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Work Opportunities of Social Educators as Vocational Counsellor at School

Pre-vocational activity is one of the key processes of the development of a young person, requiring certain skills, capacities, conditions for self-cognition, information about the current world of professional activities and identification of the relationship with this world. Significant scientific and technical achievements, rapid technological, economic, social and political changes followed by the emergence of new professions and disappearance of the old ones, predetermine a new approach towards the phenomenon of selection of a profession. Planning of professional activity affects everyone who seeks successful integration into the constantly changing labour market, and, consequently, becomes a constituent part of a permanent and inevitable process. In the modern dynamic, rapidly changing and developing society, the optimal reveal of the potential of individual capacities is instrumental, as well as successful adjustment to the labour market needs, understanding of responsibility for own decisions and lifelong learning capacities. Effective and timely vocational information, counselling and guidance are very important for successful socialisation of an individual, whereas effectively rendered vocational information, counselling and guidance services are of utmost importance to both: the education system, labour market and their interaction. The above services are part of the active labour market policy and one of the key elements of training and employment policy at national, regional and local levels. The modern vocational career theory has been diversely developed by the following foreign researchers: Parsons (1909), Super (1961), Tillinghast (1964), Holland (1973), Harren (1979), Hoyt (1979), Rubinton (1980), Hesketh (1982), Fukuyama (1980, 1982, 1984), Herr, Cramer (1984) and others. Problems related to the selection of a profession and professional mission have been widely investigated in the earlier works of the Lithuanian educologists and psychologists (Gučas, 1937; Šulcas, 1973; Kontvainas, 1976; Galkytė, 1977; Jovaiša, 1978; Kregždė, 1988; Beresnevičienė, 1990; Jatautaitė, 1991; Žilinskienė, 1994; Petrauskaitė, 1996, Laužackas, 1999, 2005; Pukelis, 2004). However, work opportunities of a social educator within the vocational information system, peculiarities and functions of their vocational information activity have not yet been investigated by the Lithuanian scientists. In view of this, a scientific problem could be determined by the following question: *what are work opportunities for a social educator in rendering vocational information services in comprehensive school?* Object of the research – to reveal work opportunities of a social educator within the vocational information system. Tasks are (1) to present peculiarities of vocational information as the first step of vocational guidance; (2) to review vocational information situation in comprehensive school and (3) to determine work opportunities of a social educator in rendering vocational information services. Object – work opportunities of a social educator within the vocational information system. Applied research methods are analysis of scientific sources and

documents, questionnaire, analysis of statistical data. The aim of the analysis of scientific sources and documents regulating education is to review peculiarities of vocational information as the first step of vocational guidance, as well as theoretic work opportunities of a social educator within the vocational information system. Since problem analysis is based on the analysis of documents regulating vocational information, counselling and guidance, the authors of the Paper, while seeking transparency, decided to apply in the Article the concepts defined in these documents. By the empirical investigation the efforts were made to determine pupils' opportunities in using vocational information, counselling and guidance services in comprehensive school, and to identify involvement of social educators in vocational information work. During the research, 828 comprehensive school pupils of 8-12 grades, 450 parents, 189 class tutors and 14 class heads from different districts of Lithuania were inquired. Conclusions: (1) vocational information is defined as a composite part of vocational training, the key objective of which is provision of knowledge on the content, peculiarities and requirements of professions, and on possibilities to acquire profession, upgrade qualification skills and employment; (2) access to and quality of vocational information services in comprehensive schools is insufficient. Quality of these services undoubtedly depends on the competence, knowledge and skills of their providers. In general terms, the competence of vocational information can be specified as capacities of a specialist to render effective vocational information services. All the above might fall into an integrated system of such capacities as identification and evaluation/assessment of clients' needs, accumulation of information, application of information technologies and provision of target oriented information; (3) the research revealed that although formally organisation and realisation of information, counselling and guidance functions in education institutions are delegated to social educators, actually the level of performance of these functions is low. The reasons determining such a low level of involvement of social educators in the vocational information activity, might be their huge work load and/or insufficient qualification in rendering information, counselling and guidance services.

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