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## **WHAT WILL I BE WHEN I GROW UP – THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE\*\***

**Abstract.** Globalisation, economic changes and high unemployment rates bring different views on the choice of profession and the career development, as well as on the new challenges which are placed before the pedagogues, who usually carry out the professional guidance as educational specialists in Croatian schools. Certain individuals naturally develop an ability to set clear goals and focuses in their lives, but there are many individuals who need assistance in terms of the professional self development. The authors of the paper present their theoretical assumptions on the importance and determinants of professional guidance, the crystallisation of the professional self, professional interests, and professional maturity. In addition, they present the research results on the population of pre-school children, the eighth grade primary school pupils, and the fourth grade secondary school pupils regarding their professional interests and professional maturity in making educational and professional choices. The results indicate a lack of a systematic approach to professional guidance in the Croatian education system, whereby the participants do not take into account all the necessary factors when deciding on an appropriate future occupation.

**Key words:** professional guidance, professional interests, professional maturity, professional self, educational specialist (pedagogue).

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## INTRODUCTION

We were often asked in our childhood what we want to be when we grow up and our answers reflected the first professional aspirations. Certain individuals naturally develop clear goals and focus in their lives, while there are many of those who need help in developing the professional self, particularly in today's circumstances of globalisation and changes regarding the meaning of career success (Hiebert, 2006; Mrnjaus, 2014). It is therefore essential to provide adequate education on career development and professional self (Mrnjaus, 2014) as well as to direct an individual to an occupation which will be sought in the labour market. In that context it is important to bear in mind that some professions are disappearing while future popular professions might still be unknown to us. Petričević (2012: 28) lists a number of new, still unknown professions such as: "experts for creating new organs, nanomedicine specialists, GM farmer, wellness manager for the elderly, memory improvement surgeons, space pilots, architects and guides, vertical farmers, "new science" ethicist, personal media worker, virtual teacher manager, information cleaner, virtual life organiser, time trader, virtual lawyer, psychologist for the virtually unadapted".

For the above reasons, great emphasis has been placed on professional guidance and counselling. There is also a noticeable need for qualified professionals in that line of work, whereby educational specialists (pedagogues) shouldn't be forgotten, as they conduct professional informing of students in the final grades of primary and secondary schools (Šarić, 2012; Vizek Vidović & Potočnik, 2013).

## PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

It is indisputable that the chosen career marks the life of every individual and it is therefore necessary to plan and guide a career which will contribute to a successful and pleasant life. "It would be good if every individual knew and could advisedly choose an occupation in accordance with their abilities, interests and personality traits" (Šverko, 2012:18). In order to reach such a decision one needs to have proper education and *professional guidance* (a set of services and activities which aim to help

individuals, in any period of their lives, choose their education programme, profession or job and guide their career (OECD, according to Šverko, 2012:19). Systematic professional guidance emerged in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century along with the process of accelerated industrialisation which resulted in massive unemployment problems and poverty. This was an attempt to provide people with the necessary help during their adequate career choice and development (Đermanov & Kosanović, 2013; Šverko, 2012). The notion of professional guidance is considered to be Frank Parson's (1909) brainchild. He laid the foundation of the theoretical and practical work in this area by developing the first theory on career guidance. Parsons (1909) identified three key elements in career selection within the aforementioned theory: 1) a clear understanding of ourselves, our attitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resource limitations and their causes; 2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in different lines of work; 3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (Parsons, 1909: 5, according to Đermanov & Kosanović, 2013: 18). The effectiveness of professional guidance has been reaffirmed by the "London" and "Birmingham" experiments which indicated that people who follow the advice obtained through professional guidance are more satisfied with their job and their employers are more satisfied with them (Ivanović & Rajić-Stojanović, 2012).

Professional guidance of primary and secondary school pupils represents the so called "early intervention" and has a significant role in making adequate decisions regarding education programme selection and/or occupation selection in accordance with their interests and abilities. It is organised through the so called "funnel system" that is, it takes place gradually and entails determining pupils' professional intentions, professional informing and professional counselling. Expert associates (educational specialists (pedagogues) and psychologists) are the ones usually providing assistance in terms of professional guidance in primary and secondary schools in Croatia. Additionally, the model of professional guidance in schools entails inter-institutional cooperation, particularly with the departments for professional guidance in the Croatian Employment Office.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the “lifetime job” model has been replaced by a career characterised by changing several workplaces, leaving the boundaries of a single business environment as well as continuous professional development [commonly mentioned are the protean and boundaryless careers (Laker, Naval & Mrnjaus, 2014)]. The importance of *lifelong professional guidance* [a set of activities that enable individuals to identify their own aptitude, competencies and interests in different periods of their lives in order to make decisions regarding their education, training and employment as well as to have the ability to manage their own career (Borbely-Pecze & Hutchinson, 2013)] through *professional informing* and *professional counselling* is becoming more significant in every period of life. *Professional informing* entails systematically familiarizing individuals with the existing occupations and jobs; seeking and gathering information important for making decisions regarding vocation, occupation and areas of work selection as well as for planning further professional development; it can be written, oral or self-informing and is conducted individually or in a group (Šverko, 2012; Zećirević, 2011). *Professional counselling* encompasses helping individuals to recognize their abilities in order to make a decision regarding adequate educational and employment choices as well as professional rehabilitation and career guidance (Šverko, 2012; Zećirević, 2011).

## PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS AND PROFESSIONAL MATURITY

Important constructs for the professional guidance process are *professional interests* [people’s preferences for different working activities, they provide motivation for elective inclusion in particular types of activities (Krapić, Kardum & Kristofić, 2008: 76)] and *professional maturity* [the willingness of individuals to make an informed decision regarding their career in accordance with their age (Savickas, 1984, according to Babarović & Šverko, 2011: 92)]. Children begin to express their professional interests already at the age of four. These early interests are characterised by the focus on the child’s perception of pleasure rather than their potential talents or interests, which results in children commonly proclaiming they want to be firefighters, nurses or cowboys. By gaining life experience, children begin to

identify with adults and imitate them in hope of developing their own personal strengths. At the age of 10 to 12, children begin to narrow down their choices based on their potential and intrinsic satisfaction the occupation brings them. At the age of 12 to 15 in addition to parents, other models start to have a stronger impact on children's deliberations on their future profession. As adolescents enter the second half of their teenage years (age 14 to 17), there is an increase of awareness that work offers more than means of meeting personal needs, that occupations are linked with the differences in the manner people live which leads to consideration of their personal values and the implications of the values on professional choices. In the late adolescent period and the early 20s, *professional self-awareness* [thoughts on personality characteristics, abilities and satisfactory types of jobs (Tinsley, 2006: 210)] begins to crystalize. Individuals with well-crystallized professional self are able to differentiate the alternatives which are or are not adequate for them. Insufficient crystallization of the professional self can cause numerous career difficulties such as chronic indecisiveness (Mrnjaus, 2014; Tinsley, 2006).

Nowadays most researchers agree that the adolescents' professional [individual's *prominent goals or career choices* (Johnson, 1995)] and educational aspirations are among the most useful predictors of potential educational and professional choices made later in adulthood (Mau & Bikos, 2000). It is clear that early aspirations can be used for predicting later ones, and possibly the professional choices people make (Rojewski, 2005). The currently available theory and research suggest that the professional aspirations formed in the early childhood have a tendency to become more realistic and stable over time (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000; Rojewski & Yang, 1997; Trice & King, 1991; Trice & McClellan, 1993), that they are under the influence of gender and racial stereotypes (Davey & Stoppard, 1993; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000), socioeconomic status and parents' careers (Hotchkiss & Borow, 1996; McNair & Brown, 1983), career of others in the community (Trice, 1991), self-awareness (Gottfredson, 1981; Super, 1990; Super D., Savickas & Super C., 1996), control locus (Taylor, 1982), and educational aspirations (Farmer, 1985; Mau, Domnick & Ellsworth, 1995) (cf. Mrnjaus, 2014).

## EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST (PEDAGOGUE) AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

Staničić (2001) characterises educational specialists (pedagogues) as the most broadly profiled educational experts in view of their participation in all phases of the educational process. Among other, an educational specialist (pedagogue) directly participates in the educational process through pupil enrollment and organizing grade departments as well as through introducing new programmes and innovations, monitoring and performing educational activities. The latter also entails conducting professional guidance (Ledić, Staničić & Turk, 2013; Fajdetić & Šnidarić, 2014).

In that context it is important to present some of the research results on the existing capacities of primary and secondary schools for conducting professional guidance (Gregurović & Lukić, 2014) which indicate several significant findings. The schools' documents analysis showed that schools mostly integrate the topics regarding professional guidance in their documents, however there is a visible lack of concrete activities which ought to be carried out for that purpose. It is noteworthy to mention that the results recognize the expert associates (psychologists, pedagogues) as the carriers of activities regarding professional guidance. However, the results also show that they are the ones who have excessive workload (particularly pedagogues), and are therefore more inclined to conduct group informing and counselling. Finally, there is a noticeable challenge in the context of competencies and capacities of the expert associates to conduct professional guidance in schools due to the fact that a significant number of expert associates assess their knowledge about professional guidance as poor or express uncertainties in the context of these type of activities (Gregurović and Lukić, 2014). Additionally, Ledić et al. (2013) in their research indicate a generally critical attitude of school pedagogues towards their initial education, whereby they notice not having acquired relevant competencies for what is expected from them in practice.

In accordance with everything stated above, several inconsistencies are visible in the realisation of professional guidance in educational institutions. Although there is a legal obligation to conduct professional guidance for pupils in schools in Croatia (The Act on primary and secondary

school education, Official Gazette 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14, 07/17), school documents do not provide concrete activities which should be carried out. In addition, expert associates, even though recognized as the ones conducting professional guidance in schools, feel insecure about their competencies in that aspect, and are already overburdened by various activities.

### WHAT WILL I BE WHEN I GROW UP AND WHY?

In order to scientifically confirm or revoke the assumptions regarding the tendency of early professional aspirations to become more realistic and stable over time, a longitudinal study examining professional interests from the pre-school period, should be conducted. In the absence of the necessary time and resources for that kind of research, we conducted a smaller scale study with the aim to establish professional interest of pre-school children, pupils in eighth (final) grade of elementary school and pupils in the fourth (final) grade of secondary school. The research examined *professional interests* (what the participants want to be in life and why; who/what is the main source of influence in the decision on the school/faculty they want to enroll); *professional intentions* (which secondary school/faculty pupils want to enrol after completing the present level of education); *professional maturity* (willingness of pupils to make an informed decision about their career in accordance with their age); and finally *professional guidance* (who are the persons advising them on their choices of secondary school/faculty). The following text brings about only a part of the research results.

A purposeful sample was selected which consisted of pre-school children (25 participants; 16 girls and 9 boys), eight grade primary school pupils (57 participants; 31 girls and 26 boys) and fourth grade secondary school pupils (62 participants; 36 girls and 26 boys) from educational institutions in the area of the city of Rijeka, Croatia. The participants were chosen in order to have groups which are transitioning from one educational level to another.

Both qualitative and quantitative approach was used in this research, while the data collection methods entailed a structured interview (for pre-

school children) and a survey (for the pupils in eight grade of primary school and fourth grade of secondary school). The instruments used were a structured interview protocol and a questionnaire designed for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire was constructed with the assistance of The Career Style Interview (Savickas, 1989). The collected data from the quantitative part of the study was analysed in the statistical analysis and data processing program SPSS 20,0 (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*). The presented results are on a descriptive level in order to gain an overall insight in the topic.

The pre-school children's answers to the question "What would you like to be when you grow up?" are mostly characteristic for children of that age. Three participants (N=3) answered they want to be painters, there were two participants (N=2) for each of the following occupations: a police officer, a hairdresser, a cook, a football player and one participant (N=1) for each of the following occupations: a singer, a ballerina, a dancer, an artist, a flight attendant, a fireman, an electrician, an actor, a builder, a cruiser shipbuilder, an astronaut and a big boy. One participant (N=1) was indecisive: *"I don't know really. Sometimes I can't choose from five or six or I don't know how many things. Well...a secretary isn't that good"*.

The eighth grade primary school pupils' responses to the question "What do you want to be in life?" are much more concrete from the pre-school children and point to the fact that at this age children still take their personal preferences into account, however, also think about their potentials and other occupational benefits. The majority of participants (N=36) list as their future occupations those which according to the National Occupations Classification in Croatia belong to the area of scientists, engineers and experts. Specifically, the majority of the participants (N=10) decided on the subgroup of artists and similar experts (singers, dancers and performance artists). Following are the participants who want to be health experts (N=7) such as nurses and doctors while there are four participants (N=4) who opted for experts in the social sciences and humanities (economists, psychologists) and ICT technology (programers). There were three participants (N=3) for each of the following occupations: architects and lawyers and one participant (N=1) for each of these occupations: surveyor, journalist, pre-school educator



and veterinarian. The second most popular area of work is the technical and expert associates occupations which fifteen participants (N=15) opted for. Specifically, six participants (N=6) would like to be expert associates for sport and fitness; coaches or athletes. Two participants (N=2) opted for each of the following occupations: electrotechnicians, physicists and chemists, while one participant (N=1) opted for each of the following occupations: ship captains, pilots, flight controllers, commercialists, expert associates for arts, culture and cookery (for instance: designers, decorators and arrangers), expert associates for legal, social and religious issues and ICT technicians. The area of service occupations is the least popular among eighth grade pupils, only three participants (N=3) overall opted for these occupation (for instance: cooks, police officers, guides, security). There were also those who couldn't decide on a particular occupation so their responses included: *"I want to be successful"* or *"I want to be popular so that others know who I am, whether my peers or others."*

The fourth grade secondary school pupils' show a higher degree of differentiation with regard to occupations' popularity, material benefits as well as the social status of particular occupations. However, their choices are still mostly based on personal preferences. The majority of participants (N=33) would like to work in the area of scientists, engineers and experts. Specifically, the most popular subgroup (N=25) is health experts (nurses, general practitioners, doctors specialists – surgeons, neurosurgeons, plastic surgeons) or other health workers (pharmacists, doctors of dental medicine, logopedes, physiotherapists). Three participants (N=3) decided on the subgroup of educational experts, while one participant opted for each of the following occupations: an architect, an electrical engineer, a journalist, a pre-school educator and a civil engineer. The area of work which includes operators of plants and machinery, industrial producers and product assemblers is of interest to eleven participants (N=11), specifically they opted for occupations such as truck and train drivers as well as drivers of mobile machinery. The area of work including technical and expert associates occupations is of interest to six participants (N=6). Specifically, three of them (N=3) would like to be expert associates for sport and fitness (coaches, athletes), two participants (N=2) would like to be expert associates in art,

culture and cookery (designers, decorators and arrangers) while one participant (N=1) chose to be an electrotechnician. Two participants (N=2) opted for the occupations from the subgroup of legislators, officials and directors (one participant (N=1) would like to be an official of the state authority and one participant (N=1) would like to be a managing director). The area of service occupations is the least popular among the fourth grade secondary school pupils with one participant (N=1) choosing to be a police officer and one participant (N=1) opted for a military occupation. Some participants didn't provide any specific occupation whereby three participants (N=3) maintained they want to be happy. One participant (N=1) said he wants to be "*A philanthropist and humanitarian who saves animals*", while one participant (N=1) wants to be "*A successful man with a steady job*".

When asked "Why they want to be what they chose?" the majority of pre-schol children (N=9) answered because they like that occupation: "*Because I really like to build things from Legos, so I thought why not actually build something.*" The responses which followed (N=7) described the occupation as interesting: "*Because it's really cool for me.*" Three participants (N=3) made their decision based on their success in the area: "*Because I'm really good at it and I like to paint.*", "*Because I'm good at building.*" Two participants (N=2) said it is because their father does that job, and one participant (N=1) explained because it was their mother's job. Two participants (N=2) do not know the reason why they want to do something, while the remaining responses included one participant saying he wants to help people ("*Because firefighters help and extinguish.*") and one proclaiming it is because financial reasons ("*So that I have a lot of money.*"). One participant (N=1) also stated he wants to be a big boy in the future and go to school.

The same question was posed to the eighth grade primary school pupils, and the majority (N=21) responded it is because they find the occupation interesting. The responses which follow (N=16) described loving that particular occupation: "*Because I love that more than life.*" Ten participants (N=10) proclaimed they are interested in doing a particular job while five participants (N=5) chose their occupations because of a hobby they do. There are also those who would like to ensure their material

wellbeing, whereby four participants (N=4) decided on an occupation because it is well paid and two participants (N=2) think that the occupation is sought on the labour market. One participant (N=1) reasoned that the choice of occupation was appropriate because of “*good future*” it provides, while three participants (N=3) want to help people and think there are talented for certain occupations. Two participants (N=2) opted for an occupation because it is popular, while one participant (N=1) claims “*these things make me happy.*” The remaining responses included one participant (N=1) choosing a profession because of parents, one participant (N=1) would like a job which is not strenuous, while two participants (N=2) decided they would like to travel: “*I would like to visit other countries in the world.*”

The fourth grade secondary school pupils’ reasons for choosing a particular occupation for the most part include interest (N=12) or love (N=12) for a particular occupation. The responses following are because other people need help (N=8), because they like that (N=7), because it is interesting (N=6) or because that is their wish (N=4). Three participants (N=3) emphasize the profitability of the occupation and one participant (N=1) claims it is “*in order to have certain perks and privileges compared to other citizens.*” Contrary to that, three participants (N=3) list happiness as the reason for doing a particular job: “*Because happiness is the only good thing for which you strive for its own sake.*” Additionally, two participants consider the chosen occupation to be “*the most humane and beautiful ever*”, while other reasons include: “*To be a better human being.*”, “*Because of one person.*”, “*Because my parents are making me.*” and “*I don’t know.*”

The question related to how the pupils obtained the idea for a particular occupation included the following, already offered responses: *because of my hobbies, I watched a film, it is my life motto, because of my school subject, because of a childhood rolemodel, I read a book, I saw it in a magazine, other sources.* The most common eight grade primary school pupils’ responses (37,5%) was because of a hobby, while the same response was obtained with 19,4% of fourth grade secondary school pupils.

The majority of fourth grade secondary school pupils got their idea for an occupation from it coinciding with their life motto, while the same response was obtained with 16,1% of the eight grade primary school pupils.

Watching a film influenced the career choice of 16, 1% of eighth grade primary school pupils and 8, 1% of the fourth grade secondary school pupils. A significant difference among pupils is visible in terms of obtaining the idea from reading a book or a magazine, whereby, 14, 2% of eighth grade primary school pupils claims to have gotten the idea from the mentioned resources in comparison with only 3, 2% of the fourth grade secondary school pupils. School subject instigated 14, 3% of eighth grade pupils and 12, 9% of fourth grade pupils to choose a particular occupation, while a childhood rolemodel is listed for 10, 7% of eighth grade pupils and 21% of fourth grade pupils. Other sources mentioned by the eighth grade pupils are *YouTube*, *a desire to do exactly that*, *a need to travel*, *friends*, *the need to solve problems and help others*.

When it comes to people who advise the pupils with regard to choosing a career, the questionnaire also included the following, already offered answers: *parents*, *friends*, *teachers*, *expert associates in school (educational specialist (pedagogue), psychologist, librarian)*, *professional guidance counsellor*, *somebody else*. The majority of eighth grade elementary school pupils (82, 5%) mention parents, 33, 3% friends and 22, 8% of them list teachers. Only one participant mentioned an expert associate in school (educational specialist (pedagogue), psychologist, librarian), and none of the responses included a professional guidance counsellor. The majority of the fourth grade secondary school pupils (80,3%) say they are advised by their parents, 31,3% by friends, 9,8% by teachers, 4,9% by expert associate in school (educational specialist (pedagogue), psychologist, librarian), and only one participant stated by a professional guidance counsellor. There is also 18% of fourth grade pupils who list "somebody else": *"I decide myself and advise myself."*, *"My brother."*, *"My boyfriend."*, *"Nobody really advises me."*, *"A personality test on the Internet."*

The obtained responses indicate that eighth grade elementary school pupils and fourth grade secondary school pupils mostly chose occupations from the area of science, engineering and experts which could point to a more systematic reflection on the choice of their career, being that they are becoming aware of the demand for scientists, doctors, engineers both home and abroad. However, the response analysis shows that the pupils rely mostly

on personal interests, wishes or life mottos. The persons who advise pupils most are parents and friends, while very few answers point to expert associates at schools and professional guidance counsellors. These results bring into question the professional, systematic and informed decision making process about future education and career possibilities.

## CONCLUSION

A lack of information, indecisiveness, a mismatch between interest and ability, a lack of motivation – all of the above can occur on the professional path of choosing a career. However, in order to assist individuals in making an informed decision, an efficient development process (professional guidance), which would provide them with adequate support, is required. Although recognized as important, professional guidance is a concept interpreted in different manners and there is a lack of programmes for educating and training professionals in that area (cf. Vizek Vidović & Potočnik, 2013). The job is commonly left to expert associates in schools, employment offices and student counselling centres, specifically to experts who acquired certain competencies in this area through their initial education. There is no consensus on whether there should be a particular programme for educating professionals for career guidance or it should be integrated within particular academic fields, nor is there agreement on how much career counselling a person needs in order to be satisfied with the final choice. Our recommendation is therefore, to conduct further research in this area as well as to create more comprehensive educational programmes for the expert associates in schools who ought to conduct professional guidance.

## ŠTA ĆU BITI KAD PORASTEM –TEORIJSKE PRETPOSTAVKE I PEDAGOŠKE IMPLIKACIJE PROFESIONALNOG USMERAVANJA

### APSTRAKT

Vreme globalizacije, gospodarskih promena i visoke nezaposlenosti donosi drugačije poglede na izbor zanimanja i razvoj karijere, a time i nove izazove pred pedagoge koji, kao stručni suradnici, u školama najčešće provode profesionalno usmeravanje. Neki pojedinci

prirodno razvijaju sposobnost određivanja jasnih ciljeva i fokusa u svojim životima, ali su brojni oni koji trebaju pomoć u razvoju profesionalnog samopoimanja. Autorice u radu iznose teorijske postavke o važnosti i komponentama profesionalnog usmeravanja, kristalizaciji profesionalnog samopoimanja, profesionalnim interesima i profesionalnoj zrelosti koje dopunjuju rezultatima istraživanja provedenog na populaciji dece predškolskog uzrasta, učenika osmih razreda osnovne škole te učenika četvrtih razreda srednje škole. Cilj istraživanja je ispitati profesionalne interese i profesionalnu zrelost u donošenju obrazovnih i profesionalnih odluka kod ispitanika različitih dobnih skupina.

**KLJUČNE REČI:** profesionalno usmeravanje, profesionalni interesi, profesionalna zrelost, profesionalno samopoimanje, pedagog.

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