

## Conditions for Use of Dialogue Method of Students' Career Guidance in Secondary Vocational Education

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**Abstract.** The dynamic contemporary society where continuous change is inevitable, dialogue practice is regarded as an important component of sustainable change and successful cooperation. Its presence is relevant in everyone's life, including career development and guidance. In the secondary vocational education environment where learning of general and special theories interspersed with practice of special subjects, requires not only dialogue as a simple form of communication, but dialogue method as a package of deliberate sequential activities that can efficiently operate under conditions if between student and learning environment occurs reciprocal communicative interactions that promote new behavior and attitude towards themselves, their learning and for the further life plans. The scientific article is answered to the following *questions*: Why is need dialogue method in the career guidance of students of secondary vocational education? What conditions ensure successful use of dialogue methods in students' career guidance in secondary vocational education? *The aim of the study* is to explore and evaluate the conditions that ensure the successful use of the dialogue methods of students' career guidance in secondary vocational education. *Objectives*: 1) to describe the dialogue method and its principles; 2) to justify the need for dialogue methods career guidance of students in secondary vocational education; 3) to characterize the conditions that promote the dialogue method of guidance of students in secondary vocational education.

**Keywords:** dialogue method, career guidance, conditions of the use of dialogue method, vocational education.

### Introduction

Usually people, who are interested in a targeted search for a solution to a particular problem or issue, engage in the dialogue. In this communication they express their needs, values and attitudes, thus creating a dialogical environment that gives answers and enrich their understanding of the issues of common interest, as well as encouraged to make important decisions. But most importantly, creates a high-quality result. Dialogue allows anyone of its members to think, to express what does he/she think, listen carefully and understand each other. But it means to explore them and learn from others.

If used dialogue as a method in individual career guidance of vocational educational environment, his life and career construction occurs faster and more qualitatively. One of the conditions is a creation and developing of career-oriented dialogic educational environment that positively changing individual behavior and attitudes. However there are several factors that hinder the dialogue method performance. One of them is fragmentary and formal career guidance. Already in 2010, Regulations No. 852 of Cabinet of Ministers made a claim for its compulsory implementation in the education system, including secondary vocational education institutions (Kārtība, kādā..., 2010). Still the career guidance has been too slow, superficial and without visible positive results. This is evidenced by the significant number of early school leaving students which have a tendency to rise, for example, in 2014/2015 school year it was 17.25%; 2013/2014 school year - 16, 87%, and 2012/2013 school year - 17.03% of the total number of students (Audzēkņu skaits..., 2015). If systematically organized career guidance works in a school environment in which actively involved all teachers and school partners, the same environment encourages student regularly to think and move on achieving to the career objectives.

The fact that the dialogue method is able to encourage students to construct self-life and career, including building of the new career-oriented attitudes and behavior, demonstrates foreign scientific research (Meijers, 2009; LaPointe, 2010; Reid, West, 2011; Bigelow, Elsass, 2015). It can take the form through an increasing number of independent searches of answers to the issues of interest themselves, related to the achievements of the personal learning.

Nature of dialogue method requires a purposefully organized systematic communication process in which the use of a variety of techniques can achieve the best possible results in a short time. It follows that the use of dialogue method is considered to be appropriate in career guidance because it focuses on the individual's self-realization and self-development, career exploration and planning, rather than the blind investment of personal and national resources in unmotivated self-development process. However, such dialogue method works in the environment of vocational secondary education, it is important to find out whether it has all the necessary conditions: firstly, there must be at least two persons involved in the communicative exchange, to live in roles of the speaker and listener by focusing attention on each other (Hinds, 1978, 598). Secondly, participants of dialogue must be *here and now* (Isaacs, 1999). It means to use active listening, which is very difficult to do at once and that should be acquired through the creation of new behavior, to listening and expressing self emotions as well as to respecting other. Thirdly, it is necessary to ensure a safe space for dialogue, or container, in which dialogue can flow freely (Bohm, 2004; Isaacs, 1999).

### Methodology

The research was done by studying scientific literature and guidelines, as well as interviewing vice directors or responsible teachers of career guidance of vocational secondary schools about the use of dialogue method of students' career guidance. The data were collected during the seminar "Career Guidance in Vocational Education" organized by State Education Development Agency in October, 2015. The survey involved 16 respondents from 16 vocational secondary schools, representing all regions of Latvia. The obtained study data show that the features of using of dialogue methods are weak, because the conditions for its successful operation are fulfilled in partially but career guidance is a fragmental and superficial. The research results are important because reveals weaknesses of the learning environment that hinder the use of dialogue methods for the students' career guidance in vocational secondary education.

### Results and discussion

Conditions for use of dialogue method are evaluated in relation to developed career guidance model by B. Law (Rethinking Careers..., 2005, 104-107), that theoretically demonstrates the presence of dialogue. The effective operation of model is based on the interest and readiness of all involved parties, including both teachers and employers and students to establish and develop a career. One of the conditions for use of dialogue method is *context* that helps to create a space or container in which the dialogue revealed in a variety of ways, ranging from student reflection to the empathic hearing on various points of view, changing attitudes and behavior.

First of all, those are *various informational resources* in the environment of vocational secondary school which systematic use encourages students to think about their professional choice, learning and career development. Currently, libraries and information canters of secondary vocational school are provided with materials of career-related information and those are available, but unfortunately, their use is passive. This is because the students grudgingly read the information and make it, only when requested by teachers. It is one of the causes that does not encourage students' reflection and self-awareness of their acquiring of profession and career development.

Secondly, it is *face to face* career guidance work in which student must be interested, proactive to ask and to speak with teachers and/or career professionals. This is a work in small groups and individually, which helps to learn about themselves and the world of work, to plan their careers and make decisions how to proceed. However it is recognized, that such students' discussions related to their needs and expectations are rare. Usually they are a group' teachers and the teachers of practical work, who heard by students. The assistance of career professionals is used in only 4 schools of the 16 surveyed.

Thirdly - *the records, portfolio development and career planning*. Here the student should to write a potential action plan for the realization of their professional aspirations. It would help to create notes about their experience, capabilities and their intentions in relation to working life. However, as showed the survey, students make up their career portfolio only in the one vocational secondary school. Teachers career counselors /or responsible for the career guidance expressed view that creation and maintenance

of portfolio is a laborious and complex process, having a lack of time to keep up with it. It had been an attempt to create career portfolio in the one of the survived schools, but unfortunately, it has not given the desired result. The respondents' answers indicate that they lack an understanding of the importance of the need for individual students' portfolio, as well as a lack of skills, how methodically and correctly to work out this plan. B. Law (Rethinking Careers..., 2005, 104) wrote that qualitatively and a meaningful created portfolio provides information relating to the student's personality and learning progress and quality of career development. It helps student to develop his own views on what he/she obtained from a variety of learning experiences in school and working environment. Fourthly, it is a *personal and social education* through which the student informs about their career prospects in many ways; also that it is necessary to link their career expectations with other life roles. Unfortunately, this activity is fragmented, because students are not always aware himself and self-influence through their social roles, or they has not learned or do not want to demonstrate their social roles. All of the respondents indicated that the results of personal and social education are felt after qualification practice, which takes place on the third and fourth school year when the student has strengthened assurance about their career path.

Fifthly, the *educational work of career development* in the classroom helps to understand, create and use acquired social skills from the previous setting. Those are used to get the on-site assistance of the teachers in the classroom, because they are acting as the professionals of the branch. According to the Law B. (Rethinking Careers..., 2005, 104-107), student participate in various activities of the planned work, where is being examined in detail the most important professional aspects of the work carried out by the teachers as professional experts. It helps student to create a real picture of the chosen career direction. Here student's career progress occurs through active *learning by doing*, which is based on career issues and decisions. It gives to student an opportunity to openly and freely share their thoughts and feelings about the career. With regard to the learning position, the respondents answered unanimously that it so happens, but not always and not all students are ready to take the initiative and to express their feelings and thoughts. Typically, there are 3-4 students from the group.

Sixthly, it is an *integrating career guidance work*. B. Law (Rethinking Careers..., 2005, 104) thought that student's individual career plan arises from what the subject teachers have said in lessons or are urged to think and operate in practice. In this way, student learning forming links with working life situations. However the real situation in surveyed vocational schools shows that teachers, especially, the practical work' teachers and practice managers are urged to think and operate in practice in relation to the their future occupation outside the compulsory education period, but often it is left in the form of recommendations, having are rarely followed by real actions. The situation would be much more optimistic, if schools practiced professional qualifications based on individual career development plan, where student sees his personal contribution and personal growth.

Seventhly, - it is connected with *the community-related activities*. As written by B. Law (Rethinking Careers..., 2005, p.104 -107), it is the cooperation with local employers and the community in which student has much more possibilities to recognize the relationship between his life and all the things what he/she learns in school. This is characterized schools' communication with the parents, employers and other responsible institutions about the career guidance work at school. However, very rarely there are cases when the school succeeds in fruitful communication with the students' parents about guidance issues. The reason has developed a view that career issues do not need any more to tackle, because students already have chosen their profession before enrolled in the relevant vocational secondary school. Involvements of students' gaining in work experience in local community projects, etc., what student can be used as learning resources, also are rare. This is because, not always local business capacity and opportunities can provide it.

The survey results showed that school co-operation with a local business and other partners has campaign and a formal nature, which does not provide a permanent feedback in order to promote functioning of career guidance at school. For example, on the question *does students' career management and future plans being discussed between the school managers to potential employers?* 10 respondents answered that it is *rare*, only 3 respondents admitted that they do *always* and 3 – *often*. On the question *has it ever happened that student talks about his life in relation to their choice of profession?* 12 teachers responded that it happens *rarely*, but in turn, 4 - believes that *often*. 7 of the 16

surveyed teachers notes that students do not always take the individual works, which encourages them to constantly think and solve problems according to their learning abilities and experience. On the question *does learners have the motivation perform their individual exploratory activities learning environment in connection with their career choice?* 13 teachers responded that *rare*. It indicates the fact that learning environment does not completely ensure the conditions for successfully dialogue.

All surveyed teachers believe that the students are always given the opportunity to rethink their newly acquired practical experience. However, it takes the form of campaign. For example, writing practice report (9 responses) during a qualification practice, school is organized "School Day" and practical advice when students share their experience; they filled in a questionnaire which assesses the place of practice. Negotiation and reflections on their newly acquired practical experience held in cooperation with the group's teachers, teachers of special subjects and far as possible with career professionals (if one is available).

Like all surveyed teachers considered that they received feedback from students about their newly acquired knowledge, skills and practical experience in the work environment. It manifests in different ways - the most - students practice conferences (11 responses), writing of practice diaries (4); in negotiates among students, teachers and practice mentors from an establishment (5); it is a communication on social networks or by phone (2). Although all 16 of the respondents said that in school education process is established training exercises that test students' professional competences connected with the real working life problems (13 – always; 3 - often), but it should be noted that it has not contributed to the students themselves to be active in their career management.

Both observations of the author of this article and surveyed teachers have given an opinion, which is also confirmed by the Dutch scientists (Meijers, 2009; Mittendorff, Jochems, 2008) that for the big number of the vocational secondary schools 'students the school is a place where should they someone will tell how to do things, and that they will make self life unpleasant, if will do it wrong. They principal activity of the school is not targeted learning, but performance of tasks that must be done, though, or at least with minimal effort and unpleasantness. But usually they do not care how they deal with. If they can do this, they will do; if experience teaches them that it does not work very well, they will turn to others - illicit means that completely kill any target that has been in mind of the task-giver.

This points to the fact that these students have not cleared, meaningful their vision of future. Therefore learning is adapting of survival strategy with a number of interrelated consequences: they are not intrinsically motivated to master the curriculum. This is evidenced by the fact that they forget much of what they have learned a short time before. There are a growing number of students who lack interest in researching and thinking about their career choice, because they have not found their needs, values and goals. As a result, teachers are forced to invest a lot of effort in order to maintain a balanced student-teacher interaction. This interaction is reduced to *the exchange of knowledge on the order of how to obtain the learning outcomes*. Therefore 1/4 of students of secondary vocational education leave school without a diploma, because they do not know how to take responsibility and manage their own learning and to organize leisure time. It shows the importance of the role of the learning environment, where integrated career guidance and where through a thoughtful and systematic activities occurs dialogue between the student and their trusted adults; that in the center of dialogue is located meaning of students' experience about his life and career.

The dialogue' researchers K. Mittendorff, W. Jochems, F. Meijers and Mr P. Brok (2008) consist, that it is important to have a clear relationship between the student's experience with the world of work and his professional identity formation. The author proposes to use the method of dialogue as a solution to the above mentioned topical issues. This is due to various scientific findings that show the benefits of the use of dialogue, for example:

- dialogue guarantees the anticipation of change in thinking, action and behavior, since the participants jointly communicating and practically doing is generating new direct experience (Meijers, 2009);
- dialogue is an exchange process where two variables are interacting and performing two different tasks: *giving* and *asking* (Halliday, 1984, 3-11);

- dialogue occurs, if there are talks about the "my interest" and "your interests" (MacIntosh, Beech, 2012, 376), where hearing of the difference opinion leads to the formulation of question what must be discussed and solved (Walton, 1989, 176).

Dialogue in career guidance requires the same individual to permanently look for solutions of self life and career development in different ways, because in that way he/she can to access own resources. J. Lyons (1977, 66) writes that in the dialogue people are using their knowledge from their different social roles and status; their location in time and space; their degree of formality and the subject of negotiations. Besides, each participant of dialogue wants to receive a permanent feedback from other actors involved in the dialogue, which would guarantee the recipient's attention and favorable confirmation of perception about what been said, and that have desire to continue the dialogue. Moreover, constant feedback provides a study and the solution of the problem.

If dialogue is used as a method of in the educational environment, it is essential to take into account the following principles, defined by R. Flecha (2000, 137):

- 1) to be on an *equal* footing, since the arguments based on the logic and proof, not on the authority);
- 2) to be *culturally intelligent*, it is mean, that each dialogue participant has possibility to confirm self intrinsic abilities, interests and abilities;
- 3) to be *transformative*, because dialogue should be changed attitudes towards the outside world and ourselves; 4) to be *instrumental* - it improved capacities of dialogue' participants in the widest field;
- 5) to be able *to create meaning* - in interaction with others establish personalized or collective meaning;
- 6) to be *joint and several* – it means, dialogue participants must be united about the value of dialogue, despite the differing views; 7) it *promotes understanding of the equality of different*, because there is no more or less valuable views, there is only more or less justified opinions.

Describing the method from the pedagogical point of view (Pedagoģijas terminu..., 2000, 102) and extending it to a narrower view - the dialogue method, then can be considered that dialogue method is set of sequential cognition and exploration techniques which is used as the operating principle ("how to do") addressing to a studying of specific topic in order to achieve adequate results producing by target. But describing the dialogue method of career guidance in vocational secondary education, must take account the three sets of goals of career education and counseling (Karjeras izglītība, 2006, 8): 1) self-knowledge and self-development, 2) career exploration, and 3) career planning, whose process of achieving the student develop their career management competence. Consequently, it can be assumed that *dialogue method of career guidance in secondary vocational education is purposefully organized systematic communication between two or more persons, which focuses on self-exploration and self-development, career exploration and planning*. Dialogue method includes a variety of communication techniques, where each of them carries out its task in an orderly sequence so as to in a short time to achieve the best possible results.

For understanding of the necessity of dialogue methods in career guidance, it is important to mention a *principle of Reciprocity and Answers*, on which underlying a dialogue. M. Baker-Ohler and A. Holba (2009, 140) writes that reciprocity is characterized by interhumanity. Whereas people communicate through language that is appropriate to their existence, according to M. Buber (2014) findings, reciprocity is a source of interhumanity because it is designed to seek to address and response. Reciprocity calls each individual to meet life through the relationships and attitudes. Such a meeting requires that dialogue participants to see each other and both find the meaning of this reciprocity, which also has an individual's connection in dialogue; it recognizes that *self* and *other* are different dialogue partners, which focuses its attention not only to the self but to the scope of what they both create together. Both M. Buber (2014) and W. Isaacs (1999), believes that dialogue raises genius communicative relationship that is mutual and reciprocity, which makes communication an operational and alive with understanding that communication is a container in which the individual conveyed own truth of oneself to another dialogue participants. R. Anderson, L. A. Baxter and K. N. Cissna (2004, 2) believe that it refers to the specific detailed and qualitative communication processes, where are permitted and where there exist changes because the dialogue participants cannot predict what they will have to say, and thus they may surprise not just another, but also themselves.

Based on the current situation of students' career guidance in vocational secondary education environment, it must be emphasized most urgent conditions of use of dialogue methods - ensuring of the *active listening* and *dialogue container*, where dialogue can flow freely.

According to the W. Isaacs, (1999), to allow for dialogue, the participants must be in *here and now*. It is difficult to do at once; attentive, active listening is acquired through the creation of new behavior, while to listening, expressing emotions and respecting others. Scientists J. Stewart, K. Zediker and S. Wittenborn (2006) believes that *active listening* is a structured way of listening that requires peace of mind and empathic behavior. Being an active listener does not agree with the others view, because it is a way of approaching the problems (Rogers, Farson, 1987). So that, an active listening to be effective, it must be firmly based in basic attitude of dialogue' participants, where is demonstrated in a real mutual respect. Listening to create changes in the individual's attitudes toward themselves and others; it also changes their values and personal philosophy. People who have listened to this new and special way, becomes emotionally mature and open to their experience. When people listen carefully, they are listening to him with greater diligence for understanding what exactly they feel and think. They argue less and are more willing to accept other points of view. Besides providing more information than any other activity, listening constructed deep, positive relationships and constructively changes the listener's attitude. According to the C.R. Rogers and R. E. Farson (1987), active listening goal is to achieve positive changes in the human mind and actions. During his life, individual has learned to think for themselves in certain, very specific ways. On the one hand, these perceptions and assumptions about themselves tend to be both really and deceptively. Everyone has experience relevant to the way in which it is necessary to think about selves and it is also accepted. But there is much more difficult to accept experience that does not fit. For example, a student can be considered themselves to be incompetent and worthless. He/she may feel that he/she is doing his/her work ineptly despite to favourable environmental assessment. As long as he/she has such feelings for himself/herself, he denies any experience, it seems, are not satisfied with the same picture taken him/her. He/she is forced to defend himself or completely to deny the experience. The defense and denial of these experiences and the same taken picture usually leads to rigid behavior and create difficulties in personal self-putting in order. On the other hand, active listening, pose no threat to the individual's own image. He/she is able to study it, see what it is and accept his decision as to how realistic it is. And then he/she is in a position to change. But as long the individual is not ready to change, communication cannot be effective. It is therefore necessary to create an atmosphere of dialogue that is neither critical and evaluative nor moralizing. It must be equal, free and awareness accepting. Only in such a situation, the individual feels safe enough to incorporate new experiences and new values in his own behavior. C.R. Rogers and R. E. Farson (1987) believe that anyone who listens carefully with the understanding however, is the one who ultimately is likely to be heard. Active listening requires practice and changes to the individual basic attitudes. These changes come slowly and sometimes with considerable difficulty. In order to active listening be effective everyone must have a real interest in the speaker.

The second important condition is to provide a full-fledged *container of dialogue* in which the dialogue can flow freely between and through us (Bohm, 2004). It is central to the concept of dialogue. According to the acknowledgment of W. Isaacs (1999, 244): "if no container, no dialogue". Container is capable to holding a dialogue. The dialogue in learning environments/classroom becomes a container when it participants feel heard and themselves knows how to listen carefully and to respect others, as well as can safely stopped assumptions, expressing their thoughts. A. C. Baker (2004, 695) uses the term "holding environment" to describe the space, in which opposing ideas can be explored, resolved, or embraced and in which the contributions of all participants are valued. In the dialogue, "people become as observers of their own thought" (Senge, 2006, 242) and gain an understanding, both individually and collectively, on how diverse tend to have people' opinions; here people are no longer in opposition, but participates in the construction of commonly accepted meaning which is able to grow and change.

May agree with view of J. Jermolajeva (1997, 58) that one of the preconditions of dialogical learning is *dialogical attitude* as a complex phenomenon, where interacts the mutual relationships of dialogue' participants and their attitude towards the dialogue itself. J. Jermolajeva (1997, 58) recognizes that the nature of the attitude is variable and fickle. In its development can be seen in several lines: the first - is characterized by attitudes towards the other participants of dialogue. Its zero point is a desire to see other

as a mean for self expression (the other as a means), but amid a dialogue increasingly gets ability to see in another the other personality, by which is formed cooperation. The second axis or a line creates an attitude towards themselves. There zero point is the treatment of themselves as closed and constant personality (I as a means), but amid a dialogue, there is developing the ability to more deeply understand themselves (I, as an end in itself). The third axis is the attitude to the dialogue process. In this case, the zero point is utilitarian dialogue as a necessary recognition (dialogue as a tool). Away from it, is forming dialogue as a higher value-realization (dialogue as an end in itself). Thus dialogical attitude is mutual creative activity, during in which the two individuals in a free and open interaction are formed new mutual importance of revelation - dialogue space or container. Dialogue practitioners Mr. Drybrough and D. Goddin (2014) writes that as more powerful container, as will be more authentic and more effective dialogue. It is important to create a container that is clearly understandable to all its participants, because in such a way are forming the necessary conditions for the supportive conversations. Therefore practitioners and maintainers of dialogue methods have needed to work on the container. It is essential to identify the following main "pillars" for creating dialogue container: 1) to respect its own and other contributions, which are involved in the dialogue; 2) to suspend judgments; 3) use active listening in understanding others, to understand the rhythm and flow of what is being said; 4) to express self views through own authentic speech by voice. The dialogue space that is built on these pillars, is a challenging and obviously variable, because it ensures the existence of a dialogue. Context is everything in the dialogue - they are the actual and visible conditions involving a dialogue and that respects the participants of dialogue. Context affects the successful outcome of the dialogue and it is a question of how much work has been invested in the container building.

### Conclusions

- Dialogue method for students' career guidance should be viewed as a set of cognitive and research techniques whose systematic use of students' self-knowledge, career exploration and planning, can ensure stable changes in their behaviour and attitude towards their acquiring of profession and future plans of career and life.
- Dialogue method is based on the principle of reciprocity and response, which are partly reflected in environment of the career guidance of vocational secondary school. This is because the operation of career guidance in vocational secondary education is a formal and superficial, where too little attention is devoted to the making meanings of student's own experience on his life and career.
- Dialogue method will give the expected results - positive changes in students' thinking, action and behavior, - if communication between the student and his career guidance' stakeholders have mutual credibility and true interest to deal with the problems. It will form deep and positive relationships and constructively will change both the student's thoughts and his actions in connection with acquisition of professional qualification and future career development.

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