

UNIVERSITY STUDENT FUTURE PROFESSIONAL CAREER: PROMOTING AND LIMITING FACTORS AND PERSONAL TRAITS

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Abstract

In post-modern society where rapid economic, social and political changes take place, career planning and management becomes more and more urgent every day. The mentioned changes are not necessarily positive or providing only all-round benefit. The environment becomes turbulent, in general sense; therefore it is natural that career environment, basically, is chaotic as well. Nevertheless, career for many people is, undoubtedly, very important, because it is directly related to life quality. Professional activity satisfies almost all human needs: physiological, safety, social, attainment, self-realisation, independence, autonomy and other. The efficiency of the mentioned activity and the ability of the personality to construct his career are closely related things.

Seeking to analyse university student position regarding career questions, a written form survey was carried out. The research was carried out between September and December, 2014. The research sample (265) was structured applying a consecutive 'bunch' system. The respondents from three Lithuanian universities Klaipėda, Vilnius and Šiauliai, were selected in the sample. Professional career parameters were evaluated: career conception, the importance of work values and abilities, study influence, promoting and limiting factors and personal traits. The research is grounded on a mixed strategy, when quantitative and qualitative research approach is combined. The obtained results, based on qualitative analysis, about professional personal career promoting and limiting factors and personal traits are presented in this research.

Key words: *career education, professional career, qualitative analysis, university students.*

Introduction

The changing world of today creates a new human self-identification basis. A lot of factors determine this: understanding that a man's, as an active subject of an activity, occupation, role, activity character, context in the society has changed – a man acts under very complex, rather often very complicated situations of increasing uncertainty, intensive search for meaning, the increasing role of human and social capital and other (Giddens, 2005). Career is one of the most important contemporary man's life and self-identification fields. Very often, the individual's professional activity determines its integral status in the society.

Individual's career process studies have become especially popular recently, because deeper career perception helps to understand the most important relations between man and work, career management and constant learning, helps not only to know man's abilities, but also the abilities to give oneself to modern environment, to understand career projection possibilities, to plan one's professional future (Augiene, Lamanuskas, 2013).

Career is a lifelong lasting process, which can be developed consistently and systematically, or chaotically and accidentally. A successful career is hardly imagined now otherwise than the man himself planned and managed process, therefore, today, the ability to guide your career process is

valued as one of the most important active labour market participant's abilities. The main career management purpose is a successful career and a proper its balance with the other life spheres. Career management, according to the scientists, is determined by three factors: firstly, this is a *person's self* (personal traits, abilities, values, demands, interests and so on) *cognition*; secondly, *career possibility* (labour market changes, economic development and other) *cognition*; thirdly, *career decision making, career planning and realisation process* (Brown, 2002; Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, Peterson, 2006 and other.)

Every profession requires certain physical and mental features. Therefore, a successful career realisation means not only active, independent and conscious career direction choice, but also setting of one's personal development limit, which is influenced by personality's peculiarities, its maturity, intellect, interests, inclinations, talents and so on. *Self-cognition* is a complicated process, requiring conscious and active efforts. Personality and its traits, which are conditionally unchanging, in different situations reflecting in the individual's behaviour, have influence on individual's behaviour. Personality is an integral system, joining human psychic processes, behaviour traits, motives, cognition and activity into a unique, harmonious entirety, which distinguishes him from other people. Personality is a complicated system, in which several spheres can be distinguished, becoming especially pronounced in personality's activity and having a big influence on the choice of career: temperament and character (their peculiarities determine activity performance peculiarities), abilities (they determine, what possibilities a man has for activity performance), purposefulness (these are personality activity determining motives, attitudes, values, inclinations, ideals). Seeking career, one has to understand the strongest and the weakest sides of his personality. It is also important to know, how we are similar and different from the others, which our features suit for certain professions and jobs, and which do not, how to ascertain such features, if it is possible to change them. For making good decisions, very often various dangers arise, related with the individual's personal traits, such as, decision making style, preconceived attitudes and stereotypes, the ability to make a decision, to choose a suitable decision making place, time and criteria. Therefore, it is very important to know oneself as better as possible as a decision maker.

The other important factor is *external career possibility cognition*. Career is realised in the external world, therefore, good orientation in it, is very important. Understanding of state policy, economic tendencies, technology changes, important society phenomena, such as emigration, demography, lifestyle and other, help to more accurately evaluate long term labour market tendencies, to foresee, what abilities will be valued in future, what professions will be more or less in demand on the whole in the country or in some other separate region. Good working world possibility understanding allows selecting career paths, professions, farm sectors, organisations corresponding best with personal demands. Learning possibility cognition makes the acquisition of necessary career competencies easier, allows raising, planning, and realising teaching aims themselves. It is important to be able to evaluate and control external factor (decision making time and place, the surrounding pressure and other) influence on the career decision making.

It is important not only to understand external career possibilities and their interrelationship, but also to be able to relate these possibilities with personality traits, interests, values, competencies. Self cognition and external career possibility investigation competencies allow accumulating the necessary information for the career about self and the surrounding world. A person, knowing what career directions, organisations and occupation forms allow realising the interests best and correspond to personality traits and possessed values the most, makes assumptions to more accurately set life priorities, to use the acquired competencies and to choose best matching career realisation variants.

L. Harvey (2000) points out, that only just higher education does not assure students' successful integration in labour market, because not only acquired knowledge and abilities, but also other important factors, such as personal student traits and labour market changing demand in the region at national and international levels influence the integration. Higher schools provide professional qualification, prepare for professional activity, however, not enough attention is devoted to education for career. Effective career realisation requires extra knowledge, skills and abilities. Over the last decade, university graduate employment raises a very big concern. Therefore, universities have to be extremely interested to ensure student career management competence education in the study

process – students have to learn to recognise personal development possibilities and limits, to identify career planning possibilities, conditioned by one's own values, knowledge and learning and to foresee successful career decision making and realisation perspectives. The research studies show, that in the university study process, students' views and attitude to future career change. Such change can be both positive and negative. This is an important issue that needs to be considered by school administrators and universities (Stokes, 2007). The research studies, carried out in Jordan showed that students' career planning was highly influenced by parents, teachers, friends, high school academic experience and self-efficacy (Khasawneh, 2010). Country's economic characteristics influence professional career as well. The researches fixate, that between different economic power countries do exist differences. For different country students common promoting (exposure to rural location, role models, working conditions) and limiting factors (low income, prestige, environment) were established. Such factors as attitude towards social problems, voluntary work, influence of family were specific to high-income countries (Puertas, Arósquipa, Gutiérrez, 2013). It is also obvious, that personality traits, peculiarities in the aspect of sex and further professional career, are related things. The research studies with the students, who have just graduated from university, reveal this (Saks, Ashforth, 1999), and working world is treated as rather uncomfortable (Perrone, Vickers, 2003). In this respect, personal traits, such as personal activeness, confidence and other become significant, so that moving from studies to labour market was more successful (Pinquart, Juang, Silbereisen, 2003). The researches carried out in Lithuania show, that personality traits are important foreseeing and planning student and future workers' professional behaviour. Students' emotional engagement to profession is significantly related to consciousness, frankness and agreement (Pociūtė, Bulotaitė, Bliumas, 2012). Besides, it has been stated, that students devote more attention to internal world cognition (e.g., self-cognition) than to external one (e.g., change influence evaluation, learning) (Augienė, Mickevičius, 2014).

Though academic results and achievements are important, however, they themselves do not guarantee a successful career. Various factors determine it. After all, it is not necessarily with the obtained profession directly related factors. Especially important are personal traits. They individually reveal themselves depending on the context – society maturity, traditions, time and so on. On the other hand, labour market state also determines that it is extremely difficult for the youth to establish themselves in the adult professional world. Thus, it is very important to know the main professional career determining factors and personal traits. In the university study process, it is important to help the graduates to know themselves as better as possible, what are their personal traits, abilities and values. Knowing his personal traits on the one hand, and realising, that every job, profession is individual a) it is hopeful, that the graduate will be able to choose an optimal combination. University study students in Lithuania feel insufficiently ready to perform their career in future, to model it, to foresee possible directions and perspectives. Students feel shortage of knowledge and skills in this sphere. Such situation has occurred, because education career system in a higher school hasn't been created, there is lack of systematic research for career preparation, grounding the main parameters for career preparation at university.

Research object is university student position on the question of the future professional career.

Research aim is by qualitative analysis, to reveal plausible promoting and limiting factors and personal traits, having the biggest influence on professional career.

Methodology of Research

General Research Characteristics

The carried out research *Successful career factors* is grounded on mixed methodology (the quantitative and qualitative approach is applied). This is a narrow size research, i.e., the research conclusions do not reflect all Lithuanian university student population and fully cannot be applied to it. The research is of a piloting type seeking more to reflect social and humanitarian science field students' position on professional career questions. On the other hand, the research results will be

used preparing a wider size research. The research was carried out between September and December, 2014.

Research Sample

Bachelor study students of three Lithuanian universities: (Šiauliai – ŠU, Vilnius-LEU, and Klaipėda - KU) participated in the research. 300 questionnaires were prepared. On the whole, 265 questionnaires were acknowledged acceptable. Reversibility quota is 88%. More detailed information about the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The respondent sample characteristics.

Institution	N/%	Distribution according to study programmes
Šiauliai University	181 / 68	English philology(17), special pedagogy (15), kinetotherapy (29), social pedagogy (16), Lithuanian philology and communication (12), History (10), Music (10), Physical Education (15), health educology (10), finance managing (11), business administration (16), public administration (6), primary and pre-school education pedagogy (13)
Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences	52 / 20	Psychology (12), primary education pedagogy (18), ethics (4), choreography (6), pre-school education pedagogy (12)
Klaipėda University	32 / 12	Educology (20), childhood pedagogy (12)

Sampling was structured applying a consecutive 'bunch' system. Research sample is considered sufficiently representative according to a chosen research amount. The majority of the respondents answered to the presented open questions. Only 22 out of 265 respondents did not give any answer.

Research Instrument

The authors' prepared questionnaire applied in the research is formed from open and closed questions. The respondents were asked to evaluate statements about career, the importance of work values and skills to the professional career, and also study influence to the future career. 4 open questions were presented in the questionnaire as well:

- What external factors could *help* you to successfully realise your professional career?
- What external factors could *disturb* you to successfully realise your professional career?
- What Your personal traits could *help* you to successfully realise your professional career?
- What personal traits could *disturb* you to successfully realise your professional career?

Statements, abilities, values were evaluated applying a range scale: *agree/important, partly agree/important, do not agree/not important*. A demographic part is included in the questionnaire too (the respondent sex, course, study programme).

Data Analysis

Data, obtained by open questions, are analysed qualitatively. Data analysis has been carried out using *content* analysis, when in the information massive (the respondents' presented answers, commentaries) main characteristics are distinguished. A methodological attitude is followed, that content analysis helps to reveal and understand reality. A multiple presented commentary reading and analysis is used, it is searched for semantically close answers and "key" words, semantic unit interpretation is carried out, later sub-categories are excluded, which subsequently are joined into bigger semantic units – categories. Category interpretation has been carried out. In the first stage, categorisation has been performed by two researchers independently of one another. Later, the received categories were adjusted, checked repeatedly.

Research Results

Having analysed external factors, which could help successfully realise your professional career, three categories have been pointed out: stimulating relations with the surrounding, favourable career context, professional improvement (Table 2).

Table 2. External factors, helping successfully realise professional career.

Category	N/%	Sub-category	N/%	Sub-category components	N/%		
Stimulating relations with the surrounding	105/41.3	Close people support	56/21.6	Surrounding people support and encouragement	26/10.0		
				Close people(family) support	18/7.0		
				Friend support	12/4.6		
		Social relations	49/19.7			Acquaintances, various social relations	25/10.5
						Cooperation with the other people	15/5.8
						Active social activity	5/1.9
						Help from the outside	4/1.5
Favourable Career context	93/35.9	State influence	36/13.9	Better country's economic state	12/4.6		
				Society support	12/4.6		
				State support (creating working places)	6/2.3		
				New working place creation	3/1.2		
				Possibility to emigrate, go away from the country	3/1.2		
		Organisation influence	30/11.6			Good working surrounding	18/7.0
						Good working place	6/2.3
						Positive surrounding	6/2.3
		Activity achievement evaluation	27/10.4			Getting better financial possibilities	8/3.1
						Bigger salary	8/3,1
Professional improvement	59/22.8	Professional preparation	52/20.1	Proper practice, practical experience	22/8.6		
				Constant learning and development	16/6.2		
				Good study quality	10/3.8		
				Information about professions and working places	4/1.5		
		Goal seeking	7/2.7			Favourable surrounding influence	5/1.9
						Clarity of aims	2/0.8

As it was expected, the category “Stimulating relations with the surrounding” has the biggest weight. Professional improvement is considered to be the least important thing. Close people support and social relations basically in equal parts express the relations with the surrounding. It can be seen, that friend support is the least important and encouragement of the surrounding people is much more important. Family member support occupies intermediate position. Acquaintances express social relations most. Social activity or just help from outside are the factors, having very little influence. An assumption can be made that students perfectly understand, that communication and relations with people is an important way of career possibility research and realisation. Only communicating with people one can get the newest information straight from the event place, in this way, one can understand the processes going on in the working world much better and more realistically. Therefore, one can think, that students understand the meaning of a wide and effective social net creation, when the relations are made and kept with people, able to help in seeking career and business aims.

The category “Favourable career context” is made of three sub-categories. It is seen, that state influence which reveals through society support and economic situation getting better, has the biggest influence. Whilst, new working place creation is basically not related with the favourable professional career context. Activity achievement evaluation is also considered not very important. It is obvious, that students understand, that economic, investment, innovation policy of the state, the country’s social – economic development strategy, state farm structure have a great influence and open perspectives for successful career realisation. The research results show, that in students’ opinion, organisation makes a great influence as well (11.6%). The organisation’s environment marks itself by potential elements, strengthening and encouraging the individual’s professional activity, which can be vitally important to personality activity success and demand satisfaction. The individuals, seeking to satisfy their career demands, raise the requirements for their working environment, search for the elements in it, which have the biggest value for them.

Activity success evaluation has a little less meaning for successful career realisation (10.4%). In this sub- category, getting *better financial possibilities* (3.1%) and *bigger salary* (3.1%) are named as very important parts, demonstrating career success.

The third category “Professional improvement” is formed from two sub-categories. One can claim, that professional preparation is considered a conditionally important thing notwithstanding, that this category on the whole occupies only one fifth of all external factors. It is natural, that proper practice and the acquired practical experience have the biggest influential meaning here. A little less meaning is given to *constant learning and development*.

Having analysed external factors, which could disturb successfully realise your professional career, two categories were pointed out: non favourable career context and negative relations with the surrounding (Table 3).

Table 3. External factors, disturbing successfully realise professional career.

Category	N/%	Sub-category	N/%	Sub-category components	N/%
Non favourable career context	171/69.6	Situation in the labour market	85/34.5	Shortage of working places, unemployment	45/18.3
				Negative society attitude to some professions	16/6.5
				Big competition	14/5.7
				Information shortage	10/4.0
				Unstable economy, constant crises	15/6.4
		Situation in the state	35/14.5	Corruption	8/3.3
				Political country situation	6/2.4
				Emigration	6/2.4
				Poor, non suitable working conditions	14/5.7
		Situation in the organisation	35/14.1	Poor salary for work	10/4.0
				Unsafety at work, bad atmosphere	6/2.4
				High requirements	3/1.2
				Big working load	2/0.8
				Geographic (territorial) circumstances	8/3.3
		Life circumstances	18/6.5	Health condition probable deterioration	6/2.4
Nature disasters	2/0.8				
Bad time planning	2/0.8				

Category	N/%	Sub-category	N/%	Sub-category components	N/%	
Negative relations with the surrounding	73/30.4	Surrounding people influence	37/14.9	Other people/surrounding non support and disturbance	16/6.5	
				Other people jealousy	12/4.8	
				External motivation/promotion shortage	5/2.0	
		Family influence	36/14.7		Exaggerated critics	4/1.6
					Poor property and financial state (personal/family)	28/11.4
					Family (making)	8/3.3

The first category “Unfavourable career context” has the biggest weight (about 70%). It is formed of four sub-categories. It is obvious, that the situation in the labour market has the biggest weight forming the first sub-category. This is defined both by working place shortage and unfavourable society attitude to some professions on the whole. Constant economic crises, corruption, unstable economy obviously form unfavourable environment for professional career. Family and the surrounding people influence is not considered a very significantly disturbing factor.

Having analysed personal characteristics, which could help successfully realise your professional career, two categories were singled out: personality communication traits and personality activity traits (Table 4).

Table 4. Personal traits helping successfully realise professional career.

Category	N/%	Sub-category	N/%	Subcategory components	N/%	
Personality communication features	218/63.4	Integration	125/36.6	Responsibility	58/17.2	
				Stubbornness	36/10.4	
				Honesty	24/7.0	
				Dutifulness	5/1.4	
				Ambitiousness	2/0.6	
		Communicability	69/19.8		Ability to communicate	54/15.6
					Empathy	10/2.8
					Tolerance	5/1.4
		Adaptability	24/7.0		Ability to adapt	12/3.5
					Punctuality	12/3.5
Personality activity features	127/36.6	Activity	78/22.5	Energy and determination	16/4.6	
				Diligence	15/4.4	
				Self-confidence	12/3.5	
				Independence	12/3.5	
				Persistence	10/2.8	
				Initiative	6/1.7	
				Purposefulness	4/1.2	
		Competence	49/14.1		Cleverness	3/0.8
					Creativity	22/6.4
					Wish to improve	16/4.6
					High motivation	6/1.7
					Good education	3/0.8
					Calling	2/0.6

As it was expected, personality communication traits have much bigger influence than personality activity traits. Besides, in the category of communication features, the biggest weight falls to personality integration. Such traits as responsibility, honesty and stubbornness are considered as the most significant. Ability to communicate in a wider sense is basically considered an important thing; however, the least important is adaptability.

Speaking about the second category, “Personality activity traits” it can be seen, that activity is significantly more important than competence. Activeness is expressed as person’s vigorousness and determination, diligence, independence and self confidence.

Having analysed personal features, which could disturb successfully realise your professional career, two categories were singled out: negative personality activity traits and negative personality communication traits (Table 5). The category distribution of the latter is basically equal.

Table 5. Personal traits disturbing successfully realise professional career.

Category	N/%	Sub-category	N/%	Sub-category components	N/%		
Negative personality activity traits	158/55.0	Lack of self-confidence	90/31.2	Distrust in yourself	30/10.4		
				Critics fear and avoidance	18/6.2		
				Indecision	18/6.2		
				Lack of courage	12/4.2		
				Fear to make a mistake (to do something wrong)	12/4.2		
		Indifference to activity	64/22.4	Laziness and passiveness	42/15.0		
				Unpunctuality	10/3.4		
				Lack of motivation	8/2.7		
				Irresponsibility	3/1.0		
				Improper habits	1/0,3		
		Incompetence	4/1.4	Lack of experience	2/0.7		
				Lack of creativity	2/0.7		
				Improper behaviour	52/17.9	Stubbornness	18/6.2
						Impatience, impulsiveness	16/5.5
Instability	12/4.2						
Too big frankness	3/1.0						
Lack of self-criticism	3/1.0						
Negative personality communication traits	132/45.0	Negative character traits	45/15.3	Selfishness	10/3.4		
				Ambition	8/2.7		
				Modesty	8/2.7		
				Absent – mindedness	6/2.0		
				Closeness	5/1.7		
				Naivety	4/1.4		
				Credulity	2/0.7		
				Pride	2/0.7		
				Negative emotions	21/7.1	Nervousness	10/3.4
						Jealousy	6/2.0
		Pessimism	5/1.7				
		Tough character	14/4.7	Seeking for the truth	8/2.7		
				Principle	6/2.0		

It is interesting, that in the sense of activity, the biggest negative weight have distrust in yourself (fear of critics, lack of determination, lack of courage), and in the communication sense – improper behaviour (stubbornness and impatience). Sub-category “Tough character” is not considered negative in the direct sense. However, from the point of view of the respondents, people seeking for the truth and people of principle often cannot reach a certain professional career namely because of these traits.

Conclusions and implications

The research results revealed, that students point out external factors, including stimulating relations with the surrounding, as the most important possibility to successfully manage and realise their professional career. This obviously illustrates students’ understanding, what important influence favourable social contacts with various people, social professional net creation and its usage have on successful career. The students attach great importance to career context. In students’ opinion, career context can have both positive and negative influence on career realisation. However, the students provide career context with more negative than positive influence on career realisation. Therefore, as the most important negative factor group, disturbing to realise career in future, the students name unfavourable career context (working place shortage, competition, unstable economy, corruption, emigration and so on).

The research results revealed, that students partly (insufficiently) value professional improvement. Less than one fourth of students name professional improvement (professional preparation, goal seeking) as able to help in seeking successful career.

The research revealed, that personal traits, pointed out by the students, able to help or disturb successfully realise career, one can divide into personality communication and personality activity traits. The results show, that personality communication and activity traits, defined by the students, can have both positive and negative influence on the career. The students discern more positive than negative communication traits in themselves. The biggest part of students pointed out, that their communication traits (integration, communicability, adaptability) can have a positive influence on career realisation. A smaller part of students pointed out, that their communication traits (improper behaviour, negative character features, negative emotions and other) can disturb successfully realise career.

An opposite situation was revealed analysing personality activity traits. More than half of the students pointed out, that their negative personality activity traits (distrust in yourself, indifference to activity, incompetence) can disturb successfully realise professional career. Only one third of the students evaluated their personality activity features (activity, competence) as successful career premise.

One can claim that the obtained research results will increase the effectiveness and use of career development services at university. This research extends the literature on university students future career promoting and limiting factors. By providing a better understanding of student personal characteristics, this research should allow universities to specifically construct their study programmes and to perform study process. In addition, it allows increasing their participation with career services, support their graduates to develop the behaviours, techniques, and attitudes/skills necessary to perform successfully professional career.

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