

EXPERT EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL STUDY PROGRAMME AIMED AT DEVELOPING THE COMPETENCES OF VOCATIONAL ADVISERS

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Abstract

The article deals with the results of an expert survey designed to evaluate an alternatively chosen content of a social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers. The main tasks of the research were to validate the construction of an alternative social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers and to reveal experts' attitude towards such alternative study programmes. The authors of the article provide a detailed analysis of the results of the expert interview related to the following aspects of the evaluation of the model for the development of the competences of vocational advisers in preparing social educators: the link with a social pedagogical study programme, the validity of competences, logical links between the validity of competences, study aims, study content and study achievements. On the basis of survey results, it is recommended to apply the model of an alternative aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers in updating study programmes and modelling a new career planning bachelor study programme providing for the preparation of marketable specialists in the current labour market.

Keywords: vocational adviser, vocational guidance, training of social educators.

Introduction

Vocational guidance within the European Union (EU) context is considered as one of the most important factors promoting lifelong learning, employment, adaptation of labour force to market conditions, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities (European Commission, 2001; Council of Europe, 2001). With a view to increasing the effectiveness of education, a new wording of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania stipulates the assurance of provision and the accessibility of assistance (including information assistance) to pupils, their parents (guardians, foster-parents), teachers and educators (Valstybės žinios, 2003). In order to implement the EU priorities in the sphere of education and social security, at the end of 2003 the Ministry of Education and Science together with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania approved the document regarding the National Vocational Guidance Strategy (Valstybės žinios, 2004). Pursuant to this document, a new environment is being established for the development of the vocational guidance system in Lithuania. In order to ensure the accessibility of vocational guidance services and their compliance with client

needs, vocational information workstations have been established in Lithuania. The training of the first vocational advisers (in order to ensure job quality) started at the end of 2003. The model for the preparation of counsellors (initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and implemented through the PHARE Project) is directed towards the practical needs of the above specialists. The necessity of vocational guidance specialists is also stipulated in the strategic documents of the European Commission highlighting the need for vocational guidance services (European Commission, 2000; The Council of Europe, 2001; European Commission, 2001). The training of the above specialists would comply with the requirements of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Training Foundation (ETF), European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the Bologna Process concerning the changes in the system of higher education of Lithuania. However, both, labour market and the education system still lack specialists providing vocational guidance services. Therefore, these services are usually rendered to persons who are in active search for assistance. Meanwhile this assistance is not fully accessible to various social groups and pupils of the schools of general education. In response to social needs, social pedagogues are being prepared for work in various education and social institutions. In regulatory enactments on vocational guidance (Valstybės žinios, 2005; Valstybės žinios, 2003; Valstybės žinios, 2007), these specialists are defined as the providers of vocational guidance services. These specialists would not only improve the quality of vocational guidance services at the general and vocational training level, but also ensure the provision of high-quality primary vocational assistance (provision of information, self-cognition, development of social skills, problem identification, mediation between the school-parent-vocational training system and pupils), and, in case of serious problems, their referral to relevant specialists. Despite a wide range of research by the Lithuanian scientists (Kvieskienė, 2005; Jonutytė, 2007; Leliūgienė, 2006; Rupšienė, 2006; Giedraitienė, 2006; Alifanovienė, 2009; Indrašienė, 2007, etc.), who analysed the competences and education of social pedagogical assistance specialists, there still is a lack of research related to the competences of the providers of vocational guidance services and to the aspects of their training.

Therefore, the *aim* of the present research is to evaluate an alternatively chosen content of a social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers.

Tasks:

- to validate the construction of an alternative social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers;
- to reveal experts' attitude towards an alternative social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers.

The *object* of research is the evaluation of an alternative social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers.

Research methods: analysis of scientific literature; expert interview (a structured dialogue).

1. Content Construction for the Development of the Competences of Vocational Advisers in the Social Pedagogical Study Programme

The concept of construction in the context under analysis is based on Cronholm's (2005) theory, where the main technical construction principles (construction-evaluation-reconstruction) are suggested for the analysis of a study programme, and this is treated as a certain means of thinking in creating a new result. The construction of an alternatively chosen study content for the development of the competences of vocational advisers in the social pedagogical study programme was based on the model of the competences of a social educator as a vocational adviser (Žadeikaitė and Railienė, 2009; Railienė, 2010), the content of the fifth qualification level (Lietuvos darbo rinkos mokymo tarnyba, 2007) and on the theoretical provisions for the development of study programmes highlighting the importance of the causality between the parameters of study programmes and defining study results as a connecting link of all parameters in study programmes (Laužackas, 2007, 2008; Pukelis and Pileičikienė, 2005; Pukelis, 2007; Žiliukas, 2007; Bukantaitė, 2007; Lepaitė, 2003, 2007; Jucevičienė, 2007; Jucevičienė and Simonaitienė, 2008). The stages of the establishment of the study content aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers were determined by the critical and problem-oriented questions: a) what serves as the basis for integrating an alternative into a study programme? b) what is the content of specialization? c) what teaching and learning methods will be applied for the realization of the content? d) how to determine whether the anticipated study aims have been reached?

With reference to the analysis of the operational functions of a vocational adviser and their links with the activity of a social educator (Žadeikaitė and Railienė, 2009; Railienė, 2010), the analysis of

the competences of a vocational adviser developed in an alternative social pedagogical study programme and in order to ensure the principle of accessibility, the study subjects of an alternative and its parameters were specified: learning outcomes, aims, content and the evidence of study achievements.

2. Results of the Expert Evaluation of an Alternative Social Pedagogical Study Programme Aimed at Developing the Competences of Vocational Advisers

The expert survey included nine experts who got acquainted with the block of alternatively chosen subjects of the social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers. Several criteria for the selection of experts were applied. Nine experts were selected:

- three experts were university teachers involved in the preparation of social educators; they had Ph.D. degrees in social sciences and integrated pedagogical assistance subjects for the resolution of vocational self-determination problems in their delivered courses;
- three of the experts worked in the sphere of vocational guidance and career planning; they have taken part in the establishment of normative documents related to the improvement of the vocational guidance system;
- three experts had the qualification of a social educator and at least a 5-year social educator's job experience, including the internship guidance and management of the activity of vocational information points (VIPs).

Open-ended questions were provided during the interview. They were related to the following aspects of the evaluation of the model for the development of the competences of vocational advisers in preparing social educators: the link of the competences of vocational advisers with a social pedagogical study programme, the validity of competences, logical links between the validity of competences, study aims, study content and study achievements.

The analysis of the results of the expert interview was based on the method of content analysis: 1) identification of key aspects in the respondents' answers (reflected by phrases and words) and definition of categories on the basis of key words; 2) identification of notional elements: segmentation of the content of categories by marking their elements; 3) breakdown of notional elements into sub-categories; 4) interpretation of the data.

The content analysis was followed by the identification of 5 content categories. They consisted of 14 sub-categories qualifying the main peculiarities of the programme. Their validity, i.e. a conditionally positive or conditionally negative evaluative attitude of experts towards a certain aspect of the programme, was identified (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the expert survey: categories and subcategories (n=9)

No.	Categories	Subcategories	Amount of validating statements	Valency of subcategory + positive - negative
1.	Operational fields	Validity of selection	9	+
2.	Competences (study results)	Interaction with operational fields/activity of a vocational adviser	9	+
		Links with regulatory enactments	3	+
		Validity of selection	2	-
		Links with the competences of a social educator	6	+
3.	Programme aims	Links with competences and operational fields	9	+
		Formulation	4	+/-
4.	Programme content	Multiplicity of themes	5	-
		Particularity of themes	2	-
		Links with study aims	4	+
		Formulation of themes	8	-
5.	Evidence of study achievements	Validity and consistency	7	+
		Links with other parameters of the study programme	5	+/-
		Multiplicity	6	+/-

The analysis of answers demonstrated that all experts emphasised the validity of selecting the operational fields and their compliance with the content of operational activities of a social pedagogue

as a vocational adviser (*'...selected by taking into consideration the key operational activities of a vocational adviser, but ... the content of the activity of a social educator providing vocational guidance services is also included'; 'it includes the key activities of a vocational adviser and is related to guidance activities attributed to a social educator'*).

All experts noted a logical link between the operational areas specified in the programme and competences as an advantage in selecting competences (*'Competences are selected on the basis of the operational fields of a social educator as a vocational adviser... and, in principle, include the ability to plan and organize the activity of a vocational adviser as well as the ability to realize and evaluate the envisaged activity'*).

Experts emphasized the link between the competences specified in the alternative and the competences of a social educator (*'...competences are directed towards the development of the competences of a social educator and other activities (e.g. provision of assistance, target groups); 'this ensures more effective integration of social educators into the labour market and the reduction of socially vulnerable groups (qualified assistance to socially vulnerable groups)'; '...defined links of the activity of a social educator with the activity of a vocational adviser... highlighted by providing career development competences'; '...clearly directed towards the availability of the competences of a social educator who also works as a vocational adviser'; 'most importantly, this is not restricted to a vocational adviser's competence—the competences of a social educator are also taken into account'*).

The content analysis of the results of the interview revealed that experts emphasized the consistency and logical links between the aims, competences and operational fields as an advantage of the alternative (*'Study aims comply with a specific competence'; 'study goals, reflecting the anticipated competences of trainees, comply with the envisaged operational fields'; 'study aims justify operational fields and the competences of a future vocational adviser'; '...study aims reflecting the anticipated competences of trainees are in compliance with the envisaged operational fields'; '...are in compliance with a specific competence'*).

When evaluating the programme from the perspective of study aims, experts emphasized the formulation of aims: some experts stressed the relevance of the formulation of aims and compliance with aim formulation requirements (*'formulation complies with the aim formulation requirements'; '...they [aims] are formulated properly and comply with the theoretical aim formulation requirements'*), other experts noted the specificity of the scope and formulation of certain programme aims (*'the anticipated aim might be too extensive: to know how to select and process the information relevant for the selection of a profession and for career development'; '... the aim is not clear: to identify the dependence of a consulted person to a risk group and to refer him/her to relevant institutions'*).

While evaluating the validity and quality of the content, experts emphasized the links between the study content and study aims as an advantage of the study content (*'the majority of study content themes are in compliance with the study aims'; '...the anticipated content is sufficient to reach the defined aims'; '...is related specifically to the envisaged competence and aim'*).

What regards the analysis of a programme alternative with respect to the justification of study achievements, the statements of experts were divided into notional sub-categories of validity and consistency, links with other parameters of the study programme and multiplicity. The majority of experts evaluated the evidence of study achievements as justified and consistent (logical) (*'...the evidence of the study achievements is justified and logically arranged'; '...achievement evidences are logically and reasonably specified'*) and stressed the consistency between all parameters of the study programme (*'...comply with the anticipated activities, competences and study content'; 'the evidence of achievements justifies the operational spheres of a future vocational adviser as well as the developed competences'*).

The analysis of the survey results revealed different experts' attitude towards the multiple achievement evaluation forms. Some experts treated the multiplicity of the evidence of the anticipated achievements as an aspect of a study programme which should be corrected (*'it is suggested to focus on the multiplicity of certain evidence of study achievements'; 'multiplicity of the evidence of achievements should be avoided'*). According to other experts, multiplicity of the evidence of achievements is logical and related to the development of competences: *'study evidence is recurrent, but this is a logical aspect in order to ensure the integrity of a study process and the development of competences'*.

Conclusions

1. An alternative of a social pedagogical study programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers is based on theoretical provisions for the development of study pro-

grammes highlighting the importance of causality between all parameters of the study programme and specifying study results as a connecting link of all the parameters of the study programme.

2. An alternative of a social pedagogical programme aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers ensures the consistency between its parameters and is in compliance with the envisaged operational fields.

3. The aims of an alternative programme are directed towards the development of the anticipated competences; the content is directed towards the realization of the content, whereas the evidence of achievements complies with the programme content and is directed towards study outcomes.

4. It is recommended to apply the model of an alternative aimed at developing the competences of vocational advisers in updating study programmes and modelling a new career planning bachelor study programme providing for the preparation of marketable specialists in the current labour market.

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SOCIALINĖS PEDAGOGIKOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS, SKIRTOS PROFESIJOS PATARĖJO KOMPETENCIJOMS UGDYTI, EKSPERTINIS VERTINIMAS

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Santrauka

Siekiant užtikrinti profesinio orientavimo paslaugų prieinamumą ir atitikimą vartotojų poreikiams, Lietuvoje pradėtos steigti profesinio informavimo vietos, o darbo kokybei jose užtikrinti 2003 m. pabaigoje pradėti rengti pirmieji profesijos patarėjai. Sukurtas jų rengimo modelis (inicijuotas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministerijos bei Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos ir įgyvendintas remiantis PHARE projektu), orientuotas į praktinius tokių specialistų poreikius. Atsižvelgiant į socialinį užsakymą, dirbti įvairiose švietimo ir socialinėse institucijose rengiami socialiniai pedagogai, kurie profesinio orientavimo norminiuose dokumentuose (Profesinio informavimo ir konsultavimo paslaugų teikimo aprašas, 2005; Profesinio orientavimo strategija, 2003; Profesinio informavimo standartas, 2007) įvardijami kaip vieni iš profesinio orientavimo paslaugų teikėjų. Nepaisant Lietuvos mokslininkų (G. Kvieskienės, 2005; I. Jonutytės, 2007; L. Rupšienės 2006; E. Giedraitienės 2006; D. Alifanovienės, 2005; V. Indrašienės 2008 ir kt.), tyrinėjusių socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos specialistų kompetencijas ir jų ugdymą, paskutinių metų tyrimų gausos, pasigendama tyrimų, analizuojančių profesinio orientavimo paslaugų teikėjų kompetencijas ir jų ugdymo aspektus.

Straipsnio tikslas – įvertinti profesijos patarėjo kompetencijoms ugdyti skirtą alternatyviai pasirinktą socialinės pedagogikos studijų programos turinį. Straipsnyje pagrindžiamas socialinės pedagogikos studijų programos alternatyvos, nukreiptos į profesijos patarėjo kompetencijų ugdymą, konstravimo procesas bei atskleidžiamas vertinamasis ekspertų požiūris į profesijos patarėjo kompetencijų ugdymui skirtą socialinės pedagogikos studijų programos alternatyvą šiais aspektais: sąveika su socialinės pedagogikos studijų programa, kompetencijų nustatymo pagrindumas, loginiai ryšiai tarp kompetencijų ir studijų tikslų, studijų turinio bei studijų pasiekimų įrodymai. Straipsnio pabaigoje pateikiamos išvados ir rekomendacija profesijos patarėjo kompetencijoms ugdyti, skirtos alternatyvos modelį taikyti atnaujinant studijų programas ir modeliuojant naują karjeros projektavimo bakalauro studijų programą, suteikiančią galimybę rengti šiuolaikinei darbo rinkai paklausius specialistus.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: profesijos patarėjas, profesinis informavimas, socialinių pedagogų rengimas.