

# CORRELATION BETWEEN CAREER GUIDANCE PRACTITIONERS PREVIOUS EDUCATION AND STUDENT CAREER CHOICE

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## Abstract

*The purpose of the study was to explore the correlation between career guidance practitioner's previous education and student career choice and learning for working life in general education. Guidance plays a decisive role in the major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In Latvia the most often career guidance are implemented by school teacher - career counselor; career counselor; classroom teacher; in some cases the deputy director, school librarian. Lack of common vision to competencies, necessary for career guidance, leads to different specialist's involvement in career guidance implementation. Scientific and empirically tested evidences of special training in career guidance and counseling benefits still needed.*

*Empirical data were collected through student self-assessment questionnaires (n=1013) and analysis of group (n=633) and individual (n=699) counseling evaluation reports. 18 counselors were involved in the study. Data collected in the period from September, 2012 till May, 2013.*

*Results of the study show that career guidance practitioners with career counsellors qualification act effectively than practitioners without special training in guidance. Correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner's previous education and students' comprehension about their career choice show positive correlation – Spearman's rho = 0.624. This means that the higher career counselor's qualification is facilitative factor of student's comprehension about their career choice.*

**Key words:** career guidance, career education, career choice

## Introduction

Latvian society experienced an economic crisis in last five years and, as other European countries, try to find an effective way how to solve problems. Dynamic economy demanded information and knowledge, but have simultaneously required considerable adjustments in the skills required and in working patterns. The society of the future will be a learning society. In light of this, it is evident that education systems, primarily the education of teachers and of those involved in training, have a central role to play (European Commission, 2001, 2010; Faure, 1972). For implementation of lifelong learning European Council considering that:

- “Citizens' lives are increasingly characterized by multiple transitions: notably from school to vocational education and training (VET), higher education or employment, or from employment to unemployment, further training or departure from the labour market. Guidance plays a decisive role in the major decisions that individuals have to take throughout

their lives. In this respect, it can contribute to empowering individuals to manage their own career paths in a more secure way in the context of today's labour market, and to achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives" ;

- Encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders in lifelong guidance" (Education, Youth and Culture Council of the European Union, 2008).

The question of how extensively the findings, recommendations and conclusions of guidance-related reports, studies and evaluations are being used to steer policy at regional and national levels in the EU Member States remains open. Many European countries have recently taken initiatives to build up the competencies of guidance counsellors to ensure that learning and career choices by learners will be dealt with in a professionally sufficient and qualitatively appropriate manner (CEDEFOP, 2011).

### *Problem of Research*

International qualification standard for career guidance practitioners still does not exist. Educational and vocational guidance practitioners provide several functions and career counselling is one of them (IAEVG, 2003). Lack of a common vision of competencies, necessary for career guidance, leads to different specialists' involvement in career guidance implementation. Scientific and empirically tested evidences of special training in career guidance and counseling benefits still needed.

### *Research Focus*

A wide range of specialists provide career guidance for students in general education institutions in Latvia. The most often career guidance is implemented by a school teacher - career counsellor, career counsellor, classroom teacher, in some cases the deputy director, school librarian. Since the municipalities are responsible for the implementation of career guidance, in some municipalities a career counsellor coordinates the implementation of the guidance in the schools. In some municipalities career guidance is implemented by the children and youth centre staff. Study of career guidance practitioners previous education (n=45) show that 21.5% of practitioners have an in service training in guidance, 16.1% of the practitioners necessary knowledge gained in the process of self-education, 13% have a career counsellor qualification (Jaunzeme, 2013). All basic career guidance services are implemented in schools - individual and group counselling, organizing events with employers, identify information resources on education and careers. More less guidance activities were provided to parents and integrated into education mainstreaming subjects. Evaluation of career education in secondary schools shows that the availability and quality of career guidance are very different. Systematic activities (career education program, the implementation of the measures set out in schedule, evaluation of data, identified graduates career path) provide practitioners with the career counsellor's qualifications and practitioners with in service training in career guidance (Jaunzeme, 2013).

Based on statistics of career guidance practitioner's qualification asked a research question: Do the career guidance practitioner's previous education correlate with the student career choice and learning for working life in general education?

## **Methodology of Research**

### *General Background of Research*

This research was designed to explore relationships between career guidance practitioner's previous education and student career choice.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a concurrent mixed methods design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). A quantitative data were collected through student's self-assessment questionnaires, counting of individual and group counselling evaluation reports. Qualitative data were collected through analysis of individual and group counselling evaluation reports

and guidance practitioner's previous education documents, A quantitative and qualitative data were collected from students and career guidance practitioner's who participated in school, company and municipality collaboration in the career education pilot project in Latvia. In period from January 3, 2011 till December 31, 2013 seven universities, 15 municipalities and five non - governmental organizations realize European Social Fund Project „Development and implementation of the support programs for establishing the support system for the young people under the exclusion risk“ The aim of the project is to explore, model, approbate and evaluate the system of decreasing and preventing the risk of social exclusion for young people aged 13 - 25 of five regions in 15 municipalities and 25 schools in order to decrease the social exclusion risks and the number of those young people who are early dropout's of education and stay out of education as well as to promote their vocationally-oriented education and employment by strengthening the capacity of involved institutions, developing the support system and increasing the competence level of the personnel involved in the project (Development and implementation of the support programs for establishing the support system for the young people under the exclusion risk, 2011).

One of project activities is “Career education program in schools”. Objective of program is facilitation of students (13-25 years old) career choice and learning for working life. Schools voluntary participated in career education program. Main idea of program is implementation of school, company and municipality collaboration model in career education (Strods & Vazne, 2013a).

#### *Sample of Research*

A total of 1013 (453 female and 560 male) students between the ages of 13 and 25 participated in the study. Students represent 61 classes from 25 schools. Students from seven, eighth, ten and eleven grades were involved in career education pilot project. Last year students from basic and secondary schools were not involved in the pilot project. Eighteen (18) career guidance practitioners participated in the study.

#### *Instrument and Procedures*

Data were collected between September, 2012 and May, 2013. Each month students participate in at least one group career counselling session and voluntary attend individual career counselling sessions. Career guidance practitioners each month collect quantitative data and wrote evaluation reports of group and individual counselling sessions. Statistics of the student's attendance and evaluation reports of group and individual counselling career guidance practitioners each month uploaded to project workspace. For qualitative analysis were used 699 of individual and 633 evaluation reports of group counselling sessions. In individual counselling session reports were fixed questions asked by a student, provided guidance, and result of counselling session – student selected one: I got an answer to my question; I almost got an answer to my question; I still don't have answers to my question. Selected result was written in session evaluation report by counselor. In group counselling sessions reports were fixed questions asked by students, and student's evaluation of session – each student selects one: I'm ready to start explained activity, I almost understand what should I do, I'm not ready to start explained activity. Selected results were counted and written in a session evaluation report by counselor. For guidance practitioner's previous education exploration a Resume (CV) of each practitioner were evaluated.

#### *Data Analysis*

For quantitative data analysis mean score, cross tabulation and Spearman's correlation were used. Quantitative data: count of individual and group counseling sessions, number of students for each guidance practitioner, count of student's answers given after individual and group counseling sessions. Qualitative data: individual and group counseling session evaluation reports, guidance practitioners CV. Qualitative data were analyzed according research question. Results of individual counseling sessions evaluated by students were divided in categories and value was set for each category:

- I got an answer to my question – 3 points;
- I almost got an answer to my question – 2 points;
- I still don't have answers to my question – 1 point.

Student's questions and feedback after group counselling sessions were evaluated and evaluation reports were divided in categories. The value was set for each category of evaluation reports:

- Students demonstrate comprehension and conclusions about their career choice – 3 points;
- Students demonstrate comprehension but no conclusions about their career choice – 2 points;
- Students demonstrate formal feedback without comprehension about career issues – 1 point;
- No student's questions and feedback – 0 point.

Guidance practitioners CV evaluated by education relevance to career guidance and resumes were divided in categories. The value was set for each category of guidance practitioner previous education:

- Career counsellor qualification – 3 points;
- Qualification in education and in service training in career guidance – 2 points;
- Qualification in education – 1 point.

## Results of Research

The research question of the study was: How does the career guidance practitioner's previous education impact the student career choice and learning for working life in general education?

Eighteen (18) guidance practitioners were involved in the study. Number of practitioners by previous education and count of students to whom guidance provided:

- Career counsellor qualification – 5 practitioners for 437 students;
- Qualification in education and in service training in career guidance – 3 practitioners for 215 students;
- Qualification in education – 10 practitioner's for 361 students.

Figures in Table 1 show the distribution of individual career counseling session's results according to guidance practitioner's previous education.

**Table 1. The distribution of individual career counselling session's results according to guidance practitioner's previous education.**

	Career guidance practitioner's previous education	Individual career counseling session's results			Total
		I still don't have answer to my question	I almost got a answer to my question;	I got a answer to my question;	
Total by previous education	Qualification in education	18	96	206	320
	Qualification in education and in service training in career guidance	16	51	117	184
	Career counselor qualification	3	36	156	195
Total		37	183	479	699

Assuming hypothesis that career guidance practitioners previous education does not affect the students' attendance of individual counselling sessions and follow by practitioners percentage breakdown by education:

- Career counsellors should be lead 194 sessions –195 in fact;
- With a qualification in education and in service training in career guidance should be lead 117 sessions –184 in fact;

With a qualification in education should be lead 388 sessions – 320 in fact. It should be noted that the career counsellors came to school on certain days and, according to the demand and needs, in additional time. Two other groups of counsellors working in schools as teachers and students could have more flexibility to refer the demand for advice. In this situation counsellors with qualifications in education and in service training in career guidance were more attractive for students than counsellors without additional guidance education.

Assuming hypothesis that career guidance practitioners previous education does not affect the results of student's individual counselling, students should be receiving an answer from:

- Career counsellors in 133 cases - 156 in fact;
- Counsellor with qualification in education and in service training in career guidance in 80 cases – 117 in fact;

Counsellor with qualification in education in 266 cases - in fact the 206 in fact.

Also in this section from the student's view counsellors with appropriate education look's more attractive.

Assuming hypothesis that career guidance practitioners previous education does not affect the results of student's individual counselling, students should be almost receive answer from:

- Career counsellors in 51 cases - 36 in fact;
- Counsellor with qualification in education and in service training in career guidance in 31 cases - 51 in fact;

Counsellor with qualification in education in 101 cases - 96 in fact.

In this section from the student's view career counsellors look's more attractive than two other counsellors groups.

Assuming hypothesis that career guidance practitioners previous education does not affect results of student's individual counseling, students who have not received an answer should be:

- from career counselor in 10 cases - 3 in fact;
- from counselor with qualification in education and in service training in career guidance in 6 cases - 16 in fact;
- from counselor with qualification in education in 21 cases – 18 in fact.

The negative result of counselling from students view least likely had a career counsellor. This factual evidence of necessity of professional career counsellor training.

Figures in Table 2 show a number of individual counseling sessions per participating student according to career guidance practitioners previous education.

**Table 2. Average number of individual counselling sessions per participating student according to career guidance practitioner's previous education.**

Career guidance practitioner's previous education	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	3
Number of individual counseling sessions per participating student	6,66	4,6	2,63	1,93	1,88	1,27	1,06	0,91	0,64	0,58	0,52	0,45	0,42	0,28	0,27	0,24	0,22	0,21

*Career counselor qualification – 3; Qualification in education and in service training in career guidance – 2; Qualification in education – 1*

Correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner's previous education and number of individual counseling sessions per participating student show negative correlation Spearman's

$\rho = -0.297$ . This means if counselor qualification increasing the number of individual counseling sessions per participating student decline. From a career guidance perspective would be optimal if each student attend and get benefits from one individual counseling session. Data in Table 2 show that this figure is closest to career counselors and practitioners with qualification in education and in service training in career guidance.

Figures in Table 3 show number of participating students according to career guidance practitioners previous education.

**Table 3. Number of participating students according to career guidance practitioners previous education.**

Career guidance practitioner's previous education	3	2	3	3	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Number of participating students	136	109	100	80	70	62	60	55	53	53	53	52	42	36	22	16	15	12

*Career counselor qualification – 3; Qualification in education and in service training in career guidance – 2; Qualification in education – 1*

Correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner’s previous education and number of participating students show positive correlation - Spearman’s  $\rho = 0.769$ . This means that the higher career counselors qualification increase the number of participating students. This fact can be explained through the organization process of the project. Career counselors invited for participation in project took responsibility for more involved students than practitioners without special training.

This point lead to a conclusion that career counsellors work on one involved student cost lower than work of practitioners without special training.

To make sure how the guidance practitioners previous education impact to students career choice group counseling sessions evaluation reports were analyzed. Student’s questions and feedback after group counseling sessions were evaluated and evaluation reports were divided in categories. The value was set for each category of evaluation reports:

- Students demonstrate comprehension and conclusions about their career choice -3 points;
- Students demonstrate comprehension but no conclusions about their career choice – 2 points;
- Students demonstrate formal feedback without comprehension about career issues – 1point;
- No student’s questions and feedback – 0 point.

The samples of students’ questions and feedback after group counselling sessions presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. The samples of students' questions and feedback after group counselling sessions.**

Students demonstrate comprehension and conclusions about their career choice	Students demonstrate comprehension but no conclusions about their career choice	Students demonstrate formal feedback without comprehension about career issues
<p><i>What benefits I'll get during the course of this project?</i></p> <p><i>Why I need a career management skills portfolio, what it will bring?</i></p> <p><i>Is it possible to ask questions during visit in company that were not previously prepared in my portfolio?</i></p> <p><i>What to do when I am worried during presentation and talking is hard for me?</i></p> <p><i>In my view counseling session was useful for better understanding of what kind of profession to choose in the future.</i></p> <p><i>I consider more carefully think about my further career opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>I understood that profession is important, it's just as important to me as anything else.</i></p> <p><i>I could better understand myself and reflect on the future plans.</i></p> <p><i>There are a lot of options, what to do and where to go.</i></p> <p><i>I learned a little bit about what we can do.</i></p> <p><i>The test results clearly showed my strengths and weaknesses.</i></p> <p><i>There is still a lot to think twice before I'll be able to do it.</i></p> <p><i>I learned a lot about myself. More serious thought needed.</i></p> <p><i>I'll more listen to people who are telling me about this professions area.</i></p> <p><i>I need to be sure of myself.</i></p> <p><i>I'll try to clarify what I want.</i></p> <p><i>Counseling helped a little to understand our options.</i></p> <p><i>We are able to think!</i></p> <p><i>I found that making decisions is difficult for me.</i></p> <p><i>I understood that I have to work.</i></p> <p><i>I must carefully explore everything.</i></p> <p><i>Introduce with other ideas how we can build ourselves.</i></p> <p><i>I learned a lot about my profession. A session was cool!</i></p>	<p><i>How to work in classroom workspace?</i></p> <p><i>When we going to the company?</i></p> <p><i>How can I fulfill the portfolio if I no Internet at home?</i></p> <p><i>What if I do not interested in professions offered in company?</i></p> <p><i>When portfolio must be completed?</i></p> <p><i>Does every student will meet chosen profession representative in company?</i></p> <p><i>When we need to show the class overall presentation of the visit to company?</i></p> <p><i>Where we are going to present?</i></p> <p><i>What is a volume of the presentation?</i></p> <p><i>Are the company offer materials for innovative project?</i></p> <p><i>Is material for innovative project will be available if not enough?</i></p> <p><i>What should I take with me when I going to the company?</i></p> <p><i>Are all the project works will be displayed at the Art Museum?</i></p> <p><i>Were told what to do and where to go.</i></p> <p><i>Is the proposed idea will be implement in the school?</i></p> <p><i>I liked that detailed instructions was given.</i></p> <p><i>I hope that the idea will be implemented.</i></p> <p><i>The fact is that there are many choices.</i></p> <p><i>Cool ideas proposed from our class!</i></p> <p><i>I liked this lesson because I met a car repair manager.</i></p> <p><i>I realized that the mechanic's work is interesting.</i></p> <p><i>Plumbing basics are important.</i></p> <p><i>I got impression on separated waste collection.</i></p> <p><i>I got all about car service.</i></p> <p><i>I can take online courses for free.</i></p>	<p><i>Positive attitude:</i></p> <p><i>It was interesting.</i></p> <p><i>All realized. An interesting lesson.</i></p> <p><i>Yes, I understood. I'll going to work.</i></p> <p><i>I understood everything that had to be done.</i></p> <p><i>It was very interesting and easy.</i></p> <p><i>I love these classes.</i></p> <p><i>I really liked and have fun.</i></p> <p><i>I told about what I want to become.</i></p> <p><i>It was easy.</i></p> <p><i>I learned about my profession.</i></p> <p><i>I learned a lot of new.</i></p> <p><i>In company was interesting.</i></p> <p><i>Negative attitude:</i></p> <p><i>I knew that I should have a profession and consider that everything is clear.</i></p> <p><i>I was late and completely did not understand anything. Not gain anything new.</i></p> <p><i>Nothing.</i></p> <p><i>I'm not sure, but I knew everything.</i></p> <p><i>I knew all before.</i></p> <p><i>It was hard for me.</i></p> <p><i>Most I understood, but some did not.</i></p> <p><i>There was a half-normal.</i></p>

Correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner's previous education and students' comprehension about their career choice show positive correlation – Spearman's rho = 0.624. This means that the higher career counselor's qualification is facilitative factor of student's comprehension about their career choice.

## Discussion

Research continues evaluation of "Career education program in schools" (Strods, 2013a, 2013b; Strods & Vazne, 2013b). Results of study show that career guidance practitioners with career counselor qualification act effectively than practitioners without special training in guidance: Career guidance practitioners previous education has impact to the students attendance of individual counseling sessions – career counselor's and practitioners with qualification in education and in service training in career guidance were more attractive for students than guidance practitioners without additional guidance education;

Career guidance practitioners previous education has impact to the results of student's individual

counseling - career counselor's from students view provide more relevant counseling sessions than practitioners with qualifications in education and in service training in career guidance and guidance practitioners without additional guidance education;

Career counselors and practitioners with qualification in education and in service training in career guidance provide a more optimal number of individual counselling sessions per one participating student - correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner's previous education and number of individual counseling sessions per one participating student show weak negative correlation Spearman's  $\rho = -0.297$ . This means if counselor qualification increasing the number of counseling sessions per one student decline;

Career guidance practitioners previous education has impact to the number of participating students per one counselor - correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner's previous education and number of participating students show positive correlation Spearman's  $\rho = 0.769$ . This means that the higher career counselors qualification increase the number of participating students. This point lead to conclusion that career counselors work on one involved student cost lower than work of practitioners without special training;

Career guidance practitioners previous education has impact to the students comprehension about their career choice - correlation analysis between career guidance practitioner's previous education and students comprehension about their career choice show positive correlation Spearman's  $\rho = 0.624$ .

However there are limitations to generalize the conclusions of research – only 18 guidance practitioners involved in the study. From other hand 1013 students from 61 classes in 25 schools of 15 municipalities provide research base and allow conclude at least in Latvian scale. Career education program was implemented during the school year and appropriate data were collected - 699 of individual and 633 evaluation reports of group counseling sessions, 1013 students questionnaires. The comparison with international experiences showed that the examination and measurement of real impacts is also not easy in other countries, as the impact of career guidance is not unambiguously visible and measurable. Several factors together have an influence on the quality of guidance services – guidance target group, multi-professional cooperation, institutional context, position of guidance practitioner, situation in the economy and society in general (CEDEFOP, 2011).

## Conclusions

Study was done with research question: Do the career guidance practitioner's previous education correlate with the student career choice and learning for working life in general education? The main results of empirical study evidence for: the higher career counselor's qualification is facilitative factor of student's comprehension about their career choice.

Study provide empirical evidences about career counselor qualification benefits in career education context in general school. According study position of career counselor in school, when counselor attend students in certain days, is not a obstacle for quality of guidance.

This evidence can be used by guidance policy makers for implementation of administrative-centred approach in guidance. Municipalities can organize administrative models, where career counselor coordinates the implementation of the guidance in the schools.

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