

## 4.2. CAREER COUNSELING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MODERN CONDITIONS

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*The achievements and controversial aspects of the activities of such structural units in educational institutions are identified. The actual functions of career counseling centers are analyzed, namely: assessment and diagnostic, educational and communicative, integrative and coordination, socialization and advisory, regulatory, information and stimulating. The hypothesis is that the holistic implementation of these functions will help to overcome the contradictions of career counseling for students, in particular, the discrepancies between: the ideal representation and the real profile of a particular profession or specialty, the subjective perception and ignoring of career orientations by young people, and will also make it possible to correct students' self-esteem of individual and personal qualities. The article suggests ways to address issues related to the organization and functioning of career counseling centers in vocational education institutions.*

**Keywords:** professional career, career development, career counseling centers, vocational education.

## 4.2. КОНСУЛЬТУВАННЯ З КАР'ЄРИ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ В СУЧАСНИХ УМОВАХ

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*Виявлено досягнення та суперечливі моменти діяльності таких структурних підрозділів у закладах освіти. Проаналізовано актуальні функції центрів консультування з професійної кар'єри, а саме: оцінювально-діагностувальну, навчально-комунікативну, інтегративно-координаційну, соціалізаційно-консультативну та регулятивну, інформаційно-стимулювальну. Означено гіпотезу, що цілісна реалізація цих функцій сприятиме подоланню суперечностей кар'єрного консультування учнівської молоді, зокрема, невідповідностей між: ідеальним уявленням і реальним профілем конкретної професії чи спеціальності, суб'єктивним сприйняттям та ігноруванням молоддю кар'єрних орієнтацій, а також уможливить коригування самооцінки учнями індивідуально-особистісних якостей. Пропонуються способи розв'язання питань щодо організації та функціонування центрів консультування з професійної кар'єри в закладах професійної освіти.*

**Ключові слова:** професійна кар'єра, кар'єрне зростання, центри консультування з професійної кар'єри, професійна освіта.

At the current stage of civilizational progress, characterized by dynamic transformational changes, special public attention in economically developed countries is paid to matching the demands of the labor market with the proposals of educational institutions in order to ensure the quality of human capital development. Despite the efforts of representatives of different levels of society, the national economic space of many countries faces problems of labor migration, employment, low welfare of citizens, etc. In this regard, there is a need to create the most comfortable conditions for the professional development and further career growth of applicants of different levels of education. One of the effective ways to overcome the problem of outflow of workers abroad, employment and career growth of students is the activity of career counseling centers operating in vocational (vocational-technical), professional pre-university and higher education institutions, as well as in the State and regional employment services (centers), and directly at individual enterprises.

The study of the EU policy documents, in particular, the Maastricht Treaty, the Bruges Communiqué, the Copenhagen Declaration, the European Strategy (EEA-Eionet 2021–2030), the European Commission's White Paper, analytical materials and thematic reports on the state of development of vocational education and training by relevant European specialized institutions (IREIVET, CEDEFOP, ETF, EQUAVET, etc. ) shows that the formation of a vocational school is determined by the establishment of a competitive and dynamic economy based on the development of human capital. Therefore, the priority tasks of European policies include ensuring the prestige of vocational education, its focus on the development of professional careers of pupils and students, as well as the functioning of accessible services to provide relevant advice. In Ukraine, the state policy on vocational education is focused on ensuring that its content and quality meet the needs of the labor market, as well as creating conditions for continuous professional development of the individual.

The theoretical analysis of scientific literature and logical generalization of its results allowed us to identify the following conceptual and thematic areas of the issues studied by the authors of the article, namely: human motivation for professional development and further career growth (E. Bern, R. Burns, P. Bourdieu, L. Karamushka, V. Lozovetska, V. Rybalka, E. Sandstrom, I. Yanchenko, D. Winter, et al. ); planning and realization of professional career (V. Berg, E. Klimov, S. Covey, O. Kucheriavyi, V. Orlov, L. Peter, D. Supper, J. Holland, B. Schwalbe, etc.); management of

professional career of staff (M. Woodcock, G. Goldstein, M. McMahon, D. Francis L. Iacocca, etc.); forms and methods of career counseling for youth (S. Alekseeva, V. Biskup, L. Yershova, D. Zakatnov, M. Klymenko, L. Kuzminska, etc.) At the same time, the issues of counseling students in career centers of educational institutions are not sufficiently studied, current practices of such units are not analyzed, controversial issues are not identified, and optimal ways to solve them are not proposed.

The purpose of the study is to reveal the problematic issues of counseling pupils and students on professional career issues, identified on the basis of an analysis of the practices of the relevant structural units of educational institutions, and to find optimal ways to resolve such contradictions.

**Materials and Methods.** Theoretical analysis of regulatory and legislative sources, scientific works, contextual information and logical generalization of its results – to establish the state of development of the problem under study; study of career counseling practices for students – to establish the achievements and controversial aspects of the activities of career counseling centers; pedagogical observation, interviews with teachers, students, representatives of employment centers – to clarify the problematic issues of career centers and identify.

A study of the regulatory and legislative framework shows that the issues of career development of citizens in the Ukrainian state are declared by the current legislation (Law of Ukraine «On Professional Development of Employees» of 12 January 2012, No. 4312-17; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 11 September 2008 «On Approval of the Concept of the State System of Professional Orientation of the Population» No. 842) and are provided at the state level in the context of career guidance services to the population by employment centres, as well as within the framework of international support (e.g., the EU Programme «EU4Skills: Best Skills for Modern Ukraine», USAID Economic Support to Ukraine Project, etc.).

Initially, career counselling centres for future professionals were created as structural units of higher education institutions (Lviv Polytechnic National University (1993), National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (1994), Kyiv National Economic University (1999). In vocational education institutions, such centres began to be established in 2017 (Volyn region), in 2018 (Khmelnyskyi and Lviv regions) on a large scale in 2020, due to the introduction of the Concept for the Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Vocational Education «Modern Vocational Education» for the

period up to 2027, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (12.06.2019, No. 419-p). The document emphasises the imperfection of «career counselling for young people and adults, the importance of creating conditions in educational institutions for the formation of a fully developed personality capable of choosing an individual educational trajectory, lifelong learning, professional career development, entrepreneurship and self-employment».

The main motives for establishing such centres in the course of the study were identified as follows:

- the need to promote vocational education and increase the prestige of working professions;
- facilitating the employment of students
- providing pupils and students with the necessary legal, economic and psychological knowledge
- development of professional career and entrepreneurial initiative of future specialists;
- tracking their work experience and career development.

A study of the best practices of such units in Ukraine shows that 85% of them are called «career centre», with the following name invariants as alternatives: professional career centre, career development centre, career development centre, centre for professional career and business development, career and vocational guidance office, etc.

In foreign universities, such units offer different services. In Germany, for example, employees of such units focus on career guidance, employment of university graduates, and monitoring compliance with the requirements of the administration, teachers and employers in the practical (applied) professional training of future specialists. A specific indicator of the successful activity of such career services is the high level of employment of graduates of higher education institutions (<http://www.stifterverband.de>). The Office of Initiatives and Employment at the University of Alcantara (Spain) is aimed at expanding employment opportunities for students and graduates. In this regard, young people are offered various internship programmes, systematic career guidance activities, and advice on self-employment and entrepreneurship ([www.gipe.ua.es](http://www.gipe.ua.es)).

Studying the experience of online resources (Career Hub, My Career platform, [rabota.ua](http://rabota.ua) online magazine, GURT website, Studway electronic publication, etc.), on the one hand, helps to inform young people about successful self-realisation in Ukraine, and on the other hand, encourages

young people to migrate by vividly promoting international programmes and projects for education and further employment. At the same time, we consider the online testing service «Career Guidance and Development Platform» of the State Employment Service of Ukraine to be relevant. The test is designed to identify value orientations, professional interests, aptitudes, and other individual and personal qualities (inclinations, abilities, talents), and entrepreneurial skills, and is mainly intended for career guidance, which means that it allows each student to choose a future field of activity and profession in accordance with their individual characteristics. A Soft Skills online testing resource has been created for young employees, which allows them to identify competitive advantages, strengths and weaknesses, and additional skills that will facilitate career growth. However, the impact of online testing and online counselling is often negative, as evidenced by the results of conversations with practical psychologists and social educators, as each student is an individually unique person for whom it is desirable to individually select diagnostic methods, formulate clarifying questions, and develop career trajectories.

More than 85% of centres have more than three staff members. As a rule, these are: the head/coordinator of the centre (in most cases, one of the deputy directors of the educational institution) and a group of consultants (professional consultant, career consultant, business consultant, legal advisor). Career counselling is traditionally provided by staff psychologists or social workers at educational institutions. Legal counselling is provided by staff lawyers or law professors. Business counselling is mostly provided by economics teachers, and less often by representatives of partner organisations or employers (by agreement). Professional counselling is often combined with career counselling. If the centre has a separate vocational counsellor, his or her duties are usually assigned to the master of industrial training. In this context, the experience of Higher Vocational School No. 25 in Khmelnytskyi is of research interest. Khmelnytskyi, which opened a Career Counselling and Development Centre in April 2018. Its objectives are to: inform students about the constitutional rights of students; intensify their own efforts to solve employment problems; form an active life position; promote the development of entrepreneurial initiative; expand the range of job search methods and increase the competitiveness of graduates in the labour market, their employment and career growth. The introduction of the innovative variable course «Professional Success and Career» into the educational process contributes to the improvement of professional training

of future skilled workers, their employment and successful self-realisation in the modern labour market. The teaching staff of the institution is aware that an important evaluation and qualitative characteristic of their activities, as well as the functioning of the VET institution, is the construction and successful implementation of the professional career of students and graduates.

As part of the activities of the career counselling centres, students master the content of the disciplines «Man and the World of Professions» and «Building a Career», which aim to provide students with a thorough self-knowledge to make an informed choice of their future professional path, maximise their professional abilities and increase their competitiveness in modern conditions. The objectives of the disciplines are focused on: familiarising pupils and students with the requirements for a specialist in the labour market in modern socio-economic conditions, with career orientations, types and stages of careers; detailed study of pupils' personality traits, professional abilities, inclinations, interests, social expectations, motives that need to be taken into account in building a career; providing information on ways to obtain professions, job search techniques, trends in labour supply and demand in the labour market; organising professional development activities; and

The survey showed a wide range of organisational forms of work of the Centres with vocational education and training students to prepare them for career planning and starting and running their own business. These include activities carried out directly by centre staff and partner organisations outside of school hours, as well as during educational hours and classes.

For psychological counselling, the most popular methods are testing, questionnaires, motivational and remedial training, individual and group conversations, and workshops. For business and career counselling, the most commonly used methods are professional courses, workshops, field trips, vocational tours, project activities, advisory boards, creative meetings with successful graduates, roundtables, coaching sessions, business games, and career lessons. Legal advice usually includes individual and group consultations, lectures, roundtables, meetings with lawyers, etc.

Joint activities with local authorities, state employment services, training and methodological centres (classrooms), employers and business partners of educational institutions that have their own production facilities play an important role in the activities of the Centres. Among such joint activities, survey participants noted: all-Ukrainian vocational education

weeks, trade fairs, occupational festivals, international programmes and projects, open days, career days, monitoring studies, conferences, mentoring and coaching programmes, provision of paid services to the public through production workshops, cafes, hairdressing salons, etc.

In almost 39% of VET institutions, the goals and activities envisaged by the Centres correspond to the content of a number of subjects («Fundamentals of Sectoral Economics and Entrepreneurship», «Fundamentals of Market Economics and Entrepreneurship», «Fundamentals of Sectoral Economics», «Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship», «Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, Fundamentals of Advertising Marketing and Design, Fundamentals of Marketing and Management, Fundamentals of Labour Law, Fundamentals of Legal Knowledge, Occupational Health and Safety, Occupational Health and Safety and the Environment, Job Search Techniques, Fundamentals of Entrepreneurial Success, «Financial Literacy, Commercial Activity, E-Commerce, Skills for a Successful Career, Ukrainian Business Speech, Professional Ethics, Professional Ethics and Basics of Psychology, Business Activity, Business Management, Basics of Consumer Knowledge, «Fundamentals of Professional Mobility, Fundamentals of Small Business, Economics of Different Types of Enterprises, Foreign Economic Activity, Crisis Management, Market Research, Commodity Market Infrastructure, Fundamentals of Taxation, Technology, Civic Education, etc.).

In many VET institutions, issues related to preparing young people for self-employment by starting and running their own business are considered in classes on various subjects as separate modules («Job Search Techniques», «Creating a Business Plan», «Self-Presentation», «Features of Real Business Activities», «Entrepreneurial Competence», «Essence and Methodological Foundations of Entrepreneurial Activity», «Forms of Entrepreneurship», «Features of Employment in Modern Conditions», «Paperwork for Hiring»),

In VET institutions, educational hours are also used to develop career and entrepreneurial competence, where information hours, conversations, quizzes, round tables, discussions, literary mixes, creative meetings and other forms of group work are held for this purpose.

Despite the fact that most of the Centres have been operating for an average of 2-3 years, they have already had events that have been recognised as the most successful. These include: the quest game «Successful Merchant» held at the Epicentre Khmelnytskyi shopping centre; training

«Sources of Funding for Youth Startups»; the All-Ukrainian competition of business ideas and innovative projects «Business Aviators» (Higher Vocational School No. 11 in Khmelnytskyi); a roundtable discussion with employers. Khmelnytskyi); a roundtable discussion with employers on «Current Trends in the Youth Labour Market in the Region» (Vocational School No. 29 in Volodymyrets); a joint project of the Kalush City Employment Centre and Vocational School No. 7 in Kalush. Kalush «Building a Professional Future Today»; trainings «Building a Career and Professional Development», «Business from Scratch», «Business Promotion» (Separate Structural Subdivision «Liubeshiv Technical Vocational College of Lutsk National Technical University»); literary mix «We are talented in vocational education» (Berdychiv Higher Vocational School in cooperation with Berdychiv City Employment Centre); conversations with graduate students on the topics «One Step to Success», «Employment Strategy and Tactics», «My Profession is My Future», «Working profession – a step to a great career», “Your career starts today”, “Turn your dreams into a goal”, “A thousand professions – yours is one”, “Human happiness in work”, “Strategy of choosing a profession”, “Variety of working professions”, “Image of VET graduates” (Reshetylivka Professional Agricultural Lyceum named after I. G. Borovensky); “Career guidance in the style of coaching”, psychological training «Successful career!», defence of entrepreneurship projects (Vinnytsia Interregional Higher Vocational School); online counselling «Job Search Technology» and development of a business plan «How to start your own business» (Kryvyi Rih Vocational Mining and Electromechanical Lyceum in cooperation with the City Employment Service); the project «Snail in Ukrainian Cuisine» (Lebedynske Higher Vocational School of Forestry in cooperation with Farm Eco) and many others.

The implementation of many successful activities became possible due to the organised cooperation of the Centres with potential employers, which is envisaged in the work plans of educational institutions, directly in the work plans of the Centres, and is carried out by teachers as part of their disciplines and by masters of industrial training during the students' internships.

The establishment of career centres and other structural units designed to prepare young people to start and run their own business has significantly intensified in 2020–2022, but has not become a widespread phenomenon in the VET system. The opening of career centres was facilitated by the

adoption of the Concept for the Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Vocational Education and Training «Modern Vocational Education and Training» for the period up to 2027 and the participation of educational institutions in innovative educational activities at the regional and national levels. Therefore, there is a need to promote this Concept and detail its provisions through an operational implementation plan and specification of performance indicators (KPIs) and encouragement of educational institutions to participate in innovative educational activities.

All the Centres have a certain legal framework. However, not all of them have separate premises and sufficient material and technical equipment, operate on a voluntary basis, and have certain problems with financing their activities and motivating their staff. The lack of stable funding and clear localisation of the Centre makes it difficult for staff to communicate with each other, with students and with partner organisations, reduces the status and prestige of the unit, and reflects the attitude of the educational process as a somewhat marginal entity. In the context of the post-war economic recovery in Ukraine, high-quality training of young people for self-employment and starting their own business is an important task for VET institutions, which will have both an obvious social effect (reduction of unemployment) and an economic one (increase in state budget revenues). This necessitates addressing the issue of funding career centres at the state level. Funding for such structural units should be viewed not as a cost of vocational education, but as a profitable investment in it.

An important aspect of the activities of Career and Entrepreneurship Competence Centres is the coverage of information about their work, achievements and plans on their own websites, pages of official websites of VET institutions, through printed materials, publications in the media, etc. At the same time, many Centres have just started their activities and therefore their websites or webpages do not always have a logical architecture, meaningful and conveniently arranged content, a photo gallery or an archive of events. Publishing products do not always meet the standards of electronic and/or printed publications. This necessitates raising the level of digital competence of the Centres' staff, developing recommendations for website administration, creating web pages, building their structure, etc.

In the Statutes of 47% of the Centres that took part in the survey, «promoting the development of entrepreneurial initiative» is declared. In many VET institutions, the work of the Centres to develop career and entrepreneurial competences of future specialists not only involves

conducting their own events, but also extends to all activities of the educational institution, both in class and extracurricular. In 62% of educational institutions, the development of career and entrepreneurial competences is carried out through the teaching of individual subjects («Fundamentals of Business Activity», «Fundamentals of Sectoral Economics and Entrepreneurship», «Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship», «Business Economics», etc.), in 29% – in the process of studying individual modules, 72% – when solving relevant theoretical and practical tasks in the classroom. Therefore, there is an obvious need for educational and methodological support for the development of entrepreneurial competence of VET students (in particular through: preparation of curricula, textbooks and manuals for them, taking into account the sectoral specifics of educational institutions and specialties in which future specialists are trained; development and dissemination of lesson notes, extracurricular activities, business projects, etc. to develop the entrepreneurial competence of future specialists).

The centres help to strengthen ties between educational institutions and local authorities, state employment services, and potential employers, who are mostly small and medium-sized businesses. This is evidenced by the mass events held jointly with partners (all-Ukrainian vocational education weeks, fairs and festivals of professions, open days, career days, international projects, conferences, etc.) and recognised by representatives of VET institutions as the most successful. Therefore, it is advisable to create an all-Ukrainian communication platform for the Centres to share information and disseminate best practices in preparing young people for entrepreneurship.

Thanks to the activities of the Centres, VET institutions have begun systematic work on tracking the career paths of graduates, including those in small business. This data can become one of the criteria for the effectiveness of the centre and educational institution in preparing young people for entrepreneurship. This leads to the need to develop methodological recommendations for organising and monitoring the employment of graduates of VET institutions that train specialists for various sectors of the Ukrainian economy, including small businesses.

Thus, we consider a career counselling centre to be a social project that functions as a structural unit of an educational institution (institution or enterprise) to provide ongoing psychological and pedagogical support for the career development of pupils (students) or employees of a particular

institution (enterprise) in accordance with the individual and personal characteristics of each person. In most cases, such centres operate on a voluntary basis, as their key characteristics should be flexibility and freedom. In view of this, the main tasks of career counselling centres are as follows:

- on the basis of activation of individual and personal resources of pupils (students) or employees of a particular institution (enterprise) to provide support for the career development of each person;
- to form an active worldview position on life creativity;
- to identify and analyse individual abilities, career orientations, value priorities of future professionals;
- to stimulate positive internal motivation of pupils (students), employees for professional success and educational achievements;
- to plan possible options for future professional careers in Ukraine or in foreign countries in accordance with the defined career orientations.

The main task of the career centre is to determine the individual characteristics of an individual's career orientations in order to design and model a professional trajectory and further develop his or her career. In this case, career orientations are understood as socially conditioned and psychologically motivated motivations of an individual to develop a career, which significantly depend on the priorities in the system of values, socio-psychological attitudes, and needs of future professionals. Career orientations are relatively stable formations that determine a person's professional path, are determined by value orientations and relevant worldview priorities. Their formation is one of the substantive features of the activity.

The need to open and operate career counselling centres in Ukraine is stipulated in the current legislation and regulations, but the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has not yet adopted the Model Regulations and Conceptual Framework for the operation of career counselling centres in educational institutions.

The professional career centres established on the basis of educational institutions should provide, first of all, assistance to the professional development of future specialists, which is possible through the use of effective methods of developing communication skills, forming skills of active job search, providing effective employment counselling based on the maximum consideration of individual abilities, establishing productive interaction with employers; conducting trainings, master classes, competitions of innovative ideas, start-up projects.

When studying the peculiarities of the activities of career counseling centers in VET institutions, we identified the following problematic issues: predominance of fragmentation in counseling students on professional careers; lack of regulatory and legal support for the functioning of centers; partial consideration of regional peculiarities of the labor market; duplication of functions and tasks of career centers in educational institutions and employment centers; students' mental stereotypes, narrow and one-sided perceptions of the labor market, institutions, and enterprises; low motivation of young people to work, achieve professional success, and grow in their careers; imbalance between the realities of the regional labor market and the number of graduates of specific professions; insufficient number of qualified career center staff, etc.

It is important for career counseling centers to fulfill the following functions: evaluation and diagnostic, which involves determining the motives for choosing the type and methods of professional career, diagnosing career orientations; educational and communicative, which is focused on teaching technologies for planning a professional career through individual and personal interaction, information exchange, identifying, consolidating and reproducing connections and relations that form a system of values, norms, individual actions, ways of activity, consolidate and standardize the behavior of young people in the labor market at the appropriate stages of civilization; integrative and coordination, which determines the cross-cutting vectors of activities of the Center's employees and employees of educational institutions to train competitive specialists capable of designing a professional career, self-realization within the framework of professional activities, professional growth through the intensification of team building processes, creating a team with common interests and value orientations, and forming a sense of mutual responsibility among representatives of professional communities; socialization, counseling and regulatory, which involve the conscious assimilation of professional (corporate) culture norms, social roles, reference (typical) patterns (stereotypes) of behavior and mechanisms for their implementation, the formation of value orientations, and the provision of advisory assistance in career planning; information and stimulating, which consists in providing young people with up-to-date information on career development, the latest state of the labor market, professions in demand, employers' requirements, as well as timely identification of achievements and shortcomings in building and implementing a professional career, applying measures aimed at

consolidating, strengthening and developing positive changes and blocking and eliminating negative features.

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