



VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE – GPS FOR MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: DOES IT WORK IN LITHUANIA

Daiva ANDRIUŠAITIENĖ

*Department of Economic Engineering, Faculty of Business Management,
Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Saulėtekio al. 11, Vilnius, Lithuania*

Received 16 January 2020; accepted 18 March 2020

Abstract. *The purpose* – of this article is to assess the vocational guidance situation and development opportunities in Lithuania.

Research methodology – Systematic analysis of the peculiarities of vocational guidance; identification of the main problems and possibilities for vocational guidance through the development of a qualifications system based on the results of statistical analysis, expert assessment, data grouping and interpretation.

Findings – Vocational guidance as an important subsystem of the educational system is being underemphasised and underfinanced, career counselling is pursued in a fragmentary manner, mainly through project-based initiatives which are not based on systematic information. A way to improve vocational guidance is to organise it as an integrated information platform linked to the qualifications system.

Research limitations – The main limitation is the lack of official statistics in vocational guidance. The systematic collection and publication of statistics would make it possible to quantify and analyse the factors of the current vocational guidance situation and their impact on the development of human resources.

Practical implications – The obtained results are useful for social and economic and educational policy-making.

Originality/Value – The article contributes to the scientific literature by presenting a model of vocational guidance development related to the development of the qualifications system, which would allow providing the necessary access to information.

Keywords: economics, human resources, labour market, vocational guidance, qualifications system.

JEL Classification: I25, J24, O150, P46.

Introduction

Global economic challenges and domestic socio-economic development problems call for a review of country's social and economic policies and, in addition to investments in state-of-the-art technologies to ensure productivity growth and competitive production, require

*Corresponding author. E-mail: daiva.andriusaitiene@vgtu.lt

a greater focus on socio-economic issues: poverty, income inequality, quantity and quality of human resources. With the growing importance of the labour factor and the country losing the competitive battle for this factor in the global economy (emigration is increasing), Lithuania appears to be at risk of falling behind the world's most developing countries. In the search for possible solutions, the quality of human resources training and the effectiveness of labour market policies become priority tasks in the area of social and economic policy.

The purpose of this article is to assess the situation of vocational guidance in Lithuania and opportunities and measures for development. To this end, it is hypothesised that the guidance system is either not functioning or ineffective, leading to problems in human resource development and efficiency of the educational system, as well as to structural mismatches between qualifications and labour market needs. The possibilities to investigate this problem are limited due to the lack of official statistics allowing for quantitative research into vocational guidance problems.

Research model involves two stages: situation analysis of vocational guidance in Lithuania and capable decisions of system development.

Theoretical methodological issues of vocational guidance are discussed by presenting the concept, structure, functions and aims of vocational guidance, analyzing the variety of concepts and of vocational guidance, vocational counseling and career counseling. The state of vocational guidance in Lithuania is based on research information collected from various sources – statistics and results of researches, which targets indirectly related to the assessment of the status of vocational guidance.

During the search for development solutions, the author presents insights on the possible development of the vocational guidance system by synchronizing it with the development of the Lithuanian qualifications system – using the prepared vocational standards. This idea (presented in graphical illustration) is a practically feasible model of integration of two information systems (qualifications and vocational guidance), which would allow the vocational guidance system to function effectively, at the lowest cost, i.e. organisation of vocational guidance as a subsystem of an integrated platform linked to the qualifications system, educational system and labour market.

The obtained results are useful for social and economic and educational policy-making.

1. Vocational guidance as a GPS on individual's career paths

Vocational guidance services are recognised as an important element of a lifelong learning strategy. An *effectively functioning vocational guidance system* is one of the tools for human resource development, the importance and possibilities of which can be compared to the GPS navigation system, a common attribute of modern life.

Vocational information, counselling and guidance are defined in the Law on Vocational Education as follows:

Vocational information means systematic provision of information relating to the matters of vocational education, demand of qualifications in the labour market and occupational choice.

Vocational counselling means help rendered to a person to take a rational decision on occupational choice, taking into consideration his individual characteristics, demands of the labour market and opportunities for vocational education.

Vocational guidance means the process comprising vocational information and counselling for career development.

The objectives of vocational guidance are to provide individuals with quality information on learning and employment opportunities to provide quality guidance services to all people, irrespective of their age, gender, nationality or place of residence and social status, according to individual and societal needs, improve employability of young people and adults, promote their entrepreneurship and ongoing pursuit of knowledge; to develop people's social activity and responsibility for their occupational activities in order to prevent unemployment. This is emphasized by all the regulatory bodies and networks: European Centre for Development of Vocational Training [Cedefop], European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network [ELGPN] and others. (Cedefop, 2008, 2013a; ELGPN, 2014).

Vocational information, counselling and guidance services are part of the service area that assists people of all ages in getting navigated at all stages of their lives: choosing a qualification, finding a place in the labour market, and developing their professional career in a planned manner through lifelong learning and upskilling (Cedefop, 2013b, 2014, 2015; Deirdre & Borbély-Pecze, 2012).

Vocational guidance is a wide range of services consisting of:

- information on learning opportunities;
- psychological counselling to help learners know their preferences and identify career goals;
- introduction to the world of work (labour market) and its needs;
- assistance in developing career planning skills (including organised activities in providing advice and information by employers, alumni, students' parents);
- individual counselling to help with decisions about continued education opportunities and/or career planning;
- career change counselling;
- information and counselling on return to employment after a long break;
- consultancy support for persons with special needs;
- counselling of persons at risk of unemployment;
- counselling and information for immigrants and returnees about labour market opportunities in the country;
- support for persons in writing CVs, providing tips on the most appropriate ways to present themselves in the labour market.

Vocational guidance encompasses both vocational information and vocational counselling. The latter two functions exist as separate services, in some cases forming a complex of services and focusing on the function of vocational guidance. Thus, vocational guidance of the person is the ultimate goal of all of these services, and the system of such services is commonly simply referred to in short as a vocational guidance system.

The peculiarities of the structure of vocational guidance clients in methodological terms make it necessary to distinguish between vocational guidance of pupils/students and adults as two lines of services with different targeted motivational focuses (Cedefop, 2014; Borbély-Pecze & Hutchinson, 2013; Deirdre & Borbély-Pecze, 2012; ELGPN, 2012, 2015a, 2015b) which are shown in Figure 1.

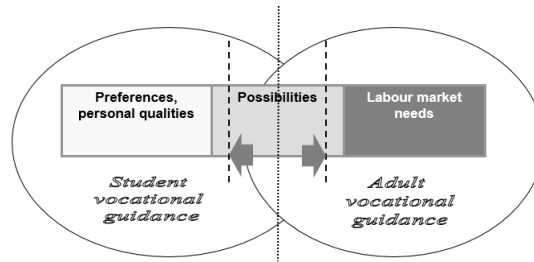


Figure 1. Targeted motivational focuses of vocational guidance for students and adults (source: developed by author)

The educational system takes care of student vocational guidance, the particular feature of which is the choice of career oriented towards personal qualities and preferences, and the accuracy and expediency of which should not counter to realities, i.e. to the real needs of the country's labour market (ELGPN, 2014).

Vocational guidance for adults has much more pragmatic goals. In a sense, this is a correction of career choices made by pupils/students, where the success of a previously made decision determined by the relationship between wishes and possibilities, is verified by real life, economic needs and the labour market (European Commission, 2000).

There is some fundamental difference in goals and directions of adult vocational guidance by client groups. Adults usually do not arrive in a facility providing vocational guidance services in a planned manner or by accident. The reason for such visits is bigger or smaller problems faced by the person in the labour market. Analysis by age groups shows that the youngest clients in adult vocational guidance are young early dropouts from the sequential educational system and those who have acquired a profession/qualification in the sequential educational system but failed to find employment in the labour market immediately after graduation. Client groups of adult vocational guidance include people of different ages whose professions are not demanded on the labour market and who need help deciding on upskilling or reskilling and with social psychological issues that prevent them from finding a job or integrating into the labour market.

The potential clientele includes employed people who want to improve their qualifications (European Commission, 2000; McMahon, 2017; Borbély-Pecze & Hutchinson, 2016) and need professional advice on how and where this can be done in the best way, and employers whose business development is inextricably linked to workforce development and who could expect vocational guidance institutions to provide information on job search opportunities for the qualifications in question in general, as well as on trends and measures for in-service training of their staff, and/or professional assistance in dealing with dilemmas of collective – psychological problems occurring at the micro (company) level.

Vocational guidance for pupils/students and adults, as two segments of vocational guidance, encompasses a whole range of milestones and factors in the provision of guidance services, but with different priority focuses. The educational system is to develop a person according to his/her natural qualities by drawing the boundaries of possibilities between

fantasy, personal wishes, and qualities that are valued and developed in society, thus linking them to person's natural capabilities. The social security system provides support for persons at later stages in life if their personal desires and prospects do not materialise for one reason or another and they have, when faced with the need to survive, to better adjust to the real needs of the labour market. For any person, whether easier or with more problems, the process of getting matched with the needs of the labour market is much longer than the period of education and training within the sequential educational system, lasting the whole working life.

Throughout his/her working life, a person is accompanied by the social security system which assists the person in integrating, adapting and reskilling or, if no other solution is found, helps him/her survive by providing passive forms of support, such as benefits and other similar support. All social security measures must be commensurate in terms of the reasonableness of their application to the person. Arrangements for applying these measures should be sufficiently clear and flexible. And vocational guidance must play an exceptional role among all the measures. To a certain extent, these services are to serve as bridging and guiding links between different support solutions. Therefore, vocational guidance for adults is in any case one of labour market policy measures and should be closely linked to all other social policies: active and passive labour market policies, vocational education and training, granting of social benefits, etc.

Along with the need for lifelong learning, there is a growing need for lifelong career guidance which tends to differentiate between age groups and the goals determined by the problems of target groups whether currently and in the long run (McMahon, 2017). Higher-skilled individuals are more likely to do it themselves by planning their careers independently. However, quite a large part of workforce, for one reason or another, faces a need for assistance from qualified labour market professionals and psychologists. This need will undoubtedly grow and differentiate in the future. Therefore, analysis of directions for the optimisation of the provision of these services should be focused not on standardisation and levelling of service provision (by attributing it to the sphere of responsibility of one of the ministries), but should be developed by differentiating and increasing the diversity and accessibility of vocational guidance programmes which is ensured not only by the total number of service providers, but also by their diversity what, at the same time, determines priority milestones.

2. Vocational guidance situation in Lithuania

The benefit arising from vocational guidance is determined not only by the competence and quality of work of professionals carrying out these functions. A more important factor for efficiency is the optimal level of alignment of the system. Obviously, if there is any.

In Lithuania, functions of vocational guidance are implemented in two systems – education and work (Figure 2).

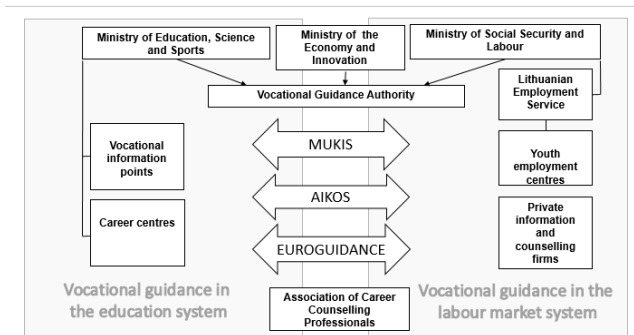


Figure 2. Main vocational guidance institutions in Lithuania (source: developed by author)

The functions and responsibilities are respectively delegated to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Vocational information and career counselling are provided at educational institutions functioning within the educational system at all levels. To provide information on learning opportunities, there is an open information, guidance and counselling system titled AIKOS, the main purpose of which is to provide information on learning opportunities in Lithuania; there is also the Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education with its career education information website for students MUKIS. Information on labour market opportunities relevant for higher education students and graduates is provided at career centres of the educational institutions. Vocational guidance (information and counselling) for adults who are already in the labour market is provided by the Lithuanian Employment Service. Information on labour demand provided by the Lithuanian Employment Service and the main job supply portals serves labour market opportunities for all. Career counselling services are also provided by private institutions to which everyone has access.

The position of a career leader was introduced in 2017 for providing vocational information and counselling and career education services in general education schools, vocational schools and other educational institutions, higher education institutions, vocational guidance centres and other institutions.

The combined efforts of educational, social security and economic systems to create a network of career leaders who liaise with employers and labour market authorities, consult learners on job opportunities according to their qualifications and monitor their careers is a welcome step towards the development of a national guidance network. However, optimism is attenuated by key indicators that illustrate the reality of vocational guidance.

As a result of emigration and other reasons, we are not only facing the problem of shrinking human resources but also of potential workforce: at the beginning of academic year 2018–19, the share of pupils and students in the educational institutions of the country was by 3.7% less than in previous years – 468 thousand pupils and students. According to data from the Education Management Information System [EMIS] (2019), the number of pupils in general education schools was only slightly above 322 thousand in 2018. The number of 11–12th grade students in general education schools was by 3.4 thousand less in 2018 compared to the previous year. Such trends call for even more responsible care of persistently

shrinking human resources and future workforce, first and foremost by targeted guidance and assistance in making the best choices in line with the needs of the labour market. Statistics illustrating the scope of career education work allows the assessment of the adequacy of attention being paid to these issues (Mukis, 2019) (Table 1).

Three thousand students per career leader and less than one euro for career counselling per student – these are the statistical figures that suggest that vocational guidance can be only available in the capital (practically unavailable in the regions) and only as a relict phenomenon.

The rather problematic situation of vocational guidance is formally mitigated by project-based activities: sharing good practices in career education, publishing methodological material for teachers, TV shows (“Try the profession”, etc.). One of the ongoing projects is the vocational guidance initiative launched in 2015, “Jump into your parents’ clogs”. In 2019, even 230 educational institutions (21.13% of Lithuanian schools, including 69 comprehensive schools and 109 gymnasiums) joined the initiative. The meaningfulness of the project is evidenced by general statistics: about 14 thousand students of the country got acquainted with real occupational activities in 722 different profit-making companies and various organisations and institutions. According to the report, as many as 830 representatives of professions were visited during the initiative and students had the opportunity to get to know about 365 different professions (Mukis, 2018). Although being undoubtedly very useful, such initiatives should be viewed rather as a necessary complement to basic systemic vocational guidance services. It is practical experience that cannot replace the underlying service.

Vocational guidance opportunities are underused and responsibility for vocational guidance is delegated to social initiatives and teachers for whom this is merely an additional function. The ineffectiveness of such a solution is illustrated by the findings of monitoring authorities and targeted studies.

Investments into vocational (career) guidance have an impact on choice satisfaction: according to a study carried out by the Government Strategic Analysis Centre [Vyriausybės

Table 1. Key indicators of monitoring career education for students in 2017–2018 (source: Mukis, 2019)

Indicators	Schools of general education (559)	Vocational schools (27)
Full-time career leader jobs (number)	74.2	5
Vocational guidance (career education) funds on average per student, (€)	1.15	0.69
Share of recipients of individual vocational guidance services (in their own school), (%)	26.55	19.31
Share of recipients of group vocational guidance services (in their own school), (%)	52.03	26.34
Share of recipients of vocational guidance services (outside their own school), (%)	41.06	20.09
Share of students who do not continue studies at vocational school, college or university after finishing 12 th grade, (%)	34.90	62.50

strateginés analizés centras] (STRATA, 2019) (Table 2), more than half of university and college graduates would choose to study the same speciality, but mostly those whose studies meet the qualifications in demand on the labour market (physical, biotechnological and similar areas); one fifth of them would change it; the opinion of choosing a completely different speciality was more common among graduates of humanitarian studies. These results are good enough.

However, this information suggests that it is appropriate, at the stage of deciding, to provide additional information on the situation and opportunities in the labour market to those who consider humanitarian studies. Early awareness of risks could reduce disappointment in the qualification gained after graduation.

EMIS data (EMIS, 2019) on dropouts from VET schools or colleges/universities (Figure 3) cannot directly be interpreted as a wrong decision, dissatisfaction with a chosen area of study or programme.

Table 2. Assessment of university and college graduates of how well the studies met their expectations (source: STRATA, 2019)

	Pre-enrolment expectations were met	Pre-enrolment expectations were met in part	Pre-enrolment expectations were not met
12 month after graduation (n = 1038)	51%	21%	28%
12 month after graduation (n = 807)	60%	16%	23%
12 month after graduation (n = 4166)	61%	17%	20%

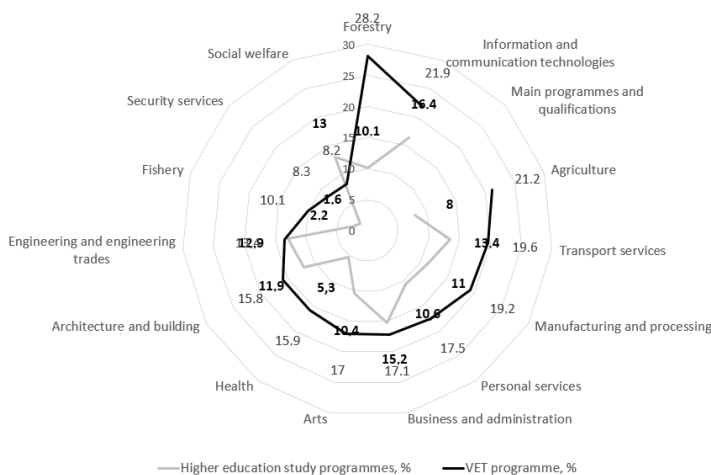


Figure 3. Share of dropouts from VET and college/university programmes of the student population in the area in 2017–2018, % (source: EMIS, 2019)

Yet, the information above is a signal showing that choices are not motivating to continue learning - they do not match wishes or possibilities so that assistance provided by vocational guidance (information and counselling) professionals would be useful not only for those who are planning to drop out, but also for those who deliver training programmes.

The fact that the system needs to be improved is illustrated by all the studies carried out (National Audit Office, 2014; Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education, 2017; Mukis, 2018). Most of the studies have been carried out within the framework of ESF-funded projects. Some of them involve attempts to create a single vocational guidance system: project *Development and Implementation of Vocational Guidance System*, implemented by the Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education (2005–2008); *Creating and Developing Career Education and Monitoring Models in General Education and Vocational Education and Training* and *Creating and Developing Career Education Infrastructure in General Education and Vocational Education and Training* (2007–2013), *Euroguidance* (2018–2020), aimed at developing vocational guidance in Lithuania and Europe. Other projects with narrower goals include: *Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners* (GOAL project), implemented by the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (QVETDC) in 2015–2018 (under the European Union Erasmus + Programme, Key Action 3 (KA3): Support for policy reform); *AMTP 2* project of the Education Exchanges Support Foundation (2016–2021), aimed at increasing international awareness of Lithuanian higher education institutions, promoting studies in Lithuania and student mobility; *Europass* project (2018–2020), aimed at promoting the use of Europass documents to facilitate employment, traineeships/internships and continued studies of EU nationals in all EU countries.

According to a report on public consultation “How to encourage Lithuanian citizens to acquire and improve competences and qualifications needed in the labour market” conducted by VŠĮ Investuok Lietuvoje (public company Invest Lithuania), one of the leading proposals for strengthening the system of qualification awarding in Lithuania is the targeted organisation of vocational guidance and the alignment of continuing adult education with industries where the greatest shortage of professionals has been identified. The recommendations of this consultation outline four essential steps: identification of sectors relevant to the Lithuanian economy; focus on vocational guidance that responds to regional and national needs; creation and implementation of reskilling opportunities for all people seeking to change careers; creation of a pool of expertise in the Lithuanian labour market.

According to the poll on career guidance results, which has been carried out by the School Education Gateway since 2018 (a total of 289 respondents) (School Education Gateway, 2019), 95.5% of education professionals agree that schools do offer vocational guidance services, but even 67% of them find the process of vocational guidance to be fragmentary and non-systemic; 59% of respondents believe that vocational guidance should start at lower secondary school grades, for pupils aged 11–16.

What vocational guidance information do students lack? Survey (Table 3) shows that students mainly lack personal counselling to determine how well they match with a certain career and information about the labour market situation.

The findings of the survey suggest that the need for personalised information on match with a certain career and likely consequences of one of another choice (labour market

prospects) constitute the core of services of the vocational guidance system. And these are the services the need for which is critically unmet.

A CEDEFOP survey carried out in the EU in 2016 (Cedefop, 2017) covered 28 countries and 35 646 respondents aged 15 and over (including 1 004 from Lithuania). Among those who indicated the main reasons for choosing vocational education and training (VET), the leading reason was the “likelihood of finding a job” (50% in Lithuania, 46% in the EU), although Lithuanians opting for VET found “career prospects” to be less important compared to interviewees from other countries (Figure 4).

The survey demonstrated that family’s or friends’ advice to choose VET is a stronger motivating factor (indicated as a factor influencing the decision by 29% Lithuanian respondents) than advice from someone at school or someone from the world of work (chosen by 14% and 7% of respondents, respectively). Respondents from other countries indicated advice from someone at school and from the world of work slightly more frequently (17% and 12%, respectively). Family’s advice as a factor that influenced the decision was indicated by 31% of respondents.

Table 3. Vocational guidance information which students are lacking (N = 242) (source: Career Education in Schools, 2013)

	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Career paths	20.9%	50.4%	28.6%
Specialities	16.3%	47.6%	36.1%
Match with a certain career	42.7%	46.2%	11.1%
Admission requirements	19.7%	33.8%	46.6%
Labour market situation	37.3%	46.6%	16.1%
Possibilities of further training and studying	21.3%	47.2%	31.5%
Study programmes	17.2%	42.2%	40.5%
Other	57.1%	21.4%	21.4%

Table 3. Vocational guidance information which students are lacking (N = 242) (source: Career Education in Schools, 2013)

	Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Career paths	20.9%	50.4%	28.6%
Specialities	16.3%	47.6%	36.1%
Match with a certain career	42.7%	46.2%	11.1%
Admission requirements	19.7%	33.8%	46.6%
Labour market situation	37.3%	46.6%	16.1%
Possibilities of further training and studying	21.3%	47.2%	31.5%
Study programmes	17.2%	42.2%	40.5%
Other	57.1%	21.4%	21.4%

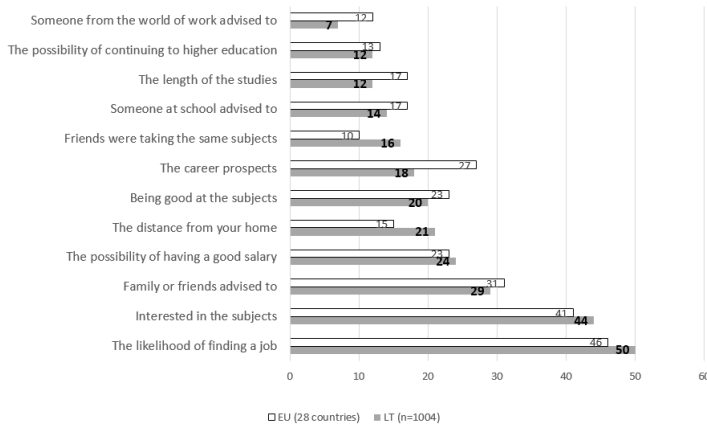


Figure 4. Factors that influenced the choice of VET in Lithuania and the EU, % (source: Cedefop, 2017)

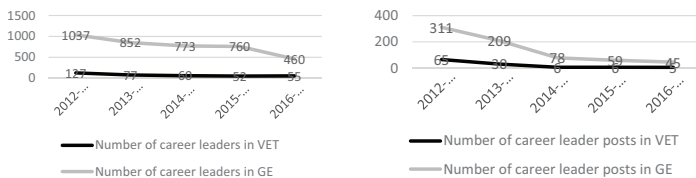


Figure 5. Dynamics in the number of career leaders and their posts in general education and VET schools from 2012–13 to 2016–17 (source: Mukis, 2018)

The answer to the question whether there is sufficient personal counselling which is the main requested cross-cutting vocational guidance measure for persons doubting the alternatives they have chosen is displayed by data: sharply decreasing numbers of career leaders and their posts (Figure 5).

In 2012–13, the number of career leaders both in general education and VET schools fell by more than half, and the number of posts decreased by 7 times. These figures clearly display the message that career counselling is treated as activity not worth investments at the national level.

The apparent decline in attention suggests that the importance of vocational guidance as a system is either no longer trusted or there is simply “no money left” for vocational guidance after allocations to the hottest areas due to underfunding of the educational system in general. Therefore, it is hardly possible to expect at least somewhat more significant increase in the student’s vocational guidance basket in the near future. Such a decision may have been recently determined by the implementation of projects for vocational guidance activities in general education schools, VET establishments and higher education institutions. From 2010 to 2015, allocations from the European Union support funds for the implementation of vocational guidance activities amounted to almost EUR 20 million. This figure is supposed to mitigate the lack of attention to vocational guidance and attempts are made once again to verify the hypothesis that an effective system of vocational guidance has been developed under projects.

The question of whether it succeeded is best answered by the project “National vocational guidance system: interdepartmental service delivery model and business inclusion” initiated and implemented by Invest Lithuania (VšĮ Investuok Lietuvoje) and the Ministry of Education and Science in 2018 (Invest Lithuania, 2018). The main results of the project included a review of good foreign practices, detailed analysis of the status of the vocational guidance system (development of a map of vocational guidance services), survey of service users’ opinions, and development of a vocational guidance system model and a procedure for providing services. The greatest value of the work is the assessment of the current status of vocational guidance provided in the conclusive findings of the project. The main findings are as follows: there is no coordination; there prevails methodological and methodological fragmentation; not only there is a lack of services, but they are not accessible at all (in regions, small schools); available services are ineffective; etc. The novelty of the vocational guidance model proposed by the project developers is the creation of the coordinated national vocational guidance system linked to the qualifications generated by the qualifications system, without disrupting the existing network of vocational guidance (information and counselling) points at the micro level (in the educational system and labour market institutions).

The proposal to link the model of the vocational guidance system with the qualifications formed by the qualifications system is one of the steps, the implementation of which can significantly increase efficiency.

Occupational standards are a significant tool for the development of vocational guidance.

The national qualifications system is a system of qualification formation and management, assessment of the competences acquired by a person and awarding of qualifications. The aim of the qualifications system is to facilitate the compatibility of the needs and objectives of the world of work with those of the educational system, to organise and manage the process of harmonisation to ensure optimal results by means of improving training of a workforce and the development of qualifications structure, as well as by enhancing the effectiveness of macro-level education services in which the world of work is interested most of all.

Many countries of the world recognise national qualifications systems as an instrument for effective dialogue between the interests of the world of work and the educational system (Cedefop, 2009, 2014a, 2014b). How can a qualifications system help balance the qualification structure of human resources? The qualifications system combines the main stages of human resources training in a cycle: methodological documents are drafted, validated and updated by qualifications management authorities for the development and updating of vocational education and training programmes that meet the needs of the economy; studies on qualifications are organised by the qualifications management authorities and carried out together with the partners of the world of work with a view to assessing and standardising the needs of the economy for qualifications and to develop occupational standards, to build and describe qualifications meeting the needs of the economy; development of modular VET and study programmes based on the studies on qualifications; teaching and learning in accordance with the programmes that meet the needs of the economy; assessment and validation of formal, non-formal and informal competences acquired.

The qualifications system, the information of which could serve as a basis for the development of vocational guidance (Borbely-Pecze & Hutchinson, 2016; Reid, 2015; Tütlys, 2013), consists of the following subsystems: management and quality assurance of the qualification system; design of qualifications; acquisition of qualifications; recognition of qualifications. The core of the qualifications system is the development and updating of occupational standards based on studies on qualifications, which provide systematised information of the world of work about qualifications and their content. A total of 24 occupational standards have been prepared within the framework of the qualification system development projects for all sectors of country’s economic activities, providing uniformly arranged descriptions of the qualifications that actually exist and are demanded in the labour market.

There are two main parties involved in the development of occupational standards, namely, the world of work and the educational system. The mission of the world of work is to participate in the identification of the existing situation by defining the currently relevant nomenclature of professional activities, the competences needed for these activities and the need for future competences, generic and specific competences in specific professional activities, performance criteria and limits of competences. Simply put, the world of work has to state what it needs in terms of qualifications and competences, i.e. what qualifications and competences are expected in the labour market (Figure 6).

All processes in the qualifications system are managed on the basis of unified methodological principles, focusing on the changing needs of the labour market and the goals of the educational system. In this context, occupational standards (qualification profiles) are developed and updated – information is vital for the development of modern educational content, which, when vocational guidance is actively pursued, may become an effective tool for matching the qualifications structure of human resources and the labour market needs. And this match is important at both macro and micro levels: for the national labour market, businesses and individuals.

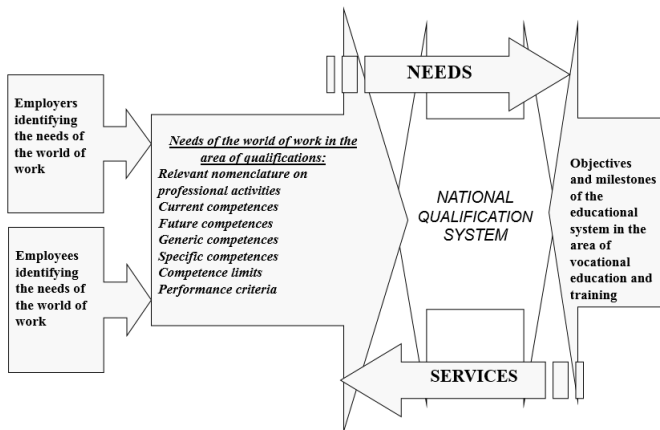


Figure 6. Matching the objectives and needs of the world of work and the educational system (source: developed by author)

The fact that, according to expert analysis, only some 20% of employees’ competences acquired in formal education match the requirements of the workplace suggests that the necessary competences are to be acquired through non-formal and informal learning. On national level, this means a significant loss of return on investment in training – unused acquired competences generate no added value. For businesses, this means additional costs related to additional training of the person employed. For individuals, this is potential costs and time that could have been spent on acquiring competences that better match their personal needs, wishes and capabilities. For these reasons, vocational guidance itself should be considered as a responsible step preceding vocational education and training in the process human resource development. Effective vocational (career) guidance would ensure a better balance between individual interests and labour market needs, a more efficient use of financial resources throughout the educational system, and a more straightforward and shorter individual career path.

Improvement of the vocational guidance model and its linkage to information and development of the qualification system (occupational standards) may aid in achieving the objectives of ensuring effectiveness of vocational guidance and the educational system as a whole (Figure 7).

However, to allow effective use of occupational standards (the qualification profiles contained therein) based on the qualifications system, the system itself needs several important steps: a large-scale information campaigns and public, reliable and interactive information technologies (IT) tool for developing occupational standards and using the qualification profiles contained therein and related information.

Creation of an integrated IT tool, encompassing the main information defining the content of qualifications combined with information on educational institutions where the preferred qualification can be obtained and the conditions and process for obtaining it, labour market information on potential jobs (employers), information of the vocational guidance

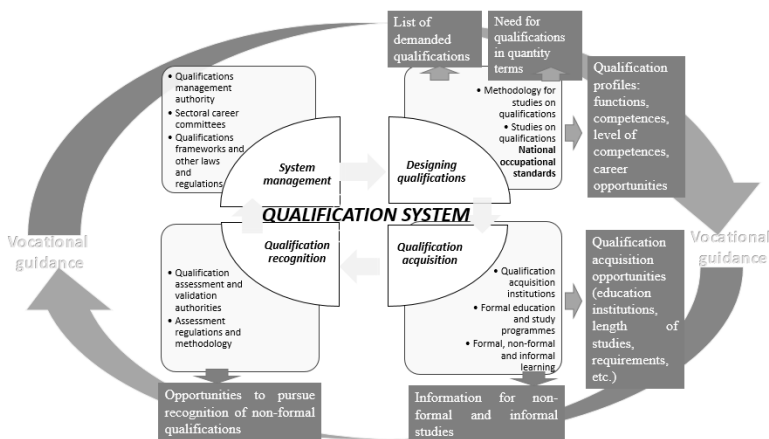


Figure 7. Qualifications system information for vocational guidance (source: developed by author)

system on possible horizontal and vertical career schemes, would enable not only career guidance and counselling professionals, but also all and any person to model their personal career scenarios with full access to education and labour market information.

The condition for implementation is also evident – education policy-makers and responsible persons from various agencies and institutions should better align and harmonise strategic objectives and, at the same time, anticipated projects aimed at ensuring efficiency and synergy effects.

Conclusions

An effective vocational guidance system is one of the instruments of human resource development. Its importance and potential for the development of the country's human resources and for each individual can be compared to the GPS navigation system, a common attribute of modern life.

Three thousand students per career leader and less than one euro for career counselling per student – these are the figures illustrating the use of the career guidance system. All the studies carried out show that the problem is not only the lack of funding: there is no coordination; there prevails methodological and methodological fragmentation; not only there is a lack of services, but they are not accessible at all (in regions, small schools); available services are ineffective. Project-based funding and community initiatives do not fill the gaps in systematic career guidance.

The opportunity to revitalise vocational guidance at the lowest cost is to organise it as an information platform linked to the qualifications system. Model proposed by the author: development of an integrated IT tool, encompassing the information of professionals standards (qualification profiles) combined with information on educational institutions where the preferred qualification can be obtained and the conditions and process for obtaining it, labour market information on potential jobs (employers), information of the vocational guidance system on possible horizontal and vertical career schemes, would enable not only career guidance and counselling professionals, but also all and any person to model their personal career scenarios with full access to education and labour market information.

References

- Borbély-Pecze, T. B., & Hutchinson, J. (2016). Work-based learning and lifelong guidance policies across Europe. *Opus et Educatio*, 3(2), 135–149. <https://doi.org/10.3311/ope.89>
- Borbély-Pecze, T. B., & Hutchinson, J. (2013). The youth guarantee and lifelong guidance. *ELGPN Concept Note*, No. 4. <https://derby.openrepository.com/handle/10545/311108>
- Career Education in Schools. (2013). <https://apklausa.lt/f/ugdymas-karjerai-mokyklose-44qp3w6/answers>
- Cedefop. (2008). *Career development at work: A review of career guidance to support people in employment*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5183_en.pdf
- Cedefop. (2009). *The dynamics of qualifications: defining and renewing occupational and educational standards*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5195>
- Cedefop. (2013a). *Return to work: Work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6121_en.pdf

- Cedefop. (2013b). *Returning to learning, returning to work: Helping low qualified adults out of unemployment*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9082_en.pdf
- Cedefop. (2014). *Navigating difficult waters: Learning for career and labour market transitions*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5542_en.pdf
- Cedefop. (2015). *The role of modularisation and unitisation in vocational education and training*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6126_en.pdf
- Cedefop. (2017). *European public opinion survey on vocational education and training*. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5562_en.pdf
- Deirdre, H., & Borbély-Pecze, T. B. (2012). Youth unemployment: a crisis in our midst – The role of lifelong guidance policies in addressing labour market supply and demand. *ELGPN Concept Note*, No. 2. https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/elgpn_concept_note2_youth_unemployment.pdf
- European Commission (2000). *Memorandum on lifelong learning*. https://arhiv.acs.si/dokumenti/Memorandum_on_Lifelong_Learning.pdf
- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. (2012). *Lifelong guidance policy development: A European Resource Kit. ELGPN Tool No. 1, Chapters 4 to 7 cover the application of the Resource Kit to policies for lifelong guidance in the employment sector*. http://www.eucen.eu/images/posts/elgpn_resource_kit_2011-12_web.pdf
- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. (2014). *The European lifelong guidance policy network. Lifelong guidance policy development: Glossary*. <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/elgpn-tools-no.-2-llg-glossary/>
- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. (2015a). *A report on the work of the European lifelong guidance policy network 2007–15*. <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/elgpn-summative-report-2007-2015/>
- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. (2015b). *ELGPN tool No. 4: Designing and implementing policies related to career management skills (CMS)*. http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/ELGPN_CMS_tool_no_4_web.pdf
- Education Management Information System. (2019). <https://www.svis.smm.lt/en>
- Invest Lithuania. (2018). *Nacionalinė profesinio orientavimo sistema: tarpinstitucinis paslaugų teikimo modelis ir verslo įtrauktis. Teminio tyrimo Profesinio orientavimo sistema valstybės mastu: sistemos dalyviai ir teikiamos paslaugos ataskaita* [National vocational guidance system: interdepartmental service delivery model and business inclusion. Case studies of vocational guidance system state level: the participants and service report]. http://kurkl.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Teminio-tyrimo-ataskaita_PO.pdf
- Lithuanian Centre of Non-Formal Youth Education. (2017). *2015–2016 m. m. mokinių profesinio orientavimo (ugdymo karjerai) stebėsenos ataskaita* [Report on monitoring career education for students in 2015-16]. <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:3lgmPdsC4YYJ:www.mukis.lt/download/1354/2015-2016%2520stebesenos%2520ataskaita.pdf+&cd=1&hl=lt&ct=clnk&gl=lt>
- McMahon, M. (2017). *Career counselling: Constructivist approaches* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315693590>
- Mukis. (2018). *2016–2017 m. m. mokinių profesinio orientavimo (ugdymo karjerai) stebėsenos ataskaita* [Report on monitoring career education for students in 2016-17]. <http://www.mukis.lt/download/1597/2016-2017%20stebesenos%20ataskaita.pdf>
- Mukis. (2019) <http://www.mukis.lt>
- National Audit Office. (2014). *Kaip organizuojamas ir vykdomas mokinių profesinis orientavimas* [Organising and implementing vocational guidance]. <https://www.vkontrole.lt>
- Reid, H. (2015). Career assessment: qualitative approaches – a reflection. In M. McMahon, & M. Watson (Eds.), *Career Assessment: Qualitative Approaches* (pp. 263–271). Sense. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-034-5_30

- School Education Gateway. (2019). *Poll on career guidance – Results*. <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/viewpoints/surveys/poll-on-career-guidance.htm>
- STRATA. (2019). *Bandomojo longitudinalinio absolventų karjeros stebėsenos tyrimo ataskaita* [The pilot longitudinal study of graduates career monitoring report]. https://strata.gov.lt/images/leidiniai/absolventu_karjeros_stebesenos_tyrimo_ataskaita.pdf
- Tūtlys, V. (2013). Karjeros projektavimo ir profesinio rengimo sąveika Lietuvoje: galimybių spąstų problemos sprendimas [Interaction between career design and vocational training in Lithuania: Solving opportunity traps]. *Karjeros projektavimas: tyrimai ir konsultavimas*, (2), 29–53.