orientation programs that focus on increasing students' awareness of the importance of active involvement in pursuing a career, assuming a critical perspective on accessed content, and developing the professional competencies employers are looking for. Career counseling services could raise awareness among students concerning the need to act responsibly when facing a career-related problem [21].

We agree with Borgen's opinion, according to whom individuals play an active role in their own career shaping process, both at the intellectual and behavioral level. Career counseling programs should play an important role in empowering students to take a more active role in the career decision-making process and to engage in activities that could increase their employability [22].

The theoretical significance of the study lies in the enrichment of scientific and pedagogical ideas about the possibilities of vocational guidance for senior schoolchildren in the context of specialized training, the development of a pedagogical model of vocational guidance for senior students based on the educational integration of the pre-profile and profile stages of education [23].

The practical significance of the research:

- methodological recommendations for teachers on vocational guidance of high school students in the context of specialized training have been developed and tested;

The research results can be used in the system of professional development of teachers and teachers of educational institutions of various profiles.

For the quantitative part of the study, we used a self-report questionnaire. It is very important to have students' perspective on what concerns their abilities and competencies, but we have to consider the fact that their answers are subjective and the instrument does not offer us information about social desirability [24]. This is one of the reasons we considered it

necessary to organize focus-groups and to conduct interviews. For a better understanding of the aspect, it is important to use a mixed methodology. One of our future research directions is to organize more focus-groups and in-depth interviews with students and encourage them to keep a diary during their internships or their first month. A longitudinal approach to career research can offer us a more comprehensive image of what our students want and, mainly, what are their needs related to career counseling [25].

## CONCLUSION

Summarizing the results of the study, let us summarize. The analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature has shown that the problem of vocational guidance for senior pupils is not new. In solving this problem, a general education school occupies an important place, which contributes to the socialization of high school students, the development of inclinations, abilities, and interests, the formation of professional self-determination. The interrelation of specialized training and vocational guidance is of great importance for high school students' professional self-determination, which is the main goal of vocational guidance. The introduction of pre-profile training contributes to the choice of a training profile, which positively affects the choice of a promising field of professional activity.

Professional orientation of students in the context of specialized training is a scientifically grounded system of socio-economic, psychological, pedagogical, medico-biological and production-technical measures to provide youth with personality-oriented assistance in identifying and developing abilities and inclinations, professional and cognitive interests in choosing a profession, as well as the formation of the need for readiness to work in a market environment, multi-structured forms of ownership and entrepreneurship.

Conclusion the study, it should be noted that well-grounded pedagogical conditions for vocational guidance of senior pupils in the context of specialized education and their implementation thus allowed organizing pre-profile training of students, as a result of which the level of students' readiness to choose a profile significantly increased, which confirms the hypothesis of our research.

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