



## CAREER EDUCATION SYSTEM CREATION AND IMPROVEMENT: A CASE OF LITHUANIA

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### Abstract

Lately, economic and demographic tendencies and technological progress are unrecognizably changing the whole working world structure. Social changes, appearing in the globalization process, raise new requirements for a man in his career path. In Lithuania, in the legislation acts on education since 2011, a modern career education understanding has also been asserted and developed. Career education in the current situation is becoming a continuous process, which starts in lower secondary schools, is simultaneously carried on in educational support institutions, continued in vocational education institutions and higher schools, later moves into lifelong learning space. In this process, a person acquires career planning and its management abilities, helping him to create and realize career plans compatible with his personality peculiarities, to accumulate necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for the realization of them, abilities to flexibly react to society and labour market changes, successfully make proper career-related decisions, acquire lifelong learning motivation. In Lithuanian context, vocational consultation, information and career education is considered to be one of the most important factors, encouraging employment, working

force adaptation to market conditions, entrepreneurship and equal possibilities. Therefore, effectively provided career education services become important both for education system and labour market and for their interaction. For this purpose, career education system has been created in Lithuania, which consists of legal basis, career education specialists, career education service coordination, provision, financing and observation mechanisms. The aim of this system is to help people consciously choose education and employment opportunities suitable for them, create conditions for career competence acquisition. Career education becomes an important teaching and employment policy element at all levels, a constituent policy part of active labour market.

**Key words:** career education, vocational information and consultation, education career system.

## **Introduction**

Lately, economic and demographic tendencies and technological progress are unrecognizably changing the whole working world structure. Social changes, appearing in the globalisation process, raise new requirements for a man in his career path. The man himself has to take on responsibility for his life and career. In order to realise his career competency, one may need not once to change not only the organisation or activity character, but also geographical location. This determines the necessity of the man's flexibility and mobility, continuous learning, readiness to find and create a working place by himself.

Growing life change of the society changes the attitude to vocational information and orientation – it is not only necessary to provide a man with information, but also to educate career management and planning skills, i.e., to teach him to make and implement real decisions about his career, to adapt to constantly occurring changes and independently make decisions. It is necessary to choose the profession rationally, systematically, not forgetting that social factors exist as well, that unplanned events also happen. Rational choice of the profession is the most essential and the most important part of education, because being mistaken in the profession choice stage,

career planning and management will not be good enough – career will be planned in that professional activity, which does not correspond to human natural abilities, or does not have demand in the labour market.

Successful career is the main condition to personality social adaptation, to his/her self-reliance in his/her strength, responsibility and life stability, possibility to plan his and his family future. Human career is very important for the society as well, because optimal distribution of its members in various activity spheres makes conditions for rational human resource use, and all that directly has influence on social progress. Therefore, human resource management more and more is becoming an inseparable part of vocational orientation system, seeking to coordinate the demand and supply questions of not only existing, but also prospective professions in the labour market. (Nazelskis, 2011).

For Lithuania being a part of European Union, it is extremely important, because its economic success mostly depends not on how many young people complete higher education studies, but on whether each of them in their activity and working world finds a place mostly corresponding to their demands and abilities. The aspiration of the citizens to overcome various life challenges, including rather frequent career changes, requires very high career management competencies of a person – especially in the times of high unemployment and competition. Therefore, effectively rendered vocational orientation, information, consultation and career management and planning services become important both for education system and labour market and for their interaction. Namely, these services help to better use human resources, because favourable conditions occur for people ability and interest coordination with the existing learning and employment possibilities. These services have to be the most important teaching and employment policy element at national, regional and local levels, also a constituent policy part of active labour market. In European Union context, vocational consultation, information and career education is considered to be one of the most important factors, encouraging employment,

working force adaptation to market conditions, entrepreneurship and equal possibilities. Lately, it is more and more associated with economic and social policy.

In 2012, in the legislation acts on education, a modern vocational orientation understanding was employed, which basically means career services, the purpose of which is to help people consciously choose education and employment opportunities suitable for them, to create conditions to acquire career competencies, to actively create their career. Such attitude is grounded on contemporary career understanding: career is understood as a lifelong lasting person's learning, self-expression and work experience sequence, significant for a person and the society. As the decisions connected with the man's career (learning, work, self-expression) are being made the whole life, career services are important throughout life (Career education, vocational information and consultation at school, 2014).

Not only comprehensive school pupils have to be provided with career services, but also the pupils learning in vocational institutions and higher schools, not only young people, but the adults as well – the employees and also the unemployed. Thus, career education is a priority vocational orientation service, which contributes to the education of individual career competencies and enables the people to independently guide – plan, make decisions and implement – individual career. Vocational consultation and career education in present conditions becomes a continual, multidimensional process, which starts at school, continues in the transitional period to adult life or in their working period and is accessible throughout the whole adult life.

It is obvious, that career education should embrace all human life periods. It is especially important for this period to start rather early (e.g., in the period of pre-school education and/or primary school) and continue throughout formal education period. Quite a lot of researchers assert that career education should start very early, because career planning is as a life skill beginning in infancy (Magnuson, Starr, 2000). Researches carried out in different countries confirm that systematic, high quality career education is an inseparable part of general education. Researchers accentuate

that high quality, impartial career education process often is the main source of information for young people and their parents (Haynes, McCrone, Wade, 2013). The earlier researches showed, that even short-term teachings in the career field have a positive influence on the pupils: for example, it resulted in increased career decision-making self-efficacy, vocational skills self-efficacy and short-term gains in outcome expectations (McWhirter, Crothers, Rasheed, 2000), besides, career education positively affects pupils' achievements and definitely can be treated as a contributor to academic achievement (Evans, Burck, 1992). As mentioned earlier, socioeconomic, political, technological changes determine career education change. This should be not only a continual, embracing all age periods subject, but also a constructive process, forming multifaceted, flexible skills, necessary for the present and future labour market. For example, if earlier emphasis was laid on employment, now - on employability. In fact, career is not selected, but constructed.

Thus, the aim of this analysis is to reveal the main creation and improvement aspects of career education system in Lithuania and to present possible improvement trends.

### **Methodology of Research**

Informative-analytic research, carried out in 2015. The type of research – case analysis. The aim of the research is to present Lithuanian experience in the creation of career education system. The main research methods - educational scientific information resource analysis, document analysis, synthesis and interpretation. The basis of analysis is systematic (career education is treated as a system) and hierarchical (in the system of career education are distinguished the main and not the main and other elements) principles.



Career orientation system created in Lithuania is a complex of institutions, in which the specialists provide various services, organise activities, seeking to help different age people to make decisions about learning, studies or job, to acquire career competencies and to guide personal career.

### *Research Context*

Today's changing world creates a new human identification basis. Many factors determine this: understanding that occupation, role, activity character of a man as an active subject in the society has changed – a man acts in complex, very often confusing situations, of increasing uncertainty, intensive meaning search, human and social capital role growth and in other conditions (Giddens, 2005). Thus, in the context of the mentioned changes and new requirements for the man's activity, the attitude to the career phenomenon has changed. Therefore, career phenomenon becomes a research object for many science spheres: educology, psychology, culture, economy, management and other. Because of this reason, career process is qualified as a transdisciplinary research object and its definition is understood differently, and various career conceptions are discerned. This influenced various career phenomenon and career realization researches. As a result, educological vocational orientation school formed in Lithuania, distinguished by quite big scientific achievements. In L. Jovaiša's (1975; 1981; 1998; 2009) scientific works the biggest attention was paid to vocational orientation pedagogy creation and vocational counselling organization. S. Kregždė (1975; 1981; 1988) and D. Beresnevičienė (2002; 2003) looked into psychological basis of vocational orientation. K. Pukelis (1998; 2003; 2004; 2006; 2012) grounded career designing paradigm in his researches, examined career designing structure, teacher professional preparation problems. V. Šernas' (1998; 2009) scientific researches are related with professional preparation pedagogy, with the problems of the preparation of an individual for professional career. R.

Laužackas (1999; 2002; 2005) laid methodological professional preparation fundament by his researches.

Carried out researches show, that a hard theoretical basis has been created in Lithuania to further develop vocational orientation. Especially, scientific works in career education on the theme of vocational consultation have started to increase since 2000. The researchers are interested in career understanding development tendencies in Lithuania, career preparation methodological questions. An exhaustive career and other important concept for vocational orientation and career development theory analysis is presented in R. Kučinskienė's (2003) career education methodology, theoretical personal career management modelling assumptions and efficacy factors are discussed. The author pays attention to systematic characteristics of the career education phenomenon. The aspect of career competency acquisition is disposed in the career education model - the person's ability to plan, organise, guide and control his/her career ability system acquisition. V. Stanišauskienė ir N. Večkienė (1999), T. Lileikienė ir R. Petkevičiūtė (2003), A. Valackienė (2000), A. Zdanevičius (2004), A. Palujanskienė and A. Pugevičius (2004) carried out career understanding change analysis. In the mentioned researches, it is mostly oriented into a traditional, positivistic attitude to career. V. Rosinaitė (2010) analysed the formation of career understanding in Lithuania referring to social constructionism theory. At least one dissertation is defended on career theme every year regularly since 2004. Noteworthy and prepared are the dissertations on special career questions (most of them in the field of educology): B. Jatautaitė (1991) analysed vocational orientation and reorientation problems; V. Stanišauskienė (1991) analysed socioeducational career preparation basics in a comprehensive school; R. Petrauskaitė (1995) analysed psychopedagogical peculiarities of the profession choice rationality; E. Danilevičius (2004) analysed personality professional interiorization modelling, professional calling expression. A. Urbonienė (2005) analysed professional choice motivation and educational assumptions of its development.

Vocational orientation researches are carried out in various directions and cover all personality development stages and all career service spheres: career education, vocational consultation, career management and planning. Early career education occupies a very important place in career research sphere. Education of pupils' ability to make career decisions in a comprehensive school, career education models, successful career factors (Augustinienė, 2007; Garnienė, 2006; Lileikienė, 2009), personal feature influence choosing a profession (Pociūtė, Isiūnaitė, 2011), pupils' value orientation preparing for career (Reingardienė, Zdanavičius, 2003) are analysed. Comprehensive school career education structure, content, school career centre activity trends and content (Augienė, 2012; Augienė, Kriauciūnaitė, 2012), professional counsellor activity peculiarities and legal presumptions are analysed (Railienė, 2011). One of the vocational orientation elements – career preparation process, is analysed in V. Stanišauskienė's (2004) monography. The manifestation of this process is examined in one of the levels of education system – comprehensive schools. Career competency (which comprises the totality of personal, social, learning and professional competencies) education is promoted as the main part of career preparation in the author's work.

Recently, university and college various profession student career planning and management researches caused interest. Student career understanding, job value, competence and study influence evaluation on professional career is researched (Lamanauskas, Augienė 2014, 2015a, 2015b), student career management competency education (Augienė, Mickevičius, 2014; Rosinaitė, 2008, 2009).

A number of scientists research adult career management. Scientific research object is the peculiarities of personal adult career development and management, employee demand expression in various career development periods, the manager's career development metamorphoses (Petkevičiūtė, 2007), employee and organisation interest coordination possibilities are researched forming the career (Čiutienė, 2006). Recently a big attention is paid to women career researches: different generation women professional career, women professional career factors, (Valackienė, 2000;

2001; 2003), women professional status and career gain possibilities (Dromantaitė-Stancikienė, Gineitienė, 2010), family role for women career development (Reingardienė, 2004).

### *Legal Context*

Vocational orientation system only forming in Lithuania (and experiencing big European Union influence in this process), it is important to evaluate existing theoretical and political presumptions. One of the essential international documents defining the strategy in career education sphere is (A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning). It is asserted in it that „living and working in the knowledge society calls for active citizens who are self-motivated to pursue their own personal and professional development“ (A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000, p. 16). The other important document is Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (2008). Globalisation, extending working life and other factors require skills to adapt in the labour market. Four priority career education spheres are distinguished in this document.

Taking into consideration international document regulations, evaluating national interests, Lithuania constructs national law acts, regulating career education. One of the basic documents is Lithuanian Progress Strategy 2030 - the first and the most important long-term strategic document (LPS2030, 2012). In 2013 Lithuania's Ministry of Education and Science has submitted a State Education Strategy for 2013-2022 (SES, 2013). The **National Strategy on Education** for the years **2013-2022** was accepted by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on August 28, 2013, and on December 23 the same year it was confirmed in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. In this strategy, it is extremely emphasized that it is necessary to form conditions for the people to independently guide the career. On the other hand,

effective support is very important cognizing oneself and choosing the path in the world ahead. On January 15, 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania confirmed career education programme, in which it is asserted, that career competencies are a part of general personal competence closely related with the other general and professional competencies (CEP, 2014).

Thus, the discussed main documents enable basically to assert, that legal basis in career education sphere is sufficient.

### *Specialist Preparation*

Master study programme *Career Education* realised only at Siauliai University prepares career specialists of a wide profile. In the programme *Career Education* career education covers all education system sections: beginning with pre-school education institution, school (vocational information centres), to career centres in higher educational institutions. This programme also integrates career modelling questions in non- educational organisations as well (Table1).

**Table 1. Master Study Programme *Career Education*.**

<b>Study subjects</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
Methodology of Career Education	8
Policy of Career Education	5
Career Education in Various Age Stages	5
Methodology of Educational Research	15
Training and Counselling of Personnel	7
Andragogical Technologies of Career	5
Systems of Career Education	5
<b>Elective study subjects</b>	
Vocational Guidance and Counselling of	5

Pupils	
Early Career Education	5
Theories of Lifelong Learning	5
Theory and Methods of Search for a Job	5
Labour Market Research	5
Quality Assessment in Career Education	5

Study programme consists of compulsory and optional study subjects. General career education competencies are concretized and supplemented by other competencies through the student optional study subjects. In the programme the attitude is followed, that vocational consultation and career education in present conditions become a continual, multidimensional process, which starts at school, continues in the transitional to adult life period and goes on in their professional activity period throughout the whole life. Therefore, in *the Programme*, career education is analysed in various age and social groups. In the programme *Career Education* career education covers all education system sections: beginning with pre-school education institution, school up to career centres in higher educational institutions. This programme also integrates career modelling questions in non-educational organisations as well.

In other Lithuanian universities, the narrower profile career specialists are prepared. For example, the programme *Career Designing* (prepares Klaipeda University, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences) more orientates to organization sector, which is directed to adult career designing, employment, therefore it is more managerial and directed to service supply sphere.

At the present moment, a new bachelor study programme *Vocational orientation and non-formal education* is prepared at Siauliai University. In this programme it is sought to integrate career integration and non-formal education, the latter understanding as a possibility for a pupil to find himself, to cognize, to broaden, deepen one's abilities and do possible professional choices. The aim of the

programme is to prepare qualified pedagogues, able to guide non-formal education and to provide vocational orientation services (Table 2).

**Table 2. Bachelor study programme Vocational orientation and non-formal education.**

<b>Vocational orientation study subjects in the programme</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
The basics of the sociology of professions	3
Vocational orientation system	3
Introduction to vocational orientation theory	3
Professional consultation theories	4
The basics of career education	4
Individual and group vocational consultation	5
Vocational orientation cultural conceptions	4
The basics of social policy	5
Career and leadership	3
Career centre activity planning and organising	8
Parent education and professional information	3
Practice	15

The researches show that there is a lack of professional specialists, able to provide qualitative vocational orientation (career) services at schools. According to 2013-2014 school year pupils' vocational orientation (career) service observation statement(2014), only a small part (17%) of the specialists giving these services at schools have graduated from special vocational orientation, career education studies. The others improved qualification in various teachings, but the research shows, that they still lack pupils' career competence education abilities. Though vocational orientation system in Lithuania has been created the second decade already, and the first vocational orientation specialists (profession) counsellors were prepared in 2004,

in Lithuanian schools, in 2013-2014, 6 from 10 career specialists were “beginners” in the pupils’ vocational orientation (career education) field (60%). (2013-2014, pupils’ vocational orientation (career education) observation statement, 2014).

### *Career Education in a Comprehensive School*

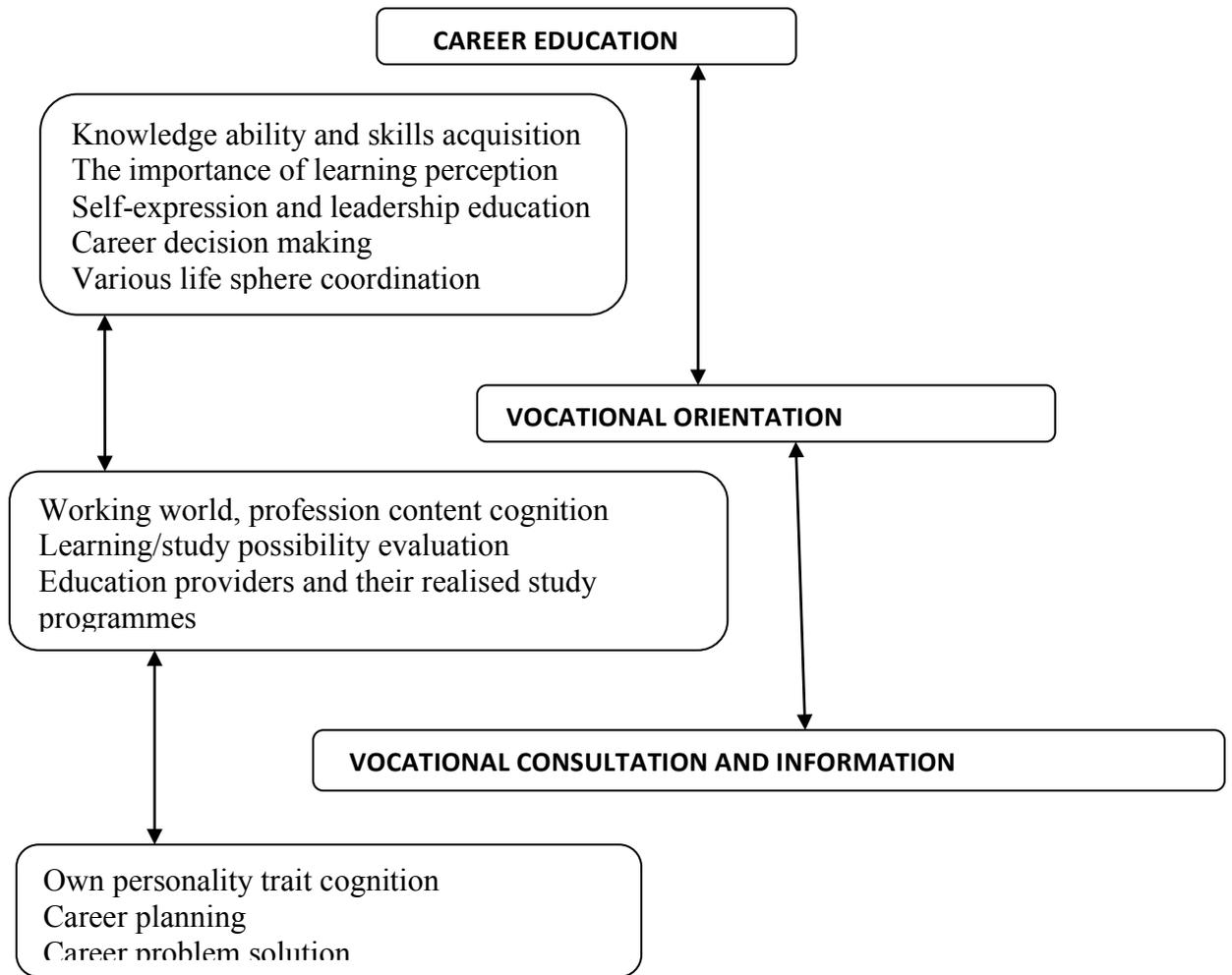
Young people cannot find a job because of many reasons among them not being able to properly plan and guide their career as well. Choice of profession is one of the most important and significant man’s choices, which determines the further life quality. A big part of young people encounter with difficulties while making a decision, which profession to acquire, where to study. Properly chosen profession decreases unemployment problem of young people. It is only important that the choice of a young man was deliberate and purposeful and for this can help qualitative career education, vocational information and consulting services, provided at school. A school has to be that place, in which a pupil could find himself, cognize, perceive his true wishes, could learn to choose important and complex things, such as profession, could acquire general competencies. Therefore, career education at school has to occupy an important place. For this purpose Education and science minister in 2014 confirmed *Career Education programme*.

Career education (2014) goal is to assure the effectiveness of career competencies, which are necessary to deliberately and successfully plan and guide one’s career (i.e. continuing throughout the whole life, significant for a person and for the society, person’s learning, self-expression, and work experience sequence) and to help him cognize, create and realize himself. Career education programme is prepared, taking into consideration pupils’ demands, their age period peculiarities. It is devoted for the pupils, learning according to primary, lower secondary, secondary education and (or) vocational teaching programmes, and is an inseparable and integral part of primary, lower secondary education General programme, secondary education General programme and vocational teaching programme.

The implementation of career education programme is based on school community collective work: communication among the people, providing career education, professional information and consultation services and other educational support specialists. At school career education is coordinated by career specialists able to consult the pupils on career questions, organize and guide career education process and to involve school community: subject teachers, class teachers, psychologists, social pedagogues, parents into activities connected with career education.

Educating career competencies, especially effective are these career education methods and activities: creating and implementing your personal vision, various active and reflective learning and self-cognition methods, learning from experience methods, teaching/learning methods based on project activity and cooperation, pupils' cooperation learning each from other, communication and common projects with the people, having achieved a lot and having found their calling, games devoted to educate career competencies, education through professional activation, teaching companies, voluntariness, "plays" and situation modelling, conversations, discussions, debates (as well with famous people, parents), teaching life situation and concrete personality life story examination with the help of books, films, information communication technologies and other devices.

Career education can be defined as a consequent and purposeful person's preparation for profession choice with the help of general education, professional information and orientation and consultation devices. Career education structure content is given in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Career education structure and content.**

Career education helps the pupil to cognize his own professional calling, personal ability, interest, gift correspondence with the chosen profession field, to acquire career planning and management skills helping to create and implement career plans, corresponding to personality peculiarities, to accumulate necessary knowledge and skills for implementing them, to flexibly react to society and labour market changes, to be able successfully make proper, career related decisions, to acquire lifelong learning motivation, successfully settle in the changing labour market, to solve personal life questions. Therefore, effectively solved career education problems become important both for education system and for labour market and their interaction.

In the compulsory education system, career education programme is usually implemented in different ways: as a separate subject (all the pupils are offered to choose a special career education occupation cycle/module, as an integrated separate subject content (to integrate career education into the basics of business and economics programme content) or can be realized as an optional extra-curricular activity, summer camp.

### *Improvement Trends*

Career services in Lithuania as in the West societies are acknowledged as the most important lifelong learning element and the essential employment policy part.

Seeking that the vocational orientation system functioned qualitatively, that the grounded decisions were made and qualitative services were provided, it is necessary to gather and systemize the data about organising and providing these services, to create quality evaluation /self-evaluation and career specialist qualification improvement systems, to assure that all vocational orientation providers cooperated at a country and place levels.

At the present moment career specialist qualification improvement system is not created, legal and administrative mechanism is not defined, which would enable to evaluate career specialist's constant qualification improvement personal and institutional motivation, would guarantee qualification improvement service quality and purposeful and effective allocated budget use for their qualification improvement. Creating qualification improvement system of the people providing vocational orientation services, which would guarantee all specialist providing these services constant competency improvement, equal possibilities would be guaranteed for the pupils to get equally qualitative services.

In the national vocational education orientation programme (20013), raised tasks obligate that vocational orientation became a continual process beginning at a school age, continuing in the transitional period to adult life, and in the space of

continual learning embraced the whole active working life period of the adults. Thus, vocational orientation oversteps the threshold of education and teaching institutions and during vocational and continual teaching breaks into institution activity, because in these times, seeking competitive superiority, teaching is carried on in enterprises, offices and organizations. Therefore, it is important that the centres were created not only in educational institutions, but also in offices, organizations, and that in their activity dominated support for young people, choosing a profession, seeking to make them interested in one or another organization activity, forming conditions to observe certain profession employee activity.

Vocational orientation (career education) contributes to teaching motivation strengthening, decision making ability education, attitude related with the lifelong learning formation. Pupils' career education can have a positive influence on the early retreat from education system level changes and prevention, make easier the transition from one teaching level to another.

One can basically assert, that career education is like "a bridge" joining academic and vocational world. This cannot be only a declarative, fashionable activity. On the whole, education is preparation for employment. Thus, the essential aim of career education is to assure successful transition from schooling to employment.

## **Conclusions**

Generalizing one could assert, that Lithuanian career orientation policy context is - the existing legal basis, strategic documents and various interest and social group participation – form favourable conditions for career education service development: a number of scientific researches have been carried out, career education has been started to develop as an independent and priority service (in education sphere), oriented into career competency education; career education programmes created for the pupils and students. ES fund support is actively used for career orientation

services in education, employment and social policy spheres. The activities devoted to career orientation service development are planned in the newest State strategic planning documents, devices are created for career service observation. Teachings are intensively organized for career specialist qualification improvement. More and more various interest groups are included into creating and providing service; the association, uniting career specialists, is created. However, in practice obstacles exist, hindering career education service development: there is a lack of quality evaluation researches and instruments, which would help to ascertain if provided services correspond to individual demands of people and society; the question of career specialist preparation and their constant qualification improvement remains urgent; still, there is insufficient social partner participation, providing career orientation services.

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<p>Zdanevičius, A. (2004). Moters karjeros trajektorijos. Karjeros samprata ir sėkmingos karjeros strategijos [Trajectories of woman career. Notion of career and strategies of successful career]. <i>Sociologija: mintis ir veiksmas / Sociology. Thought and Action, 1,</i> 73–87. <i>Dalia Augienė</i></p>	<p>Ph.D., Senior Researcher at the University of Siauliai, Faculty of Education, Department of Education &amp; Psychology, P. Visinskio Street 25, LT-76351 Siauliai, Lithuania. E-mail: augiene@gmail.com Website: <a href="http://www.su.lt">http://www.su.lt</a></p>
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