

ATTITUDE OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY STUDENTS TOWARD COMPETENCES OF A VOCATIONAL ADVISER ACQUIRED DURING THE STUDIES

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Abstract:

The article presents results of a survey that analyses the prerequisites for modelling study content aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser in the social pedagogy study programme, and the reflective experiences. The main tasks of the article are to justify the model of the study content aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser in the social pedagogy study programme and to reveal the attitude of students toward the development of competences of a vocational adviser. The object is the attitude of students of the social pedagogy study programme toward the development of competences of a vocational adviser. *The article provides an analysis of the modelling process of the study content aimed at developing the competences of a vocational adviser, presents the theoretical model of a social pedagogy study programme aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser, and provides detail analysis of qualitative research aimed to reveal students' attitude toward competences of a vocational adviser acquired during the studies.* On the basis of survey results it is recommended to apply the model of an alternative aimed at developing the competences of a vocational adviser in updating study programmes.

Keywords: competence, social educator, vocational guidance, vocational adviser, reflection.

Introduction

One of the main goals of the Lithuanian education system is to help an individual and society to respond to major challenges, and facilitate the use of multiple opportunities. In the knowledge society every person should have the knowledge on how to adapt to market changes and select a perspective profession complying with their individual and public needs.

The recent trend toward a competence-based education has become a key factor for changing the education system: the Lithuanian and EU strategic education documents stipulate the transition from giving the benefit of knowledge to the development of competences. According to the EU documents (the Bologna Declaration, Berlin and Bergen's Communications), one of the key tasks of higher education are: the revision of the study curricula and methods directed toward the needs and capacities of students complying with the global business needs. Orientation of the study programmes toward a competence-based model is one of the most effective ways of assuring the high quality of studies.

The necessity of vocational guidance specialists is stipulated in the strategic documents of the European Commission highlighting the need for vocational guidance services (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000; EC Communication on the Establishment of the Common Space for Lifelong Learning, 2001; European Employment Guidelines, 2001). Training of the above specialists would comply with the requirements of OECD, ETF, CEDEFOP and the Bologna Process concerning the changes in the system of higher education of Lithuania. However, both, labour market and education systems still lack specialists providing vocational guidance services. Therefore these services are usually rendered to persons who are in active search of assistance. Meanwhile this assistance is not fully accessible to various social groups and pupils of comprehensive schools.

Preparation of vocational guidance specialists is an issue of discussion. However, such specialists are not yet prepared in Lithuania's higher education institutions. In response to social orders, social pedagogues are being prepared for work in various education and social institutions. In regulatory enactments on vocational guidance (The Description of Provision of Vocational Information and Counselling Services, 2005; Vocational Guidance Strategy, 2003; Vocational Information Standard, 2007) these specialists are defined as providers of vocational guidance services. They would not only improve the quality of vocational guidance services at a general and vocational training level, but would ensure the provision of high-quality primary vocational assistance (provision of information, self-cognition, development of social skills, problem identification, mediation between the school-parent-vocational training system and pupils), and, in case of serious problems, their referral to different specialists.

Despite a wide range of research by the Lithuanian scientists (G. Kvieskienė, 2005), I. Jonutytė, 2007, L. Rupšienė (2006), E. Giedraitienė (2006), D. Alifanovienė, 2005, V. Indrašienė (2008), etc.), who analysed competences and education of social pedagogical assistance specialists, there is still lack of the research related to competences of providers of vocational guidance services and to aspects of their training.

Goal of Research: to analyse the prerequisites for modelling the study content aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser in the social pedagogy study programme, and the reflective experiences.

Tasks:

- To justify the model of the study content aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser in the social pedagogy study programme.
- To reveal the attitude of students toward the development of competences of a vocational adviser.

Object: attitude of students of the social pedagogy study programme toward the development of competences of a vocational adviser.

Research methods: analysis of the scientific literature and students' reflections.

1. Modelling of the study content aimed at developing the competences of a vocational adviser

The analysis of operational functions of a social pedagogue as a vocational adviser, the analysis of documents regulating activities of a social pedagogue as a vocational adviser, a concept of competence as well as the attitude toward vocational guidance as inter-dimensional services (vocational guidance as a segment of education and labour market/activity) provides for the identification of general (social; learning; effective operational; communication; information management; project management; change management and research competences), cognitive (knowledge of the vocational guidance content, knowledge of the principles for provision of assistance; organisation and evaluation of activities) and functional (upgrading vocational information, vocational counselling, career design skills; cooperation, coordination of activities, analysis and assessment of needs, vocational information planning, counselling, career planning, assessment of personal activity, efficiency of support, individual, family and community education competences) competences of a social pedagogue as a vocational adviser.

Theoretical model of a social pedagogy study programme aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser implies the theoretical analysis of the curriculum concept, the principles of constructing a study programme (Laužackas, 2008; Pukelis, 2007, 2008; Lepaitė, 2007; Jucevičienė, 2007, 2008) and the development of social pedagogy study programmes. Theory on interaction between the educational and operational segments in the study programme highlighting external and internal parts of the study programme (Laužackas, 2008), as well as the model of competences of a social educator as a vocational adviser (Žadeikaitė, Railienė, 2009) serve as a theoretical background of a social pedagogy study programme aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser (Figure 1).

According to this theory, an internal part of social pedagogy study programmes is a study curriculum determined by general (Outline of the National Qualification Framework of Lithuania, 2007; Description of general requirements for a study programme of the first cycle and integrated study programmes awarding a degree, 2010) and special (Regulation on training of teachers, 2008; General regulation for social pedagogical aid, 2004; Standard for training social educators, 2002) provisions for preparing the above specialists. Since the development of competences of a vocational adviser is an integral part of the programme, the study programme complies with the provisions of documents regu-

lating activities of these specialists (Vocational information standard, 2007; Standard for preparation of vocational counselling specialists, 2008). The external part of the study programme is a study content determined by the procedure, rules and requirements of a specific higher school. Theoretical model of a social pedagogy study programme aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser is complex and includes the provisions for preparation of psychology specialists, of the social science field, social work and educology field, and is directed toward operational provisions of specialists providing social pedagogical assistance.

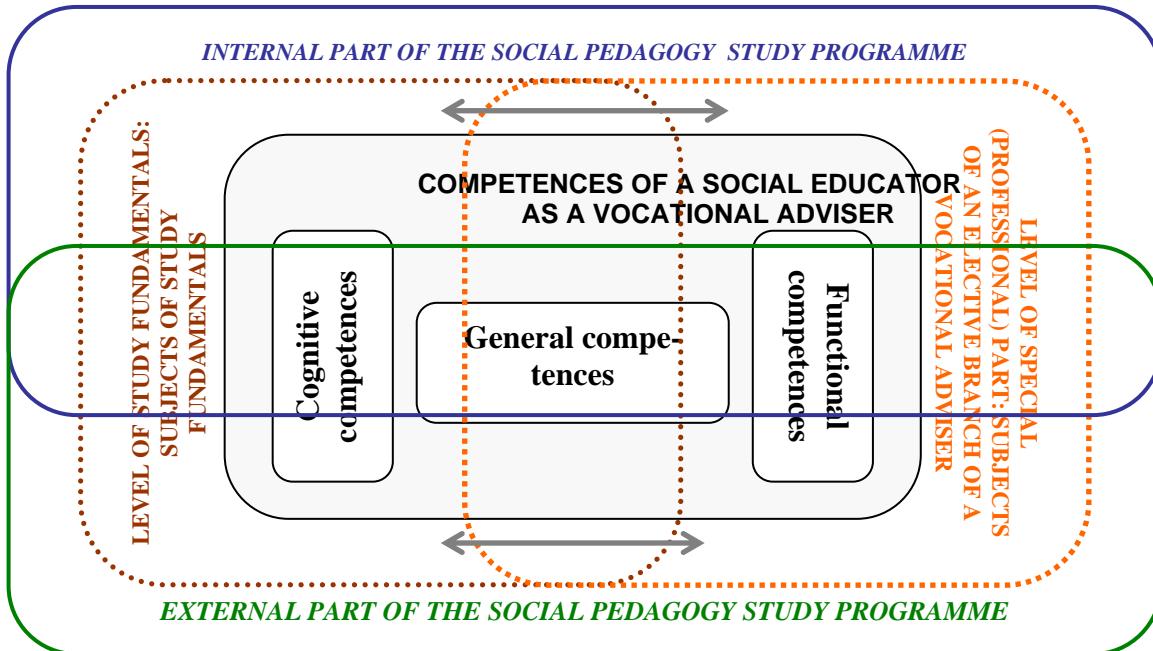


Figure 1. Theoretical model of a social pedagogy study programme aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser (Laužackas, 2008; Žadeikaitė, Railienė, 2009)

Free-chosen study content of a social pedagogy study programme aimed at developing competences of a social educator as a vocational adviser is based on the model of competences of a social educator as a vocational adviser (Žadeikaitė, Railienė, 2009), the content of European qualification level VI (2007) and theoretical provisions for preparation of study programmes highlighting the importance of the causality between all the parameters of the study programme identifying study results as a connecting link of all study programme parameters (Laužackas, 2008; Pukelis, 2007, 2008; Lepaitė, 2003; Jucevičienė, 2007, 2008). Referring to the analysis of operational functions of a vocational adviser (Žadeikaitė, Railienė, 2009) and in order to ensure the principle of continuity, the following subjects of specialisation studies and its parameters were envisaged: study outcomes, study aims and content, and substantiation of the achieved results.

2. Analysis of students' attitude toward competences of a vocational adviser acquired during the studies

In order to reveal the attitude of students of the social pedagogy study programme toward the acquired competences of a vocational adviser, a survey of educational diagnostics was applied, i.e. the analysis of structured and non-structured students' reflections (in writing) inspired by a researcher. Selection of the reflection as a data accumulation method was determined by: a) study content aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser and its realisation process based on the concept for the development of critical thinking built on a versatile analysis of the phenomena and research-based conclusions and arguments; whereas the educative activity is treated as a constituent part of the process, outcome, planning and evaluation. Reflection is identified as an axis of critical thinking embracing the meaning of individual thoughts and doubts concerning concepts and common sense (Gudžinskienė, 2006; Watkins, 2005); b) the essence of the reflection method directed toward a con-

tinuous reflection of own activity before, during and after the activity. Reflection means looking back to what has happened and reflecting on what was understood. The more a trainee reflects the better he/she knows how to critically and objectively assess own and other people's experience (Repo-Kaarento, 2008; Pollard, 2002; Schon, 1983, 1987).

The data of the research was accumulated during the period of four study semesters. Structured and non-structured methods of reflection were designed both for a qualitative analysis of a performed task and for a self-analysis of the learning process and its results, and the record of personal qualitative changes.

Written texts of respondents who participated in all four semesters were selected for the analysis; therefore the survey sample included 21 respondents (students of the social pedagogy study programme) who have selected a free-chosen study content aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser.

The result analysis was performed by applying the method of content analysis. In order to have an objective qualitative analysis and reliable results, reflection analysis was carried out in two directions: by analysing students' attitude toward the current, acquired skills and by revealing students' attitude toward missing skills and skills which have to be upgraded.

During the qualitative analysis of the research data six notional categories were highlighted through the content analysis method. They consisted of 13 sub-categories revealing the attitude of respondents toward current and/or acquired skills as well as the skills which have to be upgraded. The table below presents categories and sub-categories, as well as their expression during each semester. A positive mark means relatively positive, minus—relatively negative opinion of the acquired skills. Zero means that statements attributed to sub-category are not recorded (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the reflection analysis from the point of view of the current and acquired competences: categories and sub-categories

No	Category	Sub-category	Semesters			
			I	II	III	IV
1.	Social-communication skills	Skills of communication and cooperation with colleagues and social partners	0	+	+	+ -
2.	Research skills	Research planning and execution skills	0	0	+	+
3.	Reflection skills	Reflection and evaluation skills	0	0	+	+
		Self-analysis and self-evaluation skills	0	0	+	+
4.	Skills of effective activity	Activity planning skills	+	+ -	0	+
5.	Skills of provision of social pedagogical assistance	Client communication and contact making skills	0	+	+	+
		Social problems analysis and management skills	0	-	-	+
		Skills for individual work with the child	0	+ -	+	+
		Knowledge of common principles for provision of social pedagogical assistance	0	+	+	+
		Skills for work with parents	0	0	0	-
6.	Vocational guidance skills	Vocational information skills	0	+	+	+
		Vocational counselling skills	0	0	+	+
		Development of career planning skills	0	0	0	+

According to the analysis of research results, communication and cooperation skills were highlighted by the majority of students in the reflections written during the 2nd-4th semesters (*I'm able to work, adjust and integrate in the group; I'm able to cooperate with teachers, class tutors, partners, other institutions and their specialists; I can cooperate with various age, character and attitude people*). In the reflection of the fourth semester respondents highlighted trans-institutional cooperation skills and identified them both as available (*I know what specialists and what institutions should be involved...; Other institutions should be involved into activity*) and improvable (*I don't know how to organise trans-institutional cooperation...; It would be difficult to motivate partners to take part in the activity; I don't know how many, which partners and what they must do...*).

Research skills were identified only in the reflections of the 3rd-4th semester. As available students specified their ability to plan and execute research and to analyse its results (*I'm able to analyse, evaluate and observe; I can investigate situation and needs, i.e. I can carry out various social research activities, as well as process the data and present it to community; I can analyse situation in the community, to compare the obtained information with the already available facts, including preparation of conclusions*).

Students identified reflection and evaluation skills as available and didn't go into details (*I can evaluate own work, these skills will be very useful at the beginning of my career; My ability to analyse own work will help me a lot; I know how to compile a file of competences, it'll help me both to evaluate and analyse own professional activity*). Availability of self-analysis and self-assessment skills is reflected both through a declarative context (*I can analyse myself; I can carry out self-assessment; self-assessment skills will help me in the future*) and the evaluation aspect, which is usually related to certain doubts and/or lack or self-confidence (*I lack confidence <...> no one can instantly evaluate my knowledge and skills; I doubt on whether I'll be able, I lack confidence and I'm not sure on whether my ideas are appropriate*).

In students' reflections operational planning skills are identified by considering some specific actions (*I'll start from the acquaintance and speak with my colleagues what has been done before; I'll ask them what they liked and disliked and what they would like to change*), are specified as a capacity to change the operational plan (*I can prepare an operational plan according to the needs of a target group; I know how to plan operational proceedings and how to elaborate plans; I'll be able to prepare operational plans*). Students identified time allocation skills as the skills which have to be upgraded (*I lack skills on how to properly allocate time and arrange agenda; I'm not sure if I have sense of time...I spend too much time on details and don't have sense of time; I'm afraid that I'll plan time and set priorities incorrectly*).

During the analysis of research results, students' reflection statements specifying the skills related to functional-cognitive (inter-disciplinary) competences of a social educator as a vocational adviser were attributed to the category of skills for provision of the following social pedagogical assistance: communication with a client, contact making, the analysis of social problems, decision-making, the knowledge of common principles for provision of social pedagogical assistance, individual work with a child and work with parents.

The analysis of research results from the point of view of the knowledge of principles in providing social pedagogical assistance, revealed the following skills: observation of the principles of the counselling ethics (*to ensure confidentiality of information of every counselled client*), management of the counselling process (*I am able <...> to return to the essence of conversation when client departs from the main subject; If client asks a discreditable question, I am able to avoid it with tact or conceal and concentrate his/her attention to the main subject*), organisation of the counselling process (*I know many various methods aimed at dealing with different problems; I am aware of responsibilities of a social educator during the counselling process*).

It was defined that majority of students identified communication with clients or contact making skills as available/acquired. It should be highlighted that students substantiated availability of the above skills by providing personal examples (*I found common language with the counselled pupils. We look for possible solutions together and try to solve various problems; <...> we started from a simple conversation on how he was doing, what he liked, how things were at school...Were attracted by Internet sources*).

As available respondents identified skills of individual assistance to the child and related them with individual counselling skills (*I'll certainly be able to provide counselling; I could provide individual counselling on various issues; My strengths <...> individual counselling, individual work with the child; Individual counselling was a success*). Such an evaluation of the analysed skills is related to the main study subjects learnt during the study process.

Respondents' attitude toward the skills for work with parents was recorded only in the reflections of 4th semester, where these skills were identified as missing or to be upgraded (*the most complicated problem is work with parents in solving children's problems; there is lack of knowledge and skills for work with and involvement of parents <...>; Although I manage to work with children both individually and in groups, I have no knowledge on how to deal with their parents*).

Skills for provision of services related to upgrading vocational information, vocational counselling and career planning skills were attributed to the category of vocational guidance skills.

It was defined that in the reflections of 2nd semester vocational information skills were identified as a certain vocational information activity which, according to students, can be performed efficiently (*I'd provide relevant information to a client on learning opportunities, employment possibilities and other relevant issues; I'd inform clients on the assistance of other specialists; I have information on*

marketable jobs, employment opportunities, studies, job descriptions (CV) etc.). In the reflections of 3rd-4th semesters availability of these skills is substantiated by personal examples (*Suggested to visit the Fair of Studies, advised where to look for relevant information in Internet; Provided information on study programmes, universities, colleges*).

Informants' attitude toward vocational counselling skills was recorded only in the reflections of 3rd semester (internship diaries) (*We tried to make them identify their favourite subjects and explain why they found them so interesting; which part they liked most: content, forms or a teacher; During the first meeting they were especially negative toward colleges and vocational schools, we were ready to proceed counselling on this subject in order to mitigate negative preconceived notions*).

The attitude toward career design skills was revealed in the reflections of 4th semester, and, differently from vocational information and vocational counselling skills, these skills were identified in a declarative form (*I can organise and conduct career planning lectures, group sessions, e.g. sessions on the development of social skills, career planning etc.; I'll make a suggestion to establish own career file for the accumulation of information about personal activities, skills, wishes, opportunities*).

Conclusions

1. Theoretical model of social pedagogy study programmes aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser is complex and includes the provisions for preparing the specialists of such social sciences fields as psychology, social work and educology, and is directed toward operational provisions of specialists providing social pedagogical assistance.

2. The social pedagogical programme aimed at developing competences of a vocational adviser is directed toward the interaction of competences of a social educator and vocational adviser which ensures the development of general and functional competences and the acquisition of new special functional competences providing for training a professional specialist within the vocational guidance system.

3. According to research results, variation in the results of self-assessment of competences of a social educator as a vocational adviser is related to the development of students' self-assessment and reflection skills. The following competences were identified by students as acquired or upgraded during the study process: research, reflection and effective operational competences, that were attributed to the group of general competences; functional-cognitive competences necessary for provision of social pedagogical assistance;

4. The skills related to work with parents and inter-institutional cooperation skills were identified as to be upgraded.

5. The study process based on a constant reflection and self-assessment gives an opportunity for students to control their own learning process.

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SOCIALINĖS PEDAGOGIKOS STUDIJŲ STUDENTŲ POŽIŪRIS Į PROFESIJOS PATARĖJO KOMPETENCIJŲ ĮGIJIMĄ

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Santrauka

Vienas svarbiausių Lietuvos švietimo siekių – padėti asmeniui ir visuomenei atsakyti į esminius dabarties iššūkius, padėti kuo plačiau pasinaudoti atsiveriančiomis galimybėmis. Pastaraisiais metais orientacija į kompetencijomis grįstą ugdymą tapo esminis švietimo sistemos kaitos akcentas: Lietuvos ir Europos Sąjungos strateginiuose švietimo dokumentuose pabrėžiamas perėjimas nuo žinių perteikimo prie kompetencijų plėtojimo. Vienas esminių aukštojo mokslo kaitos uždavinių yra studijų turinio ir metodų atnaujinimas, orientuotas į besimokantįjį, jo poreikius bei gebėjimus, atliepiančius veiklos pasaulio poreikius. Vienas veiksmingiausių būdų užtikrinti studijų kokybę yra studijų programų orientacija į kompetencijomis grįstą modelį (Bolonijos deklaracija, Berlyno ir Bergeno komunikatai). Nepaisant pastarųjų metų Lietuvos mokslininkų (G. Kvieskienė, 2005; I. Jonutyte, 2007; L. Rupšienė, 2006; E. Giedraitienė, 2006; D. Alifanovienė, 2005, V. Indrašienė, 2008 ir kt.), tyrinėjusių socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos specialistų kompetencijas ir jų ugdymą, tyrimų gausos, pasigendama tyrimų, analizuojančių profesinio orientavimo paslaugų teikėjų kompetencijas ir jų ugdymo aspektus. Straipsnio tikslas – išnagrinėti profesijos patarėjo kompetencijų ugdymui skirtą studijų turinio socialinės pedagogikos studijų programoje modeliavimo prielaidas ir reflekyvią patirtį. Straipsnyje pagrindžiamas profesijos patarėjo kompetencijų ugdymui skirtą studijų turinio socialinės pedagogikos studijų programoje modelis bei analizuojamas studentų požiūris į studijuojant įgyjamas profesijos patarėjo kompetencijas. Tyrimu atskleista, kad socialinio pedagogo kaip profesijos patarėjo kompetencijų įsivertinimo rezultatų kaita susijusi su studentų savęs vertinimo ir reflektavimo gebėjimų tobulėjimu. Bendrųjų kompetencijų grupei priskiriamas tiriamosios veiklos, reflektavimo ir efektyviosios veiklos kompetencijas bei socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimui būtinas funkcinės pažintines kompetencijas studentai vertina kaip įgytas arba patobulintas studijų proceso metu. Studijų procesas grindžiamas nuolatine refleksija ir savęs vertinimu, leidžiančiais fiksuoti besimokančiojo kompetencijų pasiekimo, kritinio mąstymo ir reflektavimo gebėjimų kaitą viso studijų proceso metu, užtikrina galimybę besimokančiajam aktyviai kontroliuoti savo mokymosi procesą.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kompetencija, socialinis pedagogas, profesinis orientavimas, profesijos patarėjas, refleksija.