

Career Orientation

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In vocational programs, school and work intertwine. In our career orientation activities, we have implemented curricular activities in the fields of self-discovery, getting to know the environment, decision making, and transition skills. With exposure to communication and entrepreneurship, we try to achieve the empowerment of individuals when it comes to making decisions in this constantly changing world. The usefulness of skills and knowledge can be fleeting in today's fast-moving and rapidly changing times. That is when they need strong foundations and a sense of self-worth that will help them take the step towards changing their profession when the current environment offers new opportunities to them.

Keywords: career orientation, vocational programs, time of change, self-confidence, school

INTRODUCTION

In a society of knowledge, learning and work are increasingly interlinked. The use of vocational knowledge students gain in school for the rest of their life is no longer possible in many cases. The point of empowerment is moving away from training in knowledge towards training in skills used for dealing with changes in life. Some vocations a student might have will exist during his time in school. Showing that in addition to the classical set of skills usually taught, there is a raising need for learning self-development and soft skills. The school system can help prepare students for lifelong career decisions that are expected by the pace of development and frequent changes in the job market. Enable students' awareness of their potential and skills to make informed decisions where they can decide for themselves based on relevant information and foresee consequences of their decisions on their career. We talk about competence that is defined as the ability of an individual to use his or her knowledge and skill following his or her values and position in complex and unpredictable situations (Ažman T., Jenko G, Sulič T. 2017). Competence of planning one's career represents gaining knowledge, developing various skills, know-how, and relationship to career planning. In many documents, the career is represented as an individual's life path in their field of learning and work. A career is not a one-time event. It is formed in lifelong development.

TIME OF CHANGE

The opportunities of today's youth lie not in employment but employability, an important part of career planning and management. Innovation, ever-faster discontinuation of some, and the need for new professions, forms, and areas of work. Today's education cannot reliably predict the needs of work for the time when an individual will complete education. As progress creates new professions on one end, it discontinues the need for currently existing ones on the other. Changes demand compliance with the needs

of new skills that are sought after by employers and they are emphasized by career counselors. The changes search for their way into the education system. Despite today's society being founded by knowledge, the level of education is no longer the main factor in career success. Drucker foretold more than 12 years ago that useful knowledge will be vital not only for the survival of the individual but for the country (Ažman, A. and others 2019). As Rao, M. S., (2020) emphasized in his ideas: "The future knowledge will be highly volatile, and is based on the volatility in the technology. It is essential to encourage continuous research to forecast the future knowledge and technological trends. Hence, it is equally essential to encourage employees to learn, unlearn and relearn quickly to keep pace with the rapid global changes." (Rao, et.al., 2020, URL). The skill-set required in older lines of work will change in the majority of industries. Technology is rapidly changing more than half of all tasks in professions because they will be automated. Many long-standing professions will no longer exist. The demand for soft-skills noticeable in employment is seen as the most important trend in the world. Skills, such as creativity, persuasion, innovation, cooperation, and similar, are at the top of the list because they are almost impossible to automate. Modern trends bring new dynamics to the employment market where the employer is equally or even more interested in an individual's behavior and skills in a certain field. The trends take into account soft skills, work flexibility, and pay transparency. Therefore, 65% of schoolchildren will be working in professions that do not currently exist (World Economic Forum 2016). Even now, there are professions that we did not anticipate would exist until recently. Basic knowledge is evolving rapidly and the change of the fourth industrial revolution is setting new starting points.

WHAT WILL BE THE NEW ROLE OF SCHOOLS?

Today's variety in classrooms will increase and the school will take over a larger role in society that will not only be meant for the acquisition of knowledge but also safer building of one's own personality. A person will need these kinds of stable and well-defined foundations to face uncertain times of rapid change and mobility in their career. "Interculturalism and individual competence is the ability to adapt to trans-cultural public and reflects a high degree of pedagogical aptitude in general," says Alexander Krauss (2019) and he adds that this is the most stressful form of teaching and it is incredibly important that these teachers have the appropriate education and supervision. He continues that German research showed that children, with weaker social backgrounds and/or migrant past require more: structure, orientation, and a basic feeling of acceptance. A feeling that they are simply accepted instead of marked as a "special case". He emphasizes that children need space to build their identity, develop their personality, and to show their talents, strengths, and achievements.

The idea of schools taking on new roles in the community has been discussed as a possible societal convergence in the article *Premene v družbi, spremembe v šoli* (Gaber, S., Kos, Ž. and Tašner, V. 2016) where they define school as the most frequently present public institution in local communities in a country that represents a realistic potential for creating societal convergence. They think that school could – in addition to its core activities of passing knowledge, skills, and values onto the next generation – take on broader functions in society. What needs improvement is focus on personality, considering the environmental impact on the development of personal traits and competencies that will help future candidates in the employment market and their career development.

Anica Mikuš Kos (2019) uses the term »quality of life in school« with which she means more than just the happiness and satisfaction of students here and now. "The school experience, like all experiences, is a foundation for children's self-image and the image of the world around them." She continues that good social relationships with peers contribute towards a better social and functional learning of a student because the social inclusion works as an important protective factor (2019). In a local study by L. Magajna, S. Pečjak, C. Peklaj, G. Čačinovič Vogrinčič, K. Bregar Golobič, M. Kavkler in S. Tancig (2008), the researchers have discovered that social inclusion is an important contributor in preventing learning difficulties. Dr. Zora Rutar Ilc believes that the feeling of self-worth is intrinsically linked with the feeling of acceptance, confidence, and self-respect. It is imperative for healthy psychological development. She also adds: "The feeling of self-worth means that we feel worthy and competent, to behave appropriately in

certain circumstances, understand our place in the world, know how to form relationships with our surroundings, and face our trials and challenges.” (Ilc Rutar, Z. 2018). The connection between the social climate and measured the effectiveness of a school or student success is nothing new. The results from a study done by TIMSS 2007 and 2008 in Slovenia show that schools with better rated social climates also had higher student accomplishment. This feeling is built-up over time and dr. Anica Mikuš Kos concludes that inadequate attention is given to social climate (2019).

Career Orientation in the Middle School - Gymnasium and Secondary School Kočevje, Slovenia

Quality is the mobility and employability of the individual in the market. What we are trying to achieve in middle schools with many vocational programs is to prepare the student for the life with constant changes in career orientation activities. Schools educate on many different levels: general upper secondary school, secondary technical education, NPI (lower secondary vocational education), SPI (secondary vocational education), and PTI (secondary vocational and technical education). Activities of career orientation programs have different subjects than traditional vocational programs. Most students in these programs have already chosen their profession. However, their career path holds many possibilities for growth and change.

Career Orientation in Vocational Programs

The goal of career orientation in school is to lead the process of one’s career management to develop CAREER MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE. In vocational programs, school and work intertwine. The profession is chosen but their career path is set in uncertain times so many decisions about their professional career are subject to change. The student can continue formal education that follows known frameworks or they can pull out at different stages of vocational education. There are many opportunities when it comes to their careers and their move to the labor market, one of which is also whether to leave school and think about the different types of education and work. One of the goals of career orientation is to develop self-awareness and understanding to manage their career. Students are trained to lead their careers in the classroom and practice. Thus, they can be trained for transitions in life. They can prepare in several ways:

- I am finishing my education and preparing to enter the labor market.
- I am continuing my education and I need skills for the transition to further education: lower – secondary vocational, secondary – vocational/technical, technical – a faculty.
- I will continue my education from the labor market – adult education.
- I am changing my career. I need information about another profession, education, and the path to change my career.
- Exit without completed education and entry into the labor market or social support.

Program Career Orientation in School

The basis of the career orientation program for the vocational curriculum is the DOTS model developed by Bill Law in A. G. Watts (1977). A person with a developed career management competence masters four intertwined areas:

1. SELF-AWARENESS – Who am I?
2. OPPORTUNITY AWARENESS – Information about the environment.
3. DECISION LEARNING – What should I do?
4. TRANSITION LEARNING – How will I achieve my goal?

Teachers can implement materials in a variety of ways. Most commonly, teaching the material as a part of a subject during a lesson. Some connect subjects and implement them as interdisciplinary content. Many of these materials are gone over during homeroom hours. The school carries out various projects and courses connected with career orientation. School counseling also encompasses advisory service programs for students as a part of career guidance activities and also as job shadowing, hosting events, company visits, etc. The selected assignments from all four areas are collected in a folder.

Self-Awareness (Self-Knowledge and Self-Image Formation). Self-directed activities raise awareness of self-knowledge, recognition, and assessment of one's personality traits. Recognition and understanding of interests, desires, and goals: extracurricular, school, professional, and others. Assessing and understanding abilities: competence, knowledge, and skills. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Creating a good social climate to develop a sense of self-worth.

Recognizing and Awareness of Environmental Opportunities (Occupations, Industries and Activities, Labor Market, and Education). Be aware that good information is a requirement for good decision-making. How to acquire, understand, and critically evaluate information? The students learn that they need information about the laws of the labor market, trends, and possible forms of employment and also know the characteristics of professions (tasks, conditions, pay, etc.) to make informed decisions. Through visits, fairs, and presentations they learn about companies and opportunities in the local environment and the country. Know the possibilities and paths of formal and non-formal education in the institutions and professionals who help with career planning.

Decision Making and Goal Setting. Change and learning happen all the time. We choose between two or more options. If we do not choose any of them, is still a choice. The students learn to understand the characteristics of their decision-making process. Learn how their decision-making process influences their career and how to critically evaluate their decisions. When reacting or enacting change, decisions are necessary. Learning and changes appear in all stages and levels of a career. The problem we face with increasing frequency during the process of decision-making is the high unpredictability of future events. This fact complicates the process itself and erodes trust and confidence in decisions made based on criteria that formed from experience, intuition, or are the product of critical thinking. The security of a decision can be supported by an active gathering of information and critical evaluation of said information.

Transition (Action and Implementation of Accepted Decisions). Transitions: from one level of education to another, from education to employment, from one role to another, from one situation to another, etc.

Necessary knowledge and skills during the transitions: be able to find contacts, prepare for a job interview, communicate with the employer, write an application for a scholarship, employment, or other forms of financial assistance, enroll in an educational program, arrange insurance, etc. How to approach changes in new roles from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to university, from education to work? Getting to know transitional activities can reduce the stress of tackling the challenges and obstacles of transitioning to new roles – better decisions.

Career Map – My Map

Teachers prepare partially planned materials that they visualize for each department for the next year into a common network plan which is an integral part of the student's folder. Each student has his or her folder in which he or she inserts the products of different activities. The list of activities is flexible and can be supplemented with new activities during the year. The purpose of the folder is to collect activities from the four areas and to raise awareness of one's changes over time. There are differences between high school and vocational programs, as students in high school still decide on their field of study while students in vocational programs are usually already decided.

Start of school with career map. The transition to a new school and secondary education is stressful. In our career orientation activities, we begin the school year for newcomers with a two-day camp at the beginning of the first month, which removes at least a part of the uncertainty one faces when going to a new school. Students dedicate part of the activities at the camp to get acquainted with the activities of career orientation and prepare their career map.

At the same time, they gain the first foundations between the whole generation and the school system, which contributes to a sense of security and a good social climate.

Communication and Entrepreneurship

With exposure to communication and entrepreneurship, we try to achieve the empowerment of individuals when it comes to making decisions in this constantly changing world. In the open curriculum,

we have placed entrepreneurship and communication lessons on all levels of vocational education. Every year students experience the process of working internships with employers at home, as well as abroad – under the program Erasmus+.

CONCLUSION

Career Path

When progress rapidly accelerates, changes are generalized and happen quickly, the applicability of skills and knowledge can be fleeting. Adaptation and acceptance of these changes require many decisions to be made and that demands courage and self-confidence.

To succeed, individuals will need a solid foot on the ground and a good sense of self-worth to keep pace with changes that life will demand of them. A sense of self-worth, however, is built and requires awareness and time.

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