

Career Guidance in Lithuania: Tradition or Fear of Change?

Irena Luobikienė Dr. soc.

Kaunas University of Technology Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Lithuania
irena.luobikiene@ktu.lt

Abstract: Career guidance has a long tradition in Lithuania that includes basic formal and non-formal education elements and levels and provides its fundamentals at secondary education institutions. In Soviet times, also, to a certain extent – nowadays, career guidance is more associated with students' achievements rather than the demand of specialists in the labour market. Although the integration of graduates into the labour market is a "hot" subject for scientists, practitioners, experts in the field at various levels, however, so far, there has been a tendency in Lithuania to educate traditionally popular (such as lawyers, economists), though excessively surplus in the labour market, specialists. This justifies the relevance of the topic and the aim of this article to investigate what actually determines – tradition or fear of change – that the career guidance system fails to respond flexibly to the needs of the Lithuanian labour market. The research methods employed are the analysis of scientific literature and legal acts, and secondary data analysis.

Keywords: career guidance, career education, career information, labour market.

Introduction

The purpose of career guidance is to help individuals consciously choose appropriate educational and employment opportunities, to create conditions to gain career skills, and actively develop their careers (i.e. a lifelong sequence of individually and socially significant personal learning, self-expression, and work experience). Career guidance is carried out by providing career education, career information and career counseling services (Lietuvos respublikos ..., 2012). On the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science an open career information, career advice and career guidance system AIKOS, which helps consumers become familiar with relevant education and working registers, has been developed (Atvira informavimo..., 2014). Lithuania has a number of institutions working in the field of career guidance, such as career guidance information centres (CFI), the pedagogical-psychological services, career centres (operating at universities and republic youth technical creativity houses), the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, the labour market training offices and other organizations (including private). Since career guidance can be seen as one of the elements of lifelong learning strategy, the circle of career guidance system expands from secondary school / high school students to the unemployed seeking for retraining.

Given such a network of institutions, the situation embodies the attitude that career guidance system works sustainably and efficiently. Is it confirmed by scientific research?

Social scientists are interested in various aspects of the system of career guidance. The peculiarities of career education modeling in Lithuania were reviewed by R. Kučinskienė (2003). In concluding the research in this area she claims that the research carried out on career education in Lithuania can be characterized as fragmented and lacking conceptual approach, multidisciplinary, systematicity, and instrumentality (Kučinskienė, 2003). Education researchers in their doctoral dissertations analyze various career guidance (career education) aspects: V. Stanišauskienė (2000) investigates the socio-educational career preparation fundamentals, D. Garnienė (2006) deals with the model of career education in mainstream schools, A. Augustinienė (2007) looks into students' ability to make decisions regarding career education and career choice opportunities, and etc. Career guidance problems pertaining to concepts and issues of effectiveness are also revealed in scientific articles. A. Sokolova and V. Stanišauskienė assume that the existing different definitions of career guidance signify the complexity of the phenomenon and the lack of scientific justification. According to them, the researchers often deal with some of the elements or aspects of career guidance such as career counseling, career planning, and etc. rather than the career guidance phenomenon in general (Sokolova, Stanišauskienė, 2007). Scientists L. Ustinavičiūtė, A. Katkonienė, and I. Žemaitytė emphasize the importance of cooperation between parents and teachers (Ustinavičiūtė, Katkonienė,

2011), and V. Indrašienė, L. Grinytė, also L. Žadeikaitė and A. Railienė note the lack of systematic career guidance in secondary schools, even though it is carried out by a variety of professionals, i.e. teachers, social educators, and class tutors, who, due to their busyness, fall short of insight into career information, career advice and career guidance, and, thus, give grounds to the importance of the career counselors specialists (Indrašienė, Grinytė, 2007; Žadeikaitė, Railienė, 2008). With reference to the insights based on the results of the survey of vocational training school students, L. Žadeikaitė and G. Adomaitytė (2009) highlight the lack of systematic information as regards the matters of career guidance not so much within the institution but rather outside the institution. In the analysis of youth employment policies and career guidance of Northern Lithuanian students, L. Liukinevičienė highlights the need for deeper empirical research (Liukinevičienė, 2011). The experience of foreign scientists as regards career education perspective is very valuable. A. Racene and V. Dišlere examined the assessment of online tool application for career counseling (Racene, Dišlere, 2014, 200-207).

The overview of theoretical sources reveal, on the one hand, the achievements of career guidance system, on the other hand, it highlights the underlying problems. This justifies the topicality of the problem and highlights the main question related to the problem: what is career guidance in Lithuania based on: tradition or fear of change?

The object of the article is the possibilities of the change in the system of career guidance in Lithuania. The aim of the article is to discuss the system of career guidance in Lithuania and justify the need for its change.

The research methods employed are the review of the career guidance system legal framework, the analysis of scientific literature, and the analysis of secondary data.

Methodology

The analysis of theoretical sources in this article revealed the peculiarities of career guidance. Though the scientific literature provides the analysis of individual aspects of career guidance, however, there is a lack of profound empirical research, all the more so, the existing ones identify the current problems, the solution of which could improve the efficiency of career guidance activities.

On that basis, the following research questions have been set:

Does the existing legal framework of the Republic of Lithuania ensure successful work of the career guidance system?

Does the career guidance system provide qualified career education services to the consumers of these services?

What should be done that the career guidance system be more consistent with the Lithuanian labour market needs?

This article employs the research methodology developed in accordance with the general social research methodology and scientific works of education scientists (Punch, 1998; Bitinas, Rupšienė, 2008; Walliman, 2006).

The diagram of research organisation logic is given in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Logical diagram of the research into the change feasibility in the system of career guidance in Lithuania.

In order to find the answers to the main research questions, the following research methods into the change feasibility in the career guidance system have been employed: the review of Lithuanian legislation regulating career guidance, and secondary data analysis.

Results and discussion

The review of the Republic of Lithuania legislation regulating the activities of the career guidance system. The legislation regulating career guidance reviewed in this article are presented in Figure 2.

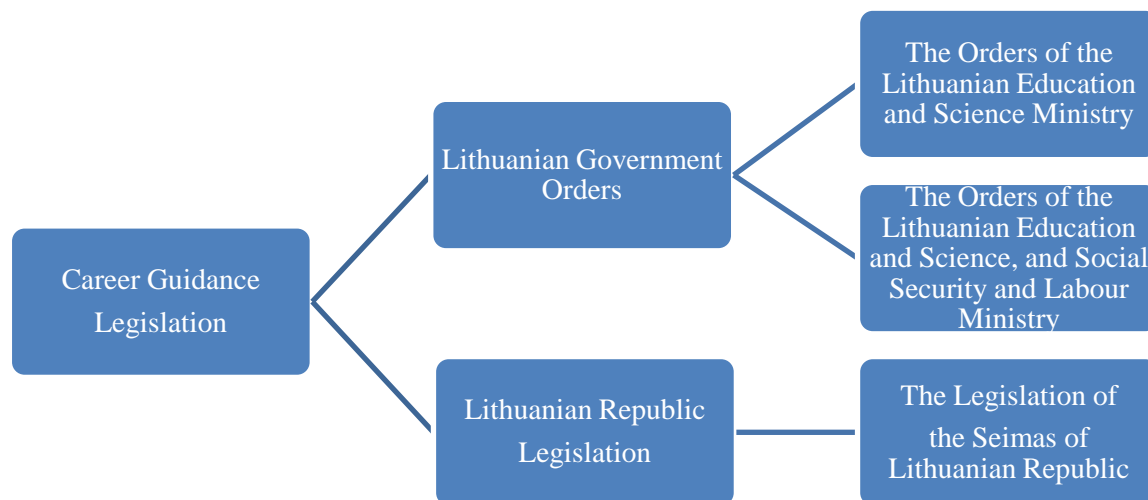


Figure 2. Legal Regulation of Career Guidance.

Figure 2 describes career guidance as the process that involves career information and career counseling in the Act of Vocational Education in the Republic of Lithuania. Figure 2 of the Act specifies the following:

- career guidance services are provided to all the residents in Lithuania,
-
- career guidance is implemented in secondary schools, vocational education institutions, career guidance centres, and labour exchange under the order established by the Ministry of Education and Science together with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour,
- the Executive Institution of the Municipality plans, organizes, and administers career guidance in accordance with the order established by the Ministry of Education and Science together with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (Lietuvos Respublikos..., 1997).

Career guidance is also regulated by other legislation. Law on Amending Article 18 in the Act of the Education of the Republic of Lithuania presents the following purpose of career guidance: career information, career counseling, and career education is a tool to help a person choose his proper education and employment, obtain career planning and management skills, and actively develop their professional careers (Lietuvos Respublikos..., 2011). As career guidance is implemented by a wide network of different ranks, for the purpose of their consistency, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania approved the description of career guidance procedure. This order regulates the procedure of career guidance in secondary schools, vocational education schools and other educational institutions (except for higher education), career guidance centers, employment agencies and other institutions

(Lietuvos Respublikos..., 2012). According to this document, the purpose of career guidance is to help individuals consciously choose proper education and employment opportunities, to create conditions to gain career skills, and actively develop their careers (i.e., the sequence of lifelong individually and socially significant personal learning, self-expression, and work experience). The Act emphasizes that the main educational institutions providing career guidance services to the students are secondary schools and vocational training institutions, and that career education is a priority area of career guidance, career information and career counseling are complementary to career education, and help individuals address specific career issues. Previous legislation also focus on vocational information, as constantly available and accessible to all service, enabling a person to make rational decisions in choosing a profession, career planning by combining self-expression and individual development needs with the labour market requirements (Lietuvos Respublikos..., 2007). This Act distinguishes the

following career information specialists: career information tutors, career counselors, social pedagogues, school psychologists, career tutors, vocational teachers, general education teachers, and classroom teachers. The adoption of career education program established the procedure for implementing this programme in schools following general education and / or vocational training programmes. This programme raises the main career education goal to effectively develop and create opportunities for all students to develop career competencies, to support the students in the process of self-cognition, self-development, and self-realization. Also, the career competences framework, and the guidelines for their development and evaluation are provided (Lietuvos Respublikos..., 2014). Therefore, it can be said that legal regulation of career guidance in Lithuania reflects the challenges of our time for education. On the other hand, no legal "barriers" have been developed for the training of socially attractive, but "oversaturating" the labour market professions.

The efficiency of career guidance: secondary data analysis. 2012 - 2013 student career guidance (career education) monitoring report emphasizes the functions of participants in career guidance system, which can, therefore, be summarized as follows: the Ministry of Education and Science supervises the quality of career guidance, performs the monitoring of the process, its results and other aspects and provides priority services areas; the Centre of Lithuanian Students Non-Formal Education is involved in monitoring students' career guidance at the state level; the Centre of Education Information Technologies Centre ensures information services for the career guidance system monitoring; Municipalities organize and conduct the monitoring of career guidance of students and people not in education (up to 21 years) in their territory; the school organizes and carries out the monitoring of students' career guidance at school (2012 - 2013 m.m. mokinių..., 2014).

The success of career guidance is determined by a consonant work of all the institutions, but it is especially important in the initial links in the chain, i.e. career information centres (further CFI), which include close to 700 formal and non-formal education and training institutions, vocational training, employment, culture and re-socialization, and other institutions (Profesinio informavimo..., 2014). The network of the mentioned institutions is presented in Figure 3.

Institutions of Formal Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gymnasiums and progymnasiums •Secondary and basic education schools
Institutions of Non-Formal Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Schools of non-formal children education •Schools of non-formal adult education
Institutions of Career Education and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Career education offices and courses •Labour exchange
Offices of Consultation Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Educational psychological services •Education support services •Teacher education centres
Offices of Culture, Care and Re-Socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public libraries •Foster homes •Department of prisons and prisons

Figure 3. Institutional Network of Career Information.

Career information centres operate under general regulations approved by the Director of the Lithuanian Youth Information and Technical Creativity Centre (PIT bendrieji nuostatai, 2008). According to this document, career information centres, the places for career information services with free access to the Internet, access to the country's education and labour market databases, and accumulated information electronically and in print. CFI realize these services by carrying out the functions assigned to them: collect data on occupations Lithuania and information about the country's

vocational and higher education institutions (enrollment, curriculum, qualification aspects); collect, analyze and store information about the activities of the CFI; disseminate information about CFI services and expertise to the interest groups and the public; provide methodological assistance to the professionals of educational institutions, teachers and other workers on the issues of student career organization and enforcement.

On the basis of the best practices methodical material for career guidance specialists in the career information centres at education and training institutions was developed (Education Exchange ..., 2010). In summary, the CFI functioning at schools in different regions of Lithuania have the potential to act autonomously. They are affected by the particularities of the region, and education institution, the team coordinating CFI activities, and other factors. Although schools favour no particular higher or vocational schools through CFI activities directly, but there is a tendency that students of a certain region tend to choose the vocational training institutions that are closer to their place of residence. On the other hand, higher and vocational school representatives visit the schools in the same region more often than geographically distant from them.

To determine whether a career guidance system meets the needs of the labour market, the undertaken Lithuanian Labour Exchange specialist employment projections for the year 2014 were analysed. According to the barometer of employment opportunities, in 2014 weak employment opportunities were provided for the following groups of professionals: managers, lawyers, social workers, primary school teachers, kindergarten teachers, educators, economists, tourism managers, physical therapists, social educators, and psychologists (Isidarbinimo galimybių barometras..., 2014). Little marketable professional opportunities for work in Lithuanian regions in 2014 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Regions of the least marketable opportunities for employment in 2014 (marked as x)

Specialists Districts	Economists	Primary Education Teachers	Social Educators	Lawyers
Alytus	x		x	x
Kaunas	x		x	x
Klaipėda	x	x		
Marijampolė	x	x	x	x
Panevėžys	x	x	x	x
Šiauliai	x	x	x	x
Tauragė		x	x	
Telšiai	x	x	x	x
Utena	x	x		x
Vilnius		x	x	x

According to the data in Table 1 it can be said that the lowest employment opportunities in 2014 are projected for four professional groups, whose representatives could hardly find work in eight of the ten counties of Lithuania. If declining demand of primary school teachers and social educators could be explained by the demographic factors (population migration, fertility, and etc.), then the labour market "saturation" with economists and lawyers could be related to the tradition of augmentation of these specialties. According to the data of AIKOS (Open Career Information, Counselling and Guidance System), in 2014, 5 Law and 9 Economic Study Programmes were carried out in Lithuanian higher education institutions (Bendrojo priėmimo ..., 2014).

According to the data of LAMA BPO (Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for Joint Admission), the top ten most popular university programmes of study, as the first choice of the applicants, traditionally were VU Law and Economics study programmes and MRU Law and Customs, and Law and Pre-Trial Process study programmes. Study contracts in the mentioned study programmes for the state-funded, scholarships and target financing places were signed by 1329

entrants, or one-third of the students enrolled in the top ten most popular study programmes who received state or sponsor funding (LAMA BPO ..., 2014).

According to the data of Science and Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA), in 2014, the Law and Economic study programmes were chosen by the students whose entrance scores were among the highest in the percentage of those who enrolled in higher education. 42 students from 419 with the highest score (100), or every tenth entrant assigned to this category, made their first choice for VU Law (22 applications) and Economy (20 applications) study programmes. These programs were among top ten study programmes according to the applicant with the highest scores (100) choice (LAMA BPO ..., 2014). The fact that the traditionally popular, but low marketable study programmes, are chosen by the students with high scores is evidenced by a minimum of basic and supplementary competition score for the admission into to university study programmes with state-funded and state non-funded with scholarship study places. For example, minimum entrance scores for the Law study programmes at university were the following: during the main admission - 6.66, and additional admission - 6.22. (LAMA BPO ..., 2014). (In 2014, due to the change in the calculation system of the competitive score, the transition to a ten-grade competitive score calculation method took place, according to which, the candidate who had the maximum maturity exam and annual evaluations could get the highest ten-grade competitive score).

Conclusions

- The monitoring and implementation guidelines of the career guidance system performance are regulated by the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania. The adoption of career guidance implementation procedure and career education programme allowed more opportunities to combine and coordinate activities among the various institutions in order to effectively develop and create opportunities for all students to develop their career competencies. Therefore, it can be said that any discrepancies between the profile of the trained specialists and their demand in the labour market are more to do with the inability to flexibly respond to the challenges of education in this area rather than with the lack of legal regulation.
- Career guidance is carried out by a wide network of institutions, and its customers are the representatives of more than 20 target groups of career informatikon. A network of career information centres at schools, vocational training institutions, employment agencies, and other institutions is developed to meet their needs. These institutions collect and disseminate information on professions, universities and vocational schools, provide methodological assistance to all interest groups on the issues mentioned. The result of career guidance is reflected in the statistics of enrollment in higher education institutions, the statistics and prognosis of graduate integration into the labour market, and other indicators.
- The analysis of the situation of the career guidance in Lithuania revealed the existing problems in this area. Some of them are related the lack of qualifications of the personnel in career guidance, other to the lack of coordination of activities among different institutions, and the rest to the fact that the problems in the field are solved too slowly. In order to find out where and what career guidance problems exist, and on that grounds, to adjust career guidance (career education) system, it is appropriate to carry out the monitoring of these processes and flexibly respond to the challenges of our time. As a result, the training of socially attractive, but unsalable in the labour market, professionals would be avoided, and, simultaneously, the number of qualified young unemployed reduced.

Bibliography

1. Atvira informavimo konsultavimo orientavimo sistema (Aikos) (2014). (Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System) [online] [15.12.2014]. Available at <http://www.aikos.ipc.lt/aikos/index.htm>
2. 2012-2013 m.m. mokinių profesinio orientavimo (ugdymo karjerai) stebėsenos ataskaita (2014). (The Report of 2012 to 2013 Students Career Guidance (Career Education) Monitoring). Vilnius. [online] [16.12.2014]. Available at http://www.mukis.lt/download/744/2012-2013%2520stebesenos%2520ataskaita_galutine.pdf (In Lithuanian)

3. Augustinienė A. (2007). Mokinių gebėjimų priimti karjeros sprendimus ugdymo galimybės bendrojo lavinimo mokykloje (The Possibilities of Students' Career Decision-Making Skills Development at Secondary School). Daktaro disertacija (Doctoral Thesis). Kaunas, Kauno technologijos universitetas, Lithuania, p. 284 (In Lithuanian)
4. Aukštojo mokslo studijų programų suvestinė pagal studijų kryptis ir kalbas (2014). (The Summary of Higher Education Study Programmes According to Study Areas and Languages). [online][15.12.2014]. Available at <http://www.aikos.smm.lt/layouts/15/Asw.Aikos.Reports/ViewReport.aspx?report=%2fStatistinisC4%97s+ataskaitos%2fSMPKR+statistinisC4%97s+ataskaitos%2fSMPKRAMProgramosPglStudijuKrKalbasEsama> (In Lithuanian)
5. Bendrojo priėmimo į Lietuvos aukštąsias mokyklas 2014 m. apžvalga (2014) (*The Review of General Admission to Higher Education Institutions in Lithuania in 2014*). [online] [13.12.2014]. Available at http://www.mosta.lt/images/leidiniai/Priemimo_apzvalga_I_pakopa_2014.pdf. (In Lithuanian)
6. Bitinas B., Rupšienė L., Žydžiūnaitė V. (2008). *Kokybinių tyrimų metodologija*. (The Methodology of Qualitative Research). Vadovėlis vadybos ir administravimo studentams. (A Manual for the Students of Management and Administration). Klaipėda, S. Jokužio leidykla – spaustuvė, Lithuania, p. 304 (In Lithuanian)
7. Garnienė D. (2006). *Model of career education at general education school: parameters and realisation principles*. Summary of doctoral dissertation. Kaunas, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania, p. 31.
8. Indrašienė V., Grinytė L. (2007). Klasės auklėtojo veikla, organizuojant mokinių profesinį informavimą, konsultavimą ir orientavimą mokykloje (Class Tutor Activities in Organizing Student Career Information, Advice and Guidance at School) *Socialinis ugdymas (Social Education)*, Vol. 3 (14), pp. 51-59. (In Lithuanian)
9. *Įsidarbinimo galimybių barometras 2014 metais Lietuvoje (2014)*. (*The Barometer of Work Opportunities in 2014 in Lithuania*). [online] [17.12.2014]. Available at http://www.ldb.lt/informacija/darborinka/puslapiai/isidarbinimo_galimybiu_barometras.aspx (In Lithuanian)
10. Kučinskienė R. (2003). *Ugdymo karjerai metodologija*. (Career education methodology). Klaipėda, Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, p. 229. (In Lithuanian)
11. LAMA BPO. *Bendrojo priėmimo rezultatai 2014 (2014)*. (*LAMA BPO. The Results of General Admission in 2014*). [online][16.12.2014]. Available at <http://www.lamabpo.lt/bendrojo-priemimo-rezultatai/2014> (In Lithuanian)
12. Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo įstatymo pakeitimo įstatymas (2011). (*The Amendment Law of Education of the Republic of Lithuania*). [online] [10.12.2014]. Available at http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=395105 (In Lithuanian)
13. Lietuvos Respublikos Profesinio mokymo įstatymas (1997) (*The Law of Vocational Training of the Republic of Lithuania*). [online] [10.12.2014]. Available at http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=295954 (In Lithuanian)
14. Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo ir mokslo ministro ir Lietuvos Respublikos Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministro įsakymas „Dėl profesinio orientavimo vykdymo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo“ (2012) (The Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania “Regarding the Approval of the Regulations for Career Guidance Procedures”). [online] [11.12.2014]. Available at http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=430003&p_query=&p_tr2=2 (In Lithuanian)
15. Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo ir mokslo ministro įsakymas „Dėl profesinio informavimo standarto patvirtinimo“ (2007) (The order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania “Regarding the Approval of the Career Information Standard”). [online] [15.12.2014]. Available at http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=293824&p_query=&p_tr2=2 (In Lithuanian)
16. Lietuvos Respublikos Švietimo ir mokslo ministro įsakymas „Dėl ugdymo karjerai programos patvirtinimo“ (2014). (The order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of

- Lithuania “Regarding the Approval of the Career Education Programme”). [online] [15.12.2014]. Available at <http://www.mukis.lt/lt/naujienos/ugdymo-karjerai-programa.html> (In Lithuanian)
17. Liukineviciene L. (2011). Youth Employment Policy and Career Guidance of Schoolchildren in North-western Lithuania, *Socialiniai tyrimai (Social research)*, Vol. 4 (25), pp. 64 - 74.
 18. PIT bendrieji nuostatai (2008). (CIF General Regulations). [online][15.12.2014]. Available at <http://uks.lmnc.lt/lt/pit-profesinio-informavimo-taskai/pit-bendrieji-nuostatai/> (In Lithuanian)
 19. Profesinio informavimo taškai (2014). (Career Information Centres). [online] [16.12.2014]. Available at <http://uks.lmnc.lt/profesinio-informavimo-taskai/> (In Lithuanian) Punch K. F. (1998). *Introduction to Social Research. Quantitative & Qualitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Sage, p. 319.
 20. Racene A., Dišlere V. (2014). Internet tools as a kind of career e-guidance. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference *Rural Environment. Education. Personality*. (REEP) No.7, LLU, Jelgava, Latvia, pp. 200 – 207.
 21. Sokolova A., Stanišauskienė V. (2007). Profesinio orientavimo sistemos Lietuvoje teorinės ir politinės prielaidos (Theoretical and Political Assumptions of Career Guidance System in Lithuania), *Profesinis rengimas: tyrimai ir realijos (Vocational Training: Research and Reality)*, Vol. 13, pp. 226 - 241. (In Lithuanian)
 22. Stanišauskienė V. (2000). *Rengimosi karjerai proceso socioedukaciniai pagrindai (Socio-Educational Basics of the Career Preparation Process)*. Daktaro disertacija (Doctoral Thesis). Kaunas, Kauno technologijos universitetas, Lithuania, p. 185. (In Lithuanian).
 23. Ustinavičiūtė L., Katkonienė A., Žemaitytė I. (2011). Veiksniai, susiję su sėkmingu karjeros planavimu ir profesijos pasirinkimu paauglystėje (Factors Related to Successful Career Planning and Career Choice in Adolescence), *Socialinis darbas (Social Work)*, Vol. 10 (2), pp. 169 – 179. (In Lithuanian)
 24. Walliman N. (2006). *Social research methods*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications, p. 224.
 25. Žadeikaitė L., Adomaitytė G. (2009). Profesinio orientavimo paslaugos profesinio mokymo įstaigoje: mokinių požiūris (Career Guidance Services in VET: Students’ Attitude), *Socialinis ugdymas (Social Training)*, Vol. 9 (20), pp. 35-47. (In Lithuanian)
 26. Žadeikaitė L., Railienė A. (2008). Socialinio pedagogo veiklos galimybės profesinio informavimo sistemoje (Work Opportunities of the Social Pedagogue in the System of Career Information), *Socialinis ugdymas (Social Training)*, Vol. 5 (16), pp. 51 – 58. (In Lithuanian)