

Importance of Goal-Setting Tasks in Career Counselling

Anita Racene Mg. oec., Mg. ed.

Institute of Education and Home Economics, Latvia University of Agriculture, Latvia
arz.pluss@inbox.lv

Abstract: The paper deals with the research results on the importance of goal-setting tasks in career counselling. The problem is urgent – setting high goals by youth influences their achievements in studies and their success in their lives. The research aim is to analyse the results of completing goal-setting tasks by vocational school students in career counselling classes. A review of theory and an analysis of the tasks completed by the vocational school students were performed to achieve the aim. The study involved 74 vocational school students aged 17-29. The study revealed that the respondents most often set the following goals: starting a family, starting up a business and becoming a good specialist in the chosen profession. The present research will contribute to the understanding of importance of goal-setting tasks in career counselling and give insight into youth's goals in their lives. Clients develop their abilities to think, plan and analyse and define their life goals owing to goal-setting tasks. The present research findings are useful for career and personnel selection specialists in the career counselling.

Keywords: goal, goal setting, task, career counselling, vocational education.

Introduction

Most EU Member States have defined that career counselling is an interdisciplinary, theoretical and applied science that integrates the theories and practices of psychology, health sciences, pedagogy, economics, management, law. To help clients understand and successfully achieve their career and job goals, a career counsellor gives advice in all career guidance and development aspects through guidance, psychological counselling, coaching and advisory techniques. There are several kinds of career counselling. Based on their education, professional skills built up throughout the lifetime, experience, personal interests and goals as well as based on clients' needs, in some countries career counsellors do their practice as career pedagogues, while in other countries they are career therapists, career coaches, mentors, mediators, supervisors. The role of a career counsellor partially overlaps with the responsibilities of other professions, such as human resources manager, an employment psychologist and a job psychologist. (Karjeras konsultāciju ..., 2009).

Career counselling is defined as assistance to people to contribute to their self-cognition, the identification of their professional talents, a profound understanding of their own education and labour market opportunities that best fit the personalities, their own values and life goals. Career counselling may involve career planning, identifying professional adequacy, job trials and building up job-seeking and job-retention skills (Karjeras attīstības..., 2008).

The effectiveness of career counselling outcomes is important in career guidance. On the result of using any career counselling method the distressed people's lives should be improved. R.V. Peavy (1929-2002) suggested asking oneself a question when choosing some particular technique – does this technique contributes to a smart choice? Does this counselling technique helps answer a question, “How should I live my life?” (Pīvijs, 2011).

R.V. Peavy asserted that counselling was based on smartness, and this means that the “best” ideas have to be considered and evaluated. Besides, the concept of counselling based on smartness is consistent with the position that giving assistance is an activity guided by ethical decisions (Pīvijs, 2011). For this reason, a technique chosen by a career counsellor to be employed in career counselling sessions has been reasonable.

The term “career” was derived from the Latin word “carrus”, which meant a passage, a way or a wagon. A human's carer is his/her life. In this respect, any counselling is career counselling, as the counselling relates to the human's life. Counselling itself represents signposts throughout the lifetime (Pīvijs, 2011).

R. Kochyunas (Кочюнас, 2000) classified counselling into four kinds, which may be used by a career counsellor:

1. advising;
2. informative counselling;

3. diagnostic counselling;
4. formative and corrective counselling.

Advising may be a component of individual and group counselling. Usually, advice is given to clients about where to search for information; the clients are advised on how to tackle their personal problems and how to assist their personality growth and to whom ask for help to solve the problems being beyond the counsellor's competences.

Informative counselling is a kind of counselling used when starting working with clients who have no idea of the working world or who have certain wishes, but they lack information about, e.g., basic requirements to work in the profession they are interested in, organisations and institutions where jobs in the profession are vacant (Солюмин, 2007).

Informative counselling is characterised by the counsellor's high activity. Information has to be given to the client in detail (with addresses, phone numbers, surnames).

Diagnostic counselling is usually associated with the identification of the client's professional appropriateness. The counsellor may suggest the client, e.g., how to match his/her wishes with his/her psychological and physiological possibilities; which professions he/she should avoid if his/her psychological and physiological possibilities do not meet the profession's standards; ways and techniques for developing or enhancing his/her attention, memory and spatial thinking (Kidd, 2006).

L. Bramer and E. Shostrom (1982) as well as G. Corey (1990) believe that the client has to take part in the choice of diagnostic tests. The counsellor's duty is to explain him/her that test scores show only a tendency and to tell him/her about his/her diagnostic results in an understandable way, but to interpret the results from a neutral perspective. The counsellor has to understand the client's reaction on the interpretation (Spiegel, Hill, 1989).

Formative and corrective counselling is a kind of counselling that is applied at the end of any counselling session. The expected degree of the client's satisfaction with the chosen profession, to a great extent, is associated with whether his/her expectations match the real specifics of the profession. The counsellor's corrective work takes place at the level of the client's advantages, expectations, notions and social principles, and no definite algorithm exist for it (Brown, Brooks, 1991). The counsellor usually helps the client to see and comprehend the life prospects. It requires a broader view on the client's situation, as the profession and the job are only the first link in the entire chain of life choices, in which social advancement, financial wellbeing and mental development are an important skill. The core of life prospects is one's value-orientation as well as life goals and plans. The client has to be assisted to understand both the differences and the connections among these terms.

However, when choosing advising as the kind of career counselling to be employed, three reasons have to be considered with regard to why the advising has to be treated cautiously (Pīvijs, 2011):

- 1) any advice could turn out to be incorrect;
- 2) advice can be good; yet, it could be implemented incorrectly;
- 3) if advice – either good or poor – does not yield the expected result, the taker of the advice could blame the advice giver for the poor advice. This means that advising can contribute to the fact that the advice seeker avoids his/her responsibility.

A goal is defined as a certain expected situation or result to be achieved by an individual (AkadTerm, 2016). Goal-setting tasks are very important in career counselling, as any individual has been born with his/her own specific life mission, and the identification, awareness and acceptance of this life mission are the most important actions of successful individuals (Kenfilds, Svicere, 2012). If one's life lacks a goal, the countless trials to do something about it yield no results, time and resources are wasted and the individual has not realised him/herself and feels unhappy.

The choice of a technique – owing to setting a goal, the client develops his/her ability to think, plan and analyse and to define his/her life goal.

The research aim is to analyse the results of completing goal-setting tasks by vocational school students in career counselling classes.

Methodology

To achieve the research aim, goal-setting tasks were developed and approved at vocational education institutions in career counselling classes. The present research analysed the results of completing the mentioned tasks. A study was conducted during career counselling classes, requesting youth aged 18-29 to perform a goal-setting task. The study involved 74 young individuals. The study was conducted from 1 September 2016 to 22 November 2016.

The research aim was to analyse the results of completing goal-setting tasks. Specific research tasks:

1. To theoretically discuss goal-setting theories.
2. To analyse the results of completing goal-setting tasks by students.

An analysis of the goal-setting theories was done to perform the research tasks and achieve the research aim. To analyse statistical data, descriptive statistics was employed using MS Excel. The task method was employed to analyse goal-setting tasks. The terms for a goal-setting task were as follows: at least five goal achievement stages had to be defined in order to set a goal. The place of conducting the study: vocational education institutions in Zemgale region – Jelgava Crafts Secondary School, Zalenieki Commercial and Crafts Secondary School and Jelgava Secondary Technical School.

Results and discussion

Goal-setting theories

Goal-setting is an effective way of motivating oneself and others. The founders of goal-setting theory were American psychologists E. Locke and G. Latham who, based on an assumption about human rational behaviours, developed a goal-setting theory (Locke, 1968, Locke, Latham, 1990). E. Locke and G. Latham found that humans set conscious goals that, at the same time, served both as motivation and as task performance drivers. The effectiveness of achieving a goal is influenced by three aspects: proximity, difficulty and specifics. A well-defined goal fits SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-targeted) criteria. A goal is the form of motivation. The result of target is satisfaction with the progress made (Locke, Latham, 2006). One should set a goal that is achievable, and it has to be done within a short period. The more complicated the goal, the greater satisfaction is achieved. Besides, the higher the goal, the higher requirements have to be set for oneself. The more specific the goal, the higher performance level has to be set, compared with a general goal. J. Canfield and J. Switzer assert that any goal has to be measurable (Kenfelds, Svicere, 2012). The key principles of achieving a goal are defined by I. Melbārde (Table 1).

Table 1

Key principles of achieving a goal
(Melbārde, 2004,2007)

No	Key principle	Example
1	Any goal has to be defined in a positive form.	Instead of <u>running away from</u> ..., there should be movement <u>towards</u> ... Instead of saying: "I do not want", you have to say: "I want."
2	The goal has to be dependent on the individual him/herself.	"I want me to be/ to do" instead of "I want them to be/ to do..."
3	The goal has to be clearly imagined.	It is important to precisely imagine what it will be when the goal is achieved. If we do not know what we want to achieve, it may happen that we have achieved the goal, but we do not notice it.
4	The goal has to be placed into the right context.	Where, how and what I want to achieve? Whom with I do not want to do it? „I want to be demanding.” (Always and everywhere, not only at the job?)
5	The goal has to be ecological or “friendly”.	Is the goal worth my efforts? How the achievement of the goal will influence my life and the lives of my relatives? What important thing I am going to lose if I achieve the goal? What is the price of achieving the goal? Is it beneficial for me to achieve the goal? What are the negative side effects?

No	Key principle	Example
6	The goal has to be set on a real scale.	„I wish to have success in any sphere of my life.” (Which life spheres are the most important?)
7	The goal has to be based on available resources.	What resources are necessary to achieve the goal? What resources are already at my disposal? What else is needed to achieve the goal?
8	What are potential obstacles on the way towards the goal?	What hinders me from achieving the goal? Why I had not achieved the goal earlier? What are other potential ways to achieve the goal?
9	What are the first steps on the way towards the goal?	What I am going to do first to achieve the goal? Where and when I am going to do my first steps to achieve the goal?

There are large and small goals, short-term and long-term ones. Individuals like small goals, as such goals require less efforts and time to be achieved. When achieving a goal, a risk is the easy achievability of the goal (Stabiņš, Pupiņš, 2008). The importance of achieving a small goal is quite small, therefore, the achievement of it is postponed.

Large goals are nice and attractive, and they create pleasure. The risk of setting a large goal is that individuals can make mistakes, overestimating their abilities, skills, knowledge, experience and resources, and this could result in frustration, depression and looking for the one to blame for (Stabiņš, Pupiņš, 2008). Setting high goals influences youth's achievements in their studies and success in their lives. Although, the children grow, change their goals, the success in the school is an important step for the successful selection of the wide range of opportunities offered by the future. Parents and the family make the greatest influence on a child, while youth and their parents are undoubtedly affected by the environment where they live. Mentors, parents, friends, the school and voluntary youth organisations play an important role in shaping the youth's understanding of their potential opportunities as well as in building up their skills needed for achieving their goals (Karjeras atbalsta ..., 2010). Children whose parents expect good school results from them are usually more successful than their peers whose parents do not expect good school results from them (Downey, 2002).

If there is a goal in the life, this means that the individual does what he/she likes very much and what he/she is good at; the individual does what it is important for him/her. Consequently, the individual him/herself and the surrounding community are the gainers because, if the individual acts in line with the true goal of his/her life, all his/her actions automatically serve for the whole community (Kenfelds, Svicere, 2012).

An examination of a number of cases has proved that wishes are the key driver in making decisions by youth regarding how to achieve success in their studies. However, practice shows that their choices, decisions and behaviours are influenced by a number of social, economic and situational factors (Learning and Skills..., 2009).

Traditional reasons that prevent from achieving a set goal are as follows (Stabiņš, Pupiņš, 2008):

- idleness;
- addiction to alcohol, drugs;
- addiction to computer games, serial movies;
- dependence on the opinions of others;
- uncontrolled emotions;
- lost time;
- strong emotional relationships with close individuals;
- stress;
- inability to decide;
- no confidence in oneself and one's abilities;
- low professionalism.

Analysis of goal-setting tasks

The study was conducted from 1 September 2016 to 22 November 2016; during the individual and group career classes “Setting a goal”, 74 vocational secondary school students were asked to perform a goal-setting task. The questionnaire was developed using the matrixes available on the website www.visidati.lv in order that the respondents could fill in their questionnaire in an easy and comfortable way. The results were processed employing the grouping method and descriptive statistics using MS Excel (Paura, Arhipova, 2002). The age indicators of the youth who participated in the study could be determined using the MS Excel tool for descriptive statistics (Table 2).

Table 2

Age indicators of the youth who participated in the study		
No	Indicator	Characteristics of the sample
1	Average	23.96
2	Mode	29
3	Median	24
4	Range	11
5	Minimum	18
6	Maximum	29
7	Number of respondents	74

After analysing the data, one can find that the youth aged from 18 to 29 years participated in the study. Their age range was 11 years, the mode was 29, the median was 24 and the arithmetic average for their age was 23.96 years. The mode is a value that appears most frequently in a series of numbers (Arhipova, Bāliņa, 2003). The most questionnaires were filled in by the students aged 29. The median is a value in the middle of a series of values sorted ascending or descending order (Arhipova, Bāliņa, 2000; 2003). The distribution of the respondents by gender was as follows: 66 % were women, 34 % were men. An example of the task with the replies given by a respondent is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Five goal achievement stages		
No	Respondent – a man, 26 years old	
	Stage description	To achieve it, I need:
1	Higher education, a lawyer.	Money and time for studies.
2	Doctor's degree in law.	It is necessary to acquire a bachelor's or master's degree in law.
3	High job position in the profession. A job position at the Supreme Court, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau or any other state administration institution.	It is necessary to have critical thinking, manager competences (or skills), accuracy at the job.
4	Financial stability, a nice house, a family.	All previous plans and goals have to be performed and achieved. It is necessary to build up one's knowledge in the field of finance.
5	Happy family, children and good education for the children.	It is necessary to have an ability to care about others and oneself and to persistently raise one's qualification.
6	My goal – a happy, prosperous and pleasant old age, assistance to children and grandchildren; no problems.	It is necessary to achieve what was mentioned above, persistently educate oneself and take care about one's health.

The study results were summarised by kind of goals (Figure 1). The goals related to starting a family were set by 15 % of the youth; the goals related to establishing one's own enterprise were set by 26 %; the goals associated with the speciality of the chosen profession were set by 27 % and the goals related

to raising one's qualification or acquiring higher education were set by 7 % of the youth; other goals were set by 25 %.

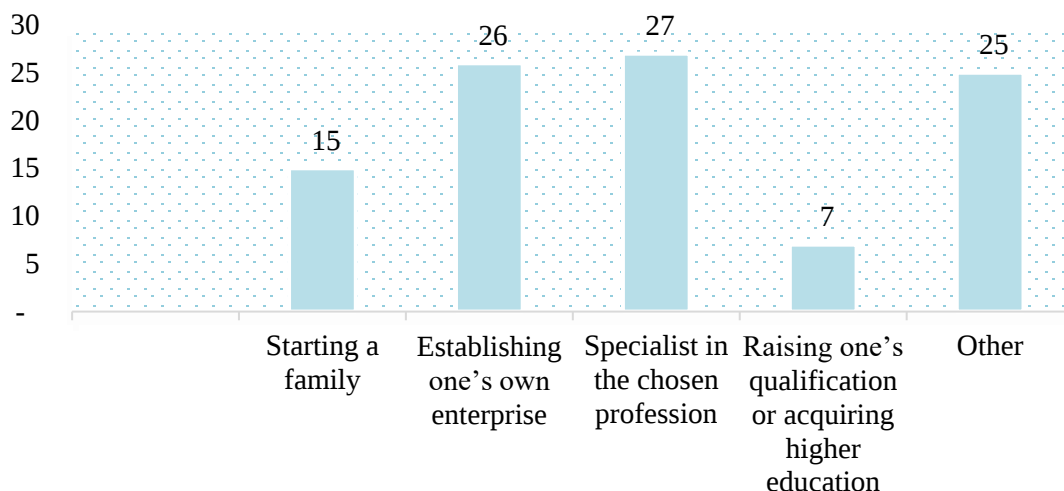


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of the goals by kind of activity [author's construction].

According to the data, the following goals related to starting a family were mentioned: starting one's own family; bringing up a child and making him/her a good person; a happy family. The goals related to establishing one's own enterprise were as follows: founding a manicure salon, one's own enterprise and a fashion salon. The goals related to becoming a good specialist in the chosen profession were as follows: becoming a chief accountant, an auto diagnostician, a visagiste, a cook, a customer service specialist. The goals related to acquiring education were as follows: starting studies at Latvia University of Agriculture, the University of Latvia or another university. Among the other goals mentioned by the respondents in their questionnaires, there were mentioned the following: doing a job that I enjoy, earning a high wage, having a highly paid and pleasant job, being rich, finding the right way to go throughout the lifetime, doing things I like, making happy close relatives and doing a job that I like.

The research data were summarised by goal achievement term: long- and short-term (Figure 2). Long-term goals were set by 78 % of the youth, while short-term goals by 22 %.

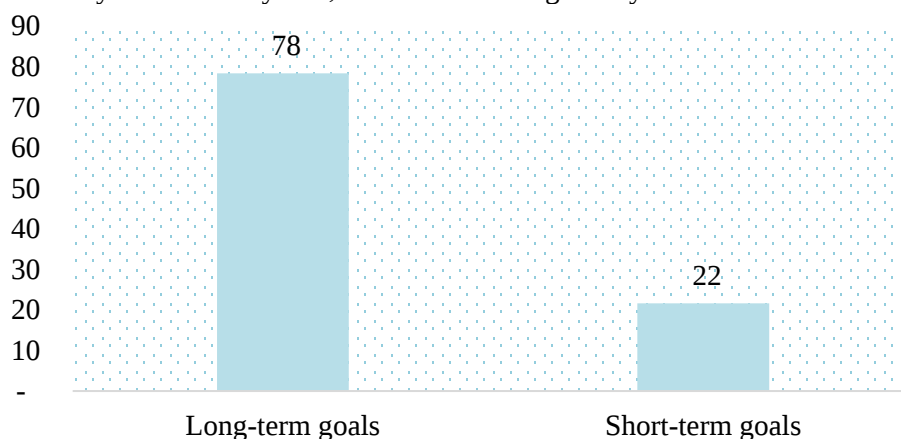


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of the goals by term [author's construction].

According to the study, the long-term goals (implementation time more than a year) were as follows:

- making the children's-professional career dream to come true and, in parallel with it, getting a stable job;
- establishing a happy family and working with pleasure at one's own or family enterprise;
- founding a manicure salon;
- establishing one's own enterprise;
- developing a successful business having great export and import opportunities;

- bringing up a child and making him/her a good person;
- keeping the native land in good shape, building a house in countryside where to spend the most pleasant moments with the family.

The study revealed the following short-term goals (implementation time to a year):

- completing a study programme in metalworking;
- acquiring a visagiste diploma;
- passing a qualification examination;
- finishing Jelgava Secondary Technical School.

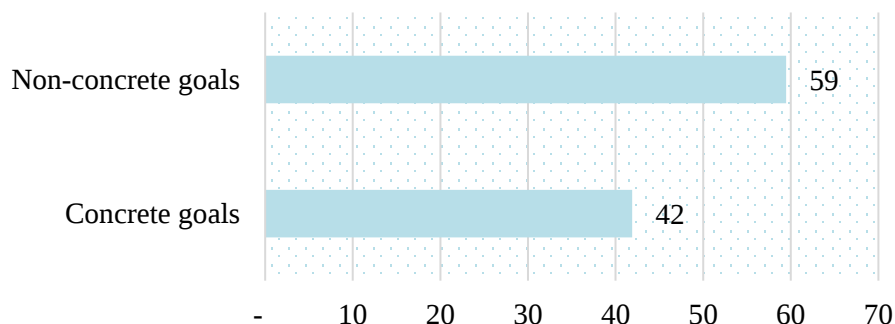


Figure 3. Percentage distribution of the goals by definition quality [author's construction]

According to the study, concrete goals were as follows (Figure 3):

- founding a manicure salon;
- taking a chief accountant position;
- having a job position at the Children Protection Association;
- completing a customer service course;
- establishing one's own shop;
- opening a fashion house in Jelgava;
- designing ball-jointed dolls;
- becoming a famous hairdresser/barber and a visagiste;
- working as an architect or a project manager at an architect bureau;
- acquiring a visagiste diploma;
- passing a qualification examination.

The study revealed the following non-concrete goals:

- doing a job that I enjoy;
- earning a high wage;
- being rich;
- creating one's own dream;
- finding a job appropriate for myself that gives satisfaction and pleasure;
- doing what I like to do in my life and being happy;
- reaching a high life quality for myself and my family!
- being happy, free from financial liabilities and the most important – living one's life instead of surviving;
- having a favourable life.

The completion of a goal-setting task in a career counselling class contributes to making a smart choice by the youth, and this counselling technique helps answer a question, "How should I live my life?" The completion of a goal-setting task by the youth develops their abilities to think, plan and analyse and to define their life goal.

Conclusions

- An individual's career is a conscious and purposeful action aimed at achieving the personal and professional goals throughout the lifetime. Career counselling provides assistance to individuals to identify their abilities and professional talents, to plan their careers, to identify their

professional appropriateness and to build up their job-seeking skills in order that they can effectively set and achieve their goals. It is advised to use four kinds of career counselling: advising and informative, diagnostic, formative and corrective counselling.

- A goal has to be professionally set, i.e. defined positively and concretely; it has to be achievable within a quite short period (not more than 1-2 years), and it has to be dependent on oneself and available resources; it has to be ecological, i.e. friendly to the surrounding community and environment; it has to be measurable, and particular steps have to be envisaged for its implementation. The higher the goal, the greater satisfaction it brings to the individual. If the individual is satisfied with what he/she has achieved, this motivates him/her to make further achievements.
- An analysis of the study data revealed that the vocational secondary school students most often set the following life goals: starting a family, starting up a business and becoming a good specialist in the chosen profession. The completion of a goal-setting task in a career counselling class contributes to making a smart choice by the youth in respect to their future educational programme and to thinking reasonably and step-by-step about their future profession. The completion of a goal-setting task by the youth develops their abilities to think, plan and analyse and to define their life goal.
- The present research findings are useful for career counsellors and personnel selection specialists, as the findings contribute to the understanding of importance of goal-setting tasks in career counselling.

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