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### **VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE GYMNASIUM OF POLAND AS AN IMPORTANT CONDITION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF A PERSONALITY**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*Choice of profession is a long process that begins in early childhood and usually lasts for the whole life. That's why it is so important to build a solid vocational guidance school system that will help students to make weighted decisions about their professional future. This system should perform the following functions: engage students in active self-awareness and self-esteem; change student's self-appraisal if it's different from his/her actual capabilities (too high or too low); help students to deepen their knowledge about professions that are interesting to them; teach students to compare their state of health with the demands of a chosen profession; acquaint them with the structure of education; collaborate with their parents. The result of its work is prepared, motivated, active and enterprising young people who know how to take initiative in finding job; adapt acquired professional skills to the needs of the labor market; acquire new skills in difficult situations such as unemployment, new working environment, retraining; be free moving in the new realities of free-market economy; use the art of self-presentation; prepare application documents; use computer and surf on the web. So, the successful choice of future professional life depends on the decision of a gymnasium graduate about his/her further direction of education. And the factor of this successful choice is the knowledge obtained by pupils about themselves, the world of professions, directions of further study in the conditions of lifelong learning program.*

**Key words:** vocational guidance, school system, professional students' development, professional choice.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the post-industrial countries, which include both Poland and Ukraine, the understanding of "professional choice" has changed significantly for the last twenty years. Earlier everyone obligated socio-professional model that consisted on: amateur phase (studying, getting profession), professional phase (working all the time in the same profession, permanent workplace) after-professional phase (exemption, retirement). So, life was reduced to the formula: 20 years – studying, 40 years – working, then – a pension that was the reason even for pride. But with the new socio-economic situation in the country this three-level model was changed too. As the result it appears a new one, where professional choice is understood as planning career. So, the principle "one job for a lifetime" is forgotten what is typical now for modern dynamic labor market. It should be noted that in conditions of hard competition and rising unemployment we cannot afford to make reckless decisions or to make the wrong choice of future profession as for economic



reasons (cost of education and retraining), so for psychological (disappointment, frustration, lack of self confidence, low self-esteem).

Choice of profession is a long process that begins in early childhood and usually lasts for all life. That's why it is important to build a solid vocational guidance school system that will help graduates to make weighted decisions about their professional future.

In the framework of our study the experience of Poland is going to be considered, that, as a result of social and economic changes departed from the industry standards and introduced free-market relationships. It also touched the education: due to reforms it was adapted to the new realities. Its structure and content changed much, and since 2001 the vocational guidance school system began its work that helps to prepare young people to enter the labor market in the new conditions of Polish economy.

#### THE AIM OF THE STUDY

To analyze the nature of vocational guidance school system in gymnasiums of Poland, to examine its main tasks and advantages of functioning.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

Reform of education in Poland started in 1999. It was based on the following principles: universality, succession, continuity, unity and differentiation, replacing narrow-wide learning profile, all-round development of students, education through labor, a wide front education and training, flexibility, independence, socialization, scientific and economic part of education. Each of these principles is important for vocational education. First of all it is necessary to distinguish *the principle of succession* associated with absence of barriers during the transition from one school to another and with co-ordination of curriculum, with development of vocational guidance; *the principle of continuity* – accessibility of forms and methods of education; *replacement of wide-narrow-learning* – promotes rapid requalification of workers and mobility in personnel policy; *the principle of education through work and for work* – provides filling the entire educational process with labor problematics and with professional knowledge and skills corresponding to the stage and type of education (Андрушкевич, 2010).

M. Palchuk considers that it is the democratization of the Polish educational model. This allowed to make deep reform of the curriculum, to improve its quality and efficiency. As a result, the Polish diplomas are recognized in all European countries without special “nostrifikation” (Пальчук, 2011).

In order to achieve an optimal relationship between the levels of education in Poland different types of school are created:

- six-year primary school;
- three-year gymnasium, after which students receive state certificates (Swiadectwo ukonczenia szkoły podstawowej);
- secondary school, which consists of various types of educational institutions:
  - general lyceum (liceum ogólnokształcące) – 3 years;
  - specialized lyceum (liceum profilowane) – 3 years;
  - technical school (technikum) – 4 years;
  - basic professional school (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa) – 2–3 years, after which you can continue the study in supplementary technical school (technikum uzupełniające) or supplementary lyceum (liceum uzupełniające) for 2 years.

After finishing the secondary school students have to pass school-leaving exam (matura) that is necessary to enter the higher educational institution.



From the above it can be concluded that a graduate of a gymnasium in order to choose the future direction of education, must make one of the most important choices about their future professional development. In the general education curriculum is noted that teachers introduce students to the world of scientific knowledge, they teach to be independent, help with the decision about further study and prepare for active participation in social life (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu, 1999).

It is therefore important to build a robust system of school vocational guidance (Wewnętrzny System Doradztwa Zawodowego). By definition of A. Lukashevich, it is a number of tasks that must be realized by school in order to prepare the student to choose a future profession, level and direction of study. The system determines the role and tasks of the teaching staff in an annual plan of action, time and place of implementation of tasks, methods of work, expected results (Łukaszewicz, 2008, p. 33).

In our study we consider those on whom the work of the system is focused, its main functions and tasks.

## RESULTS

So, vocational guidance school system should distribute its work in three main directions: teaching staff, pupils and their parents (Fiala).

**Teaching staff** have to: *create and ensure* continuous work of school vocational system according to the school statute; *define* priorities of vocational work in the curriculum for each academic year; *create* school informational and didactic base in vocational guidance, for example, the school career center; *realize* the planned work to prepare students to choose career and role of future employee; *apply* different methods of active learning of professions, personality, directions of education and labor market; *integrate* rural youth with young people from the cities that will allow to bring up the interpersonal relationships in the school environment; *acquaint* students with the professions of the future on the national and European level; *ensure* vocational assistance along with the students according to EU standards; *involve* various institutions, organizations and enterprises in the career guidance process at school: psychological and pedagogical counseling (poradni psychologiczno-pedagogiczny – PPP), labor administration (urzędów pracy – UP), voluntary labor units (Ochotniczych Hufców Pracy – OHP), consultation of Occupational Medicine (poradni medycyny pracy).

For **pupils** the vocational guidance school system should realize a number of tasks to: *acquaint* students with different professions; *study* the personality; *self-determine* preferences and professional interest in specifics of a chosen profession; *compare* self-appraisal with the demand of schools and professions; *study* the structure and conditions to enter one of the secondary schools (logging via the Internet); *assist* in planning educational and professional career and Individual Plan of Action (Indywidualny Plan Działań – IPD); *analyze* labor market needs and opportunities of employment in local, national and European labor market; *prepare* for new vocational situation, mobility and coping with difficult situations: searching the first job, unemployment, restrictions due to health problems; *organize individual work* with indecisive students who have different contraindications connected with health that influence on educational and vocational decision-making; *organize classes in groups* that activate the right choice of school or profession (seminars, training, etc.); *help* to select appropriate professional practice in various enterprises; *indicate* opportunities where you can get professional qualifications in extracurricular system; *form* the ability of conscious and realistic choice and finding of a job.

In work with **parents** the system should fulfill the following tasks: to *acquaint* parents with the principles of vocational guidance school work; to *organize* psycho-educational classes for parents whose children have to take educational and vocational decisions (seminars,



public lectures); to *include* parents as representatives of various professional groups to school career guidance work; to *give* current and complete information about educational opportunities (if necessary on higher education); to *organize individual work* with parents whose children have health, emotional, with determination, mental, family, etc. problems; to *collect, update and organize access* to educational and professional information in the region; to *give* employment opportunities on the local (national, European) labor market.

Great facilities for realization of vocational guidance tasks at school are found in the principles of universal educational school program that oblige schools to implement these tasks through such subjects as social studies (wiedza o społeczeństwie – WOS), engineering (technics), information science (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu, 2002).

*School guidance counselors* (career teachers) are responsible for the implementation of vocational guidance tasks. It should be noted that they have to be employed in every Polish school since 2003. However, significant roles also have: school directors (especially their attitude to this problem), teachers, tutors, pedagogues, psychologists and librarians. The attitude of students and parents is very important too. Thus, the functioning and success of vocational guidance school system depends on the work of many people (Fig. 1).

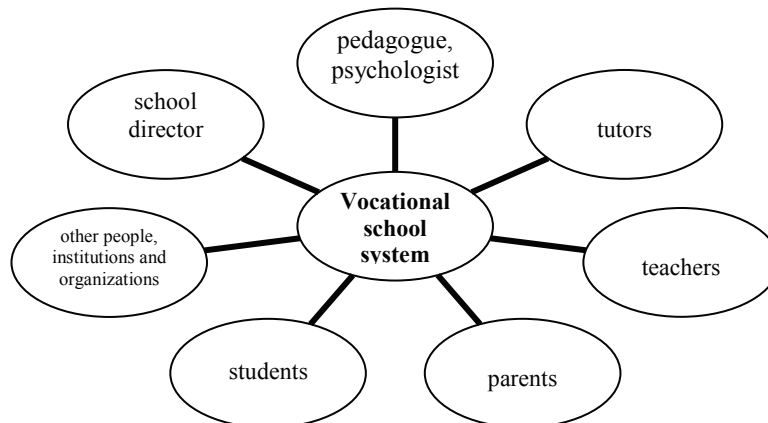


Figure 1. Implementers of vocational school system. Source: (Pater, 2008, p. 52)

A well-known Polish scientist Valdemar Furmanek considers that the graduate of a gymnasium should possess the skills that would allow him/her to take a conscious, rational and the only right decision about further education. For that it is necessary: *to study* one's positive and negative aspects, preferences, abilities, needs, temperament and character, state of health; *to be able to evaluate* one's capabilities thanks to received knowledge; *to be able to communicate* in order to achieve mutual understanding; *to look for* necessary information and check its suitability; *to possess information* about the profession and opportunities of advanced training; *to develop* positive attitude towards the work; *to use different mechanisms to find job* and get it (formulate an application, edit autobiography, carry on a conversation with the employer); *to present oneself* in different situations; *to be able to analyze* the data of labor market (Furmanek, 2000).

So, from the above it can be concluded that the successful choice of future professional life depends on the decision of gymnasium graduate about his further direction



of education. The bases of successful choice are knowledge received by pupils about themselves, about the world of professions and about the directions of further study in the conditions of lifelong learning program.

**Table 1**

Plan of Implementation of vocational guidance school system tasks  
in classes I–III of a gymnasium

| Tasks   | Planned work  | Forms of realization   | Class  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Study oneself and one's capabilities          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Study oneself: one's interests, talents, abilities, temperament, character and state of health;</li> <li>2. Interest students not only with school subjects but also with extracurricular subjects;</li> <li>3. Teach self-appraisal and self-realization, identify one's strong and weak aspects</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educational lectures;</li> <li>2. Questionnaire to determine the interests and abilities of students (personal folders with analyzed answers);</li> <li>3. Meetings with different specialists: pedagogues, psychologist, guidance counselor, nurse</li> </ol>   | Class I – during the year  |
| Study a variety of professions                | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Study a variety of professions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– associated with people (psychologist, police officer, doctor);</li> <li>– associated with numbers (banker, accountant, employee communications);</li> <li>– associated with objects (mechanic, engineer, fire);</li> <li>associated with nature (farmer);</li> <li>associated with art (painter, poet)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meetings with representatives of different professions;</li> <li>2. Excursions on enterprises;</li> <li>3. Competitions (artistic or literary) in a class or in a school level;</li> <li>4. Project method – preparation of albums for each profession that interests a student with multimedia presentation</li> </ol>  | Classes II and III during the year<br>First half of the class III<br>Second half of Class II |
| Study to apply received knowledge in practice | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show students the opportunities of secondary and high school;</li> <li>2. Familiarize them with the network of secondary schools;</li> <li>3. Prepare school career guidance table entitled "Your Future" with systematic updating of information;</li> <li>4. Establish cooperation with the local Department of Labor;</li> <li>5. Work with parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>inform</i> about state of health of their child (it is an important factor in choosing a direction for further study),</li> <li>– <i>influence</i> of the parents on their child's choice;</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Cooperation with psycho-educational consultations</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lessons devoted to profiles of secondary education;</li> <li>2. Informing on educational class hours, discussions, films;</li> <li>3. Meetings with representatives of secondary schools;</li> <li>4. Access to different information: guidebooks, reference books, catalogues, newspapers;</li> <li>5. Acquaintance with the work of the local Department of Labor (the actual labor market situation, the main point of professional choice etc.);</li> <li>6. Meetings with parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– interview the parents about secondary school choice;</li> <li>– acquaintance with profiles of secondary and high school;</li> <li>– discussion with doctors, nurses;</li> <li>– individual meetings with the school psychologist, guidance counselor</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | Class III during the year  |

Source: (Bezzubik, 2004).



In the context of our study it is very interesting to consider the authoring program “Career guidance for students in gymnasiums” which offers a plan of action for mastering the students’ knowledge in classes I–III (Table 1). The plan also defines the tasks, forms and methods of vocational guidance school work, which can be divided into three categories:

- I – students study everything about themselves – class I;
- II – students study a variety of professions – class II;
- III – students learn how to use received knowledge to make the successful choice of their professional future, beginning with determining one of the secondary schools – class III.

Thus, from the following table it can be concluded that good organized vocational guidance school system should perform the following functions: *engage* students in active self-awareness and self-esteem; *change* student’s self-appraisal if it’s different from his/her actual capabilities (too high or too low); *help* students to deepen their knowledge about professions which interest them; *teach* to compare their state of health with the demands of a chosen profession; *acquaint* them with the structure of education; *collaborate* with their parents.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In the current study, it can be concluded that new realities of free-market economy demand to refuse from preparation for one profession. Instead, students should be taught creative approach to rapid changes in the labor market that cannot be done without a well organized vocational guidance school system. The result of its work is prepared, motivated, active and enterprising young people who know how to: *take initiative* in finding job; *adapt* acquired professional skills to the needs of the labor market; *acquire* new skills in difficult situations such as unemployment, new working environment, retraining; *move freely* in the new realities of free-market economy; *know* the art of self-presentation; *prepare* application documents; *know* computer and how to *surf* on the web.

Hopefully, our findings will stimulate further research in this area. In the meantime, the problem of career guidance in schools is related with the development of the youth and their global alternative critical thinking. It will help to *open* the personality to innovation, *develop* the ability to find creative solutions in a free market economy. That’s why it is so important to build a multi-vocational system in Ukraine that would encompass all segments of the population. It cannot be done without comparative educational research of theories and practices of European Union countries.

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