

UNIVERSITY AND/OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL – WHEN AND WHY?

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Abstract

Since 2013, the university degree is free for everyone in Estonia. Vocational education has always been for free. University degrees have been valued as more academical, and vocational education because of the practical skills gained. There is a new trend in Estonia to enter into a vocational school after the university degree; and/or after one vocational education in to another vocational school. Study eagerness is always nice, but the question here is about the reason(s) – is this kind of behaviour rather the sign of lifelong learning, or of wrong choices? In this question the research problem is included also – in case of wrong choices the waste of resources can be considered (from the point of view of society).

In 2016, the National Audit Office of Estonia studied the progress of adults aged 25 and over, who had started acquiring vocational education (from 2010/2011 to 2014/2015 academic years) before and during their studies, and in working life after the completion of their studies. The focus was on adults, because the decreasing number of young people in the state means that adults are and will remain an important target group for vocational education. The aim of this research is to analyze the background of the fact that many adults in Estonia with vocational education (36%) or higher education (20%) have started acquiring vocational education alongside adults without any professional education (44%). The subjects/respondents of this research were people who decided to influence the quality of their life through education. The object of the research were scholars' opinions about the type of education.

In this research I focus on the opinion of students about university and/or vocational education. As an illustration, I discuss one case study of a highly educated person with two master degrees, who is going to start studying in a vocational school. The research question: which background impulses influence the choice of educational institution? The methodology of this research was qualitative (based on the small sample of respondents); the research method was a content analysis of scholars opinions, and of the case study.

Keywords: university; vocational education; pro-social behaviour.

Introduction

The National Audit Office of Estonia studied the progress of adults aged 25 and over, who had started acquiring vocational education in 2010/11 to 2014/15 academic years before and during their studies, and in their working lives after the completion of their studies. The focus was on adults, because the decreasing number of young people means that adults are and will remain an important target group for vocational education. (Mattson, 2016). In Estonia going to vocational school after graduating an university is a popular trend for about ten years. According to research in 2013, the number of students with an university degree in vocational education increased 36% compared to the school year 2009/2010 (Heinask, 2013).

The **aim of research** is to analyze the reasons for the re-study. According to an audit, many adults in Estonia with vocational education (36%), or higher education (20%) have started acquiring vocational education alongside adults without any professional education (44%) (Mattson, 2016, 1). Study eagerness is always nice, but the question here is about the reasons – is this kind of behaviour rather the sign of lifelong learning, or of wrong choices? In this question **the research problem** is included – in case of wrong choices the waste of resources is possible (at least from the point of the society). **The subjects/respondents** of this research were people who decided to influence the quality of their life through education. **The object** of research was scholars' opinions about the type of education.

According to the National Audit Office of Estonia, there are more women than men with previously acquired vocational or higher education. The larger proportion of women with higher education is particularly noticeable: 24% of the women who started acquiring vocational education in the reviewed period had completed a higher education degree, while for men the same amount was 15%. The younger the age group, the smaller the proportion of people without professional or vocational education, and the larger the share of people with higher education: 23% of entrants aged 25-34, 20% of entrants aged 35-49, and 17% of entrants aged over 50 had higher education (Mattson, 2016, 1). Re-studying or new beginnings can be considered as lifelong learning, quite important in Estonia: partly because this is the trend in the developed world more widely, and partly because of the relatively long lifetime of Estonians: according to the Statistical Office of Estonia the expected duration of life in 2015 for women was 81,8 and for men 73,1 years. (In 1995, the expected lifetime for women was 72,8 and for men only 60,5 years.) During the last 5 years, the expected lifetime in Estonia for men has increased 2,2 and for women

1,3 years (Statistikaamet, 2016). Longer life might also mean more working years, at least it gives extra time and readiness to study a new profession (if needed) – particularly as the age of retirement increases in Estonia continuously.

In Estonia there is the Lifelong Learning Strategy (Haridusministeerium, 2014), which guides the most important developments in the area of education for the years 2014-2020. The aim of this strategy is to provide all people in Estonia with learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs and capabilities throughout their whole lifespan, in order for them to maximize opportunities for dignified self-actualization within society, in their work as well as in their family life (Haridusministeerium, 2014). The objective set in the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 is to reduce the share of people without professional or vocational education in the 25-64 age group to less than 25% by 2020. In 2014, this figure was 30,2% (Mattson, 2016, 1). For the State it probably could be better to get many people at least with one diploma than part of people with many professions. But from social pedagogical point of view every personal action in context of improving the quality of life is excellent. According to T. Mattson (2016), the general positive impact of vocational training was evident in the case of people without professional or vocational education, as well as people who had already acquired vocational or higher education. Those with higher education were less likely to be unemployed after graduating, while adults with vocational education had better changes of improving their salary positions. In comparison with other groups, graduates with higher education had been considerably more engaged in enterprise before the commencement of their studies, and the number who started engaging in enterprise after graduating was also higher than that of people without prior professional or vocational education (Mattson, 2016, 2).

1. Theoretical background

In the past (especially during the Soviet time), the image of vocational schools in Estonia was not as good as that of the academic university degrees; teachers in general education schools used to direct students, who performed badly at school, in to vocational schools. However, since becoming a member state of the EU, and thus receiving financial support from the EU budget, vocational schools in Estonia are being renovated: the facilities and the content of the curriculum have changed. This has improved the general attitude in the society: vocational education in Estonia can not be considered as the 'last change for bad boys' anymore. In many areas of the labour market, a diploma from a vocational school has become more valued than that of universities (Nestor & Nurmela, 2013, 28). This is likely to be one of the reasons behind the trend to enter into the vocational education after university degree(s). According to H. W. Bierhoff (2002), the studying is a pro-social behaviour as part of social competence: pro-social behaviour seems to exert a positive influence on intellectual capacity, which is positively related to well-being (Bierhoff, 2002, 228).

1.1. From education till well-being

In the small country of Estonia, with only 1,3 million inhabitants, education has always been important. According to the statistics of Eurostat, 43,7% of all inhabitants in Estonia has higher education (BNS 11.04.2014). Education is the best way to get a proper standard of life, or, at least, a realistic hope for that. But a diploma alone is not enough for a happy life. According to A. Realo (2013) the continued growth of Estonia's GDP that started in 2010, has not been accompanied by an increase in the satisfaction among Estonia's population. One reason probably lies in the fact that, starting in 2007, the costs of the largest items of expenditure in Estonia, i.e. the costs of housing and food, have increased considerably faster than the average wages. Estonia continues to be positioned in the group of the former Soviet Republics and African countries, where the percentage of people that stress post-materialistic values are 5% or even less (Realo, 2013, 55). And this percentage has not notably changed during the last 20 years. Furthermore, during the last 20 years, the number of people in Estonia who would not sign a protest under any circumstances has doubled, reaching 57% in 2011 (Realo, 2013,56). Based on R. Inglehart and C. Welzel's theory of cultural change, the later speaks to the importance of survival values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, 121; Realo 2013, 56).

Going to school helps to survive: if one experiences challenges in the labour market with an university diploma, adaptable individuals are prepared to enter the vocational school, if needed. Social benefits in East-European countries are not high, which means: escaping from a poor quality of life depends on the people themselves (as the state only takes a minimal responsibility). According to K. Kerem and K. Pöder (2013), the three Baltic States Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are in an unique position, having extremely low social insurance scores and, as far as the risks related to the labour market are concerned, are more similar to such liberal welfare states like Ireland and Great Britain. In addition, the historical context of the post-communist states enabled them to build their welfare states based on solidarity, social dialogue and a striving towards greater equality. Thus, it can be asked, are they welfare states after all? (Kerem & Pöder, 2013, 111). In this context the personal initiative must be considered especially important: studying and re-studying are important steps to improve the quality of life.

1.2. Education as a pro-social activity

According to World Happiness Report 2018, Estonian position in the list is 72; Lithuania has a better position: 60; but Latvia locates on the place 106 (Kressa, 2018, 2). Estonia is similar to the majority of new EU member states, which are characterised by lower social expenditures as well as lower levels of satisfaction than that of 'old-Europe'. Estonia is sadly positioned at the lower end of the case countries – with very limited welfare state and minimal prosocial behavior (Kerem & Pöder 2013, 112). Here the concept 'prosocial' can be defined differently – the simplest is to understand it as activity to avoid social problems. According to D. Clarke, the basic of pro-social behaviour is just a help (Clarke, 2003, 2). Also a self-help can be considered as a pro-social activity – for example, starting

a new study-project for getting a better job. According to H.W. Bierhoff, the studying is a pro-social behaviour as part of social competence (Bierhoff 2002, 228). Everything starts from the idea or from a dream about the future. As an example, dreaming about a wellbeing provides motivation (to study, for example), influences behaviour (to go to the school, for example), and the result might be a better life (or at least the feeling of being in the right place). In this context S. A. Webb stresses the concept of 'life planning' (Webb, 2006, 94), which also becomes an important activity: such life planning is thought to offer us the best security against the failures we are likely to experience in trying to come to terms with a complex world. It requires that we assign overarching principles to our daily activities, in other words - the life is something that we regulate ourselves according to a plan. Such life planning is thought to offer us the best security against the failures we are likely to experience in trying to come to terms with a complex world. (Webb, 2006, 94). He continues: the personal security comes about through foresight, self-control and individual responsibility. Life-plans are forms of reflexive governance in the face of risk or what A. Giddens calls 'manufactured uncertainty'. Since many aspects of our lives have suddenly become open, they are organized in terms of 'scenario thinking'. Plans are attempts to domesticate them in order to grant us some security of being able to predict and control future events. In securing ourselves, one wishes for assurances against surprises, against an open and an uncertain future (Webb, 2006, 95). One example about scenario thinking against manufactured uncertainty is social pedagogy. According to J. Hämäläinen (2012), pedagogical activities for preventing social exclusion and promoting active citizenship are closely linked (Hämäläinen, 2012, 13). This is the point where pedagogy meets humanistic social pedagogy; and where life-plans help to stay active for coping difficulties in life.

In Estonia the Lifelong Learning Strategy until 2020 (Haridusministeerium, 2014) guides peoples life-plans through the education. Pro-social in this context means self-empowerment also: one must not wait for something from somebody, but just to start to act. The concept of 'scenario thinking' to achieve a 'better' life is also suitable in the context of the empirical case study discussed here. In Estonia we use to say: *at first one has to help him- or herself, only then the God will help too*; and we also have a sentence: *the intensive start is half of results*. People in Estonia tend to be goal-oriented and self-oriented. This might be considered as a sign of individualism (Leino, 2015). According to G. Hofstede (2013), Estonia is an individualistic country: among Estonians, there is a solid conviction about the personal responsibility and everybody's own achievement and contribution in order to be self-fulfilled. Achievement is reflected directly on the personal responsibility (Hofstede, 2013). Individualists don't count much on networking or the collective - if they want to open a new chapter in the life, individualists rather begin to study a new profession: after getting the right diploma, they will enter into the new field as members with full rights. So - studying is popular, important, and considered like a lifesaver.

It is well-known fact that life in the 21st century is unpredictable everywhere in the world: the only certainty is continuing uncertainty. Flexibility helps to cope, and it is always better to lead a life rather than to be led by it. This idea is central in social pedagogy also. For

example: in case of problems people should not just wait for a better future, but start to act themselves. Sometimes some kind of empowerment is needed, but mostly the information about the possibilities is good enough for new beginners. As next, the case of Mrs Nora illustrates one possible journey from university to vocational school. This story gives us some background information about the reasons for choosing the educational institution.

2. Research methodology

In this research I focus on the opinion of university students about the type of education. As an illustration I also discuss one case study of a highly educated person with two master degrees, who is going to start studying in a vocational school. The **research question** is formulated about reason(s): which background impulses influence the choice of educational institution? The **methodology** of this research was qualitative (about the small sample). For this article I collected the empirical data from **two different researches**: the first one was the **case study** about the highly educated person with two master degrees, who was going to start studying in a vocational school. I interviewed her before she left the job at one university in Estonia. She agreed to share her thoughts and feelings, because she was proud of her decision/solution. In this article the anonymity of her is guaranteed – as this is an ethical way to handle the personal information.

According to Yin, compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a “case” within its “real-life” context (Yin, 2006, 111). To be exact, in my research I collected the data about the specific case with thematic interview. **The procedure** concluded two meetings: at first we met at university to fix the idea of the research and the time for the interview; and then we met again for the interview (which lasted about two hours). I didn't tape the conversation, but wrote the answers, using part of them in this article.

The **research strategy** was to move from a particular case study till the general opinion of the younger generation. As the case study was kind of ‘turning back’ to a lower educational level, I was interested in opinion of university students about the possible alternatives before and/or after the academical higher education: what kind of image is connected with a specific level. In the spring of 2017, 39 students from the first and second year of the bachelor program at the Tallinn University social work department, wrote their answers to the question: *Why university and not a vocational school?* The methodology was qualitative, and the method of analysing the texts was **content analysis**.

I divided answers according to the main message of writings of students. The sampling procedure of empirical data was connected with the regular teaching environment: at the end of a seminar at the university (where we discussed about the educational background of survival problems), I asked students to share anonymously their opinion about academical and/or vocational education. Participants of research were aware, that the aim of this activity was to collect a data for the article – students were glad about the possibility to participate in the process and took the task seriously. The ethic of the research is guaranteed through anonymity and openness: participants were aware where and why the results will be used.

The reason to focus especially on the students from university is the fact, that the situation in vocational education in Estonia is analysed already (Espenberg, Beilmann, Rahn, Reincke and Themas, 2012; Leino, 2015; Mattson, 2016). According to the survey of Tartu University (done as an input to the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, for the development of the vocational education system), many (especially younger) students in vocational training place low value on studying, education and teachers (Espenberg et al., 2012, 8-11). According to my point of view, it reminds the Soviet time, where university degree was valued as more academical, and vocational education because of the practical skills gained – obviously still for many students the main reason to choose the vocational school is the low level of marks in general education. So there was no particular motive to analyse the impulses to enter into the vocational training right after the general education. Interesting (at least for me) and important (for society) is to investigate the new trend to study for a second profession after academical higher education.

3. Research results

At first I discuss one case study of a highly educated person with two master degrees, who is going to start studying in a vocational school. Then I'll focus on the opinion of students about university and/or vocational education.

3.1. The case of Mrs Nora

Mrs Nora has two masters degrees: the first she got during the Soviet time from a famous university of Estonia. After five years studying hard she graduated as a linguist of Estonian language. She got her next degree about ten years after the first one, as a teacher of children with special needs. Now she is 52 years old and works at a university in Tallinn for almost 17 years already. Her main responsibility is to organize the student- internships. She likes the university because of the intelligent work environment and the relative freedom (there is no need to sit at the office from 9 – 17 every day). The salary is small, but fixed and safe.

In her heart Nora was prepared to work for this university until her retirement, for another 13 years. Maybe even longer, because the pension is not big enough to cope, and in Estonia there is no law restricting the highest age of working: one can keep the workplace as long as s/he is able to work. But now Nora's plans had changed, and not because of her personal reasons.

This curriculum at the university, where Nora is involved, did not achieve the long-term international accreditation; and her job is therefore only guaranteed for three more years. There is still the possibility that within the next three years the curriculum will be fit again and the long-term accreditation will be achieved. But – you never know for sure. In three years Nora will be 55 already, and every year it will be harder to start a new chapter of life. At least it would be easier to change something three years earlier. As the age of getting a pension in Estonia is 65, Nora doesn't want to risk of being unemployed for ten years before the retirement as the unemployment-money is insufficient to cope and also only very

temporary. So, Nora started to think about alternatives. Being an introvert, she actually hates change, but in this case that is almost obligatory, and she would prefer to change the life completely. Especially with the encouragement and support of the family.

Nora likes to work in the garden, and she is also keen on handicraft. She now decided to get a vocational education in context of her hobbies. At the moment she has two ideas about the future – whether to study gardening or handicraft. During the vocational education, she can keep all her social benefits (e.g. medical insurance), which is very important in Estonia. It is not an easy decision to leave the work place and start something totally different, particularly at her age, but it also could be a nice possibility to have more time for hobbies. The vocational school for handicraft is located near Nora's home. The school of gardening is in a small village far away. This helps to make the decision: Nora will study handicraft in a vocational school near her home.

I asked Nora, whether she is sad because of the 'wasted' time spent to gain two masters degrees and a long working experience. Nora's answer was 'no' – she is not sad, because it is always interesting to study, especially something related to a hobby. Furthermore, in the future she might get the opportunity to teach handicraft at any ordinary school (in the Estonian general education system, handicraft is an obligatory subject for all students). She could then put together her education/diplomas, and there is no 'wasted time' at all. Being good in handicraft, Nora can also sell the items she makes with her hands – for example as an entrepreneur. And she can organize courses by herself on her favorite topics. I asked how might it feel to be the oldest student in the class. Nora answered, that she already checked this vocational school where she is going to study, and the oldest student last year was a 62 year old man. Therefore, she might not be the oldest one in her class. Nora also said that making the decision was not easy (as an introvert, she does not need any extra adrenaline), but after the decision was made, she felt peace in her soul – it is nice to experience something new, especially if it is connected to the hobbies. „Better act now than to be sorry later“, Nora emphasised.

The case of Nora is an illustration of 'manufactured uncertainty'. Her previous education was not a wrong choice; the need to change something is rather a sign of an unpredictable life. Nora knows, that in the 21st century workplaces are not 'for ever' anymore. This is the reason why she reacts to changes so peacefully.

It is better to be flexible and to be ready to start over and over again, especially when the expected lifetime is longer than ever before. Only then one gets a long life full of opportunities. There is another nice concept about flexibility, too: 'resilience', a skill to be happy about everything what happens in the life, even events that are unexpected. According to studies, the primary factor of resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models and offer encouragement and reassurance that help bolster a person's resilience. Several additional factors are associated with resilience, including: the capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out; a positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities; skills in communication and problem solving; the capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses. All of these are factors that people can develop in themselves (Constantine, Benard, Diaz, 1999, 8; see also: Factors of resilience).

Nora is a wise and well educated woman. At her age, it is never easy to start from the very beginning (even if she looks pleased). Nora made a rational choice about her subjective strengths, which probably is the best solution to her problem. According to S. A. Webb (2006, 29), the tension between rationalisation and subjectivation can be characterised as a boundary between, on the one hand, society's bid for self-completion through rationalisation, and on the other hand, the individual's drive for actualisation through the trajectory of self-identity (Webb, 2006, 29). Luckily Nora lives near the vocational school where she can study exactly what she wants – a perfect match that doesn't happen very often. In many unemployment-cases this is probably not such an easy arrangement. Which also means, that subjective flexibility and/or resilience requires objective support. It is easier to start a new chapter of life from one's current home. Nora's new job will be connected with her hobby, but working as an activity for her is not the hobby, as the unemployment benefit in Estonia is not enough for coping. Furthermore, even the salaries are small, which is one reason for high survival-values in this country. Thus, the main reason for starting a new chapter of life is the need to survive, not a romantic dream about self-fulfillment.

3.2. Opinions of university students: Why an university and not a vocational school?

In the spring of 2017, 39 students from the first and second year of the bachelor program at the Tallinn University Social work department, wrote their answers to the question: **Why university and not a vocational school?** Answers can be divided into three main groups:

- a) For 13 students, vocational education is not worse, but the profession they are interested in is not represented at any vocational school. This group I'd call *'focused professionals'*.
- b) For 12 students, a university degree enables to apply for positions with a higher salary and to pursue a better career in the labour market. This group I'd call *'pragmatic utilitarians'*.
- c) For 11 students, the university education provides a deeper and also broader knowledge. This group I'd call *'universal wisdoms'*.
- d) Varia (3 students).

As next some examples from each group, with comments.

- a) ***"University-degree is not better, but the profession I am interested in is not represented at any vocational school"***.

A typical explanations from this group was:

"It is not possible to study social work at any vocational school in Estonia".

"At Tallinn University, students can compose their personal study plan and schedule themselves, which enables them to work to earn money simultaneously, and also to visit the sports hall".

This is an insightful comment. First the attitude: for this student vocational school is not bad. He/she would be prepared to get the vocational education, but technically this just is not possible in Estonia in social work field. It is also important to stress the flexibility of the curriculum: this student did not mention the higher academical prestige of universities in society, probably this is not as important for her. She likes the possibility to create the individual study plan, which helps to live both a private life and to work for a living.

This particular student seems to be a typical presenter of the Generation Y: the Millennials, who are generally the children of baby boomers. Studies show nearly one-third of students' top priority (from this generation) is to "balance personal and professional life" (Pärna 2013).

b) Better opportunities in the labour market

From this group typical answers were:

"I prefer the university degree, because it will give more possibilities in the labour market in the future. From vocational school, I could have only one profession, which means that during the rest of my life I should work in this field".

"The university is better, because people with this kind of degree receive a higher salary in the future".

"University is better because I want a broader education and to continue my studies. University subjects are more specific and in the future, it will be easier to enter into the labour market with bachelor AND master degrees".

Talking about values, one may have in mind either beliefs concerning the desirable modes of conduct or desirable end-states of existence (Leino, 2009, 249). Rokeach refers to those two kinds of values as instrumental and terminal values. There are two kinds of terminal values: personal and social; and two kinds of instrumental values: moral and competence values. One terminal value might be instrumental to another terminal value, or one instrumental value can be instrumental to another instrumental value (Rokeach, 1973, 7-8, 12). According to A. Realo (2013), the latest data in Estonia from 2011 indicates that all generations (except one) support self-expressive values more than the previous generation. The exception is the generation of "free Estonia's" children, who were born in the early 1990s, and whose values are moving back to a greater emphasis on survival, or to less political activism, less trust and less tolerance than the previous two generations (Realo, 2013, 57).

c) Deeper knowledges

From this group typical answers were:

"I think university education is meant for those who are eager to understand the world broader and more theoretically, and philosophically too".

"A university degree gives more academical knowledge than the vocational school. There is always a possibility to get practical skills also while working, but if one has a broader academical foundation, it is easier to understand the essence of the world".

"In universities, the teaching is more efficient and specific".

"It seems that curriculums in vocational schools are much easier".

Those students want to be academically wise, they are eager to understand the world. And they probably even want to work not only in Estonia, but in the whole world. They don't dream about an easy life: for example, the academically not very demanding curriculum is considered as a negative aspect of vocational schools. University teachers, of course, are happy about students that study hard.

According to researchers (Realo, 2013, 50), the socioeconomic development of a society increases people's autonomy, creativity and freedom of choice through three important mechanisms:

- 1) socioeconomic development increases people's sense of material security, through which the impact of material limitations of people's choices and decisions is reduced;
- 2) the increase in the educational level increases the people's intellectual independence;
- 3) greater specialisation in the division of labour as well as the reduction in the importance of traditional social relations and roles increase the people's social autonomy – it is possible for people to create new social relations based on their own desires and needs, and not based on *prescribed and strictly defined roles* (Realo, 2013, 50).

d) *Varia*

In this group three specific answers are in focus:

“The university degree is good for those who don't know what to do with their life”.

“An education from university is better because one doesn't have to work in this field”.

“The prestige of a university is higher, and there are more interesting persons in universities”.

University can obviously also be as a social institution for a longer childhood. Vocational school is 'too' practical and directly focussed on the profession, but with the university there is a possibility to 'just to go'. After graduation one even does not have to work in this field. At least for one student in the study the university-education is important because of the company: students in an academical institution are obviously different than in practically oriented vocational school. Friends from school years (including higher education) will stay with you until the end of your life, which makes this motive quite important and long lasting.

There also were three students in this class with the experience of vocational education already; and one who is going to enter into it after the university degree.

“I already graduated from vocational school, but wanted to get higher and further. One reason why I am in university now is that I didn't find a suitable job, and I decided to continue to study: education is always useful”.

“Instead of going to a gymnasium I studied in a vocational school – because I wanted to be a musician. So, I don't prefer the university to vocational education. Rather the reason for studying here is that the university degree has more value in the world. But I am very sure that finally everything depends on the individual wisdom of each person”.

“I value vocational education very much and after obtaining the university degree, I am prepared to enter a vocational school”.

“After the gymnasium, I wanted to go into the police academy, but I failed the physical tests because I was seriously ill right before it. I didn’t want to waste a year at home and so I chose the social work curriculum, with which I am really happy. Earlier I even didn’t consider myself going to an university....”

Obviously the role of practical/occasional reasons to choose one or another higher school is significant. About 1/5 of students added to their answer, that vocational schools are very important, and hold a strong and secure position next to universities. The question is not whether it is better or worse, but just about values and practical circumstances.

4. Discussion

The case of Mrs Nora demonstrates one reason for lifelong learning. Actually, every person has an unique story, which makes the creation of stereotypes impossible. In reality, nobody is constantly happy. It is told that feeling well is like the shape of the letter U – younger and older people are more pleased with their lives. According to K. Kasearu and A. Trumm (2015, 28), middle age people are more critical about their life conditions. Obviously this is one more impulse to start studying once again to obtain a new profession (especially in middle age). T. Mattson (2016) indicates, that the vocational training has an extensive positive impact: adults who graduate from vocational schools achieve better results on the labour market than they did before acquiring vocational education. Vocational education helps to increase people’s income, promote their involvement in enterprise and reduce unemployment, including among people with higher education. (Mattson, 2016, 2).

According to A. Realo (2013), Estonians’ position on the map of the world values has not notably changed, compared to 1999. In 2011, compared to the people of other countries, Estonia’s population still considered secular-rational values to be more important, while also placing greater emphasis on survival rather than self-expressive values. The increase in trust, well-being and tolerance among Estonian’s residents during the last decades provides evidence of a small shift in the direction of self-expressive values. Estonia’s socioeconomic development has not been sufficient, to date, to ensure its population a material and physical sense of security, and thereby also the emergence of stronger post-materialistic values. There are a number of studies which show that a significant shift towards hedonistic as well as post-modern or Western values took place during the transition period. But, regardless of the growth of these indicators, compared to the people in Scandinavia, for instance, Estonia’s residents continue to be considerably less trusting, less tolerant and less happy, and tend to place greater emphasis on fighting rising prices and maintaining order in the state than on the general freedom of speech and political participation (Realo, 2013, 56-67). This is quite logical in a state where unemployment-benefit doesn’t enable one to cope. And students who value university education mostly because of the financial security in the future, represent the group of survival values. A. Giddens (1991, 114) uses the concept ‘fateful moments’ which are times when individuals or families reach a crossroads in terms of their own life planning capacities (Giddens, 1991, 114). Since plans in late modernity are constantly revised due to the contingency of social life, individuals often resort to expert advice to help them (Webb, 2006, 94-95).

Conclusions

The aim of this research was to analyze the reasons for the fact, that many adults in Estonia with vocational education (36%), or higher education (20%) have started acquiring vocational education alongside adults without any professional education (44%) (Mattson 2016, 1). The question was about the reasons – is this kind of behaviour rather the sign of lifelong learning, or of wrong choices? According to the research, the type of higher education is not relevant: there are other background-factors influencing the decision – mostly social reasons. As the life in 21 century is becoming unpredictable, all people should be aware of possibilities to continue the life (despite of what ever happens) – whether with a new education or without it. The target group in this research were adults: students from university; and a highly educated lady who had to change the profession because of restructures in her workplace.

According to the research, the image of vocational education is good: some people come to the university just because the area of their interest was just not represented in vocational school. In social work and social pedagogy this knowledge should be used in everyday life. In case of (social) problems education (including vocational schools and/or change of profession) could be more advertised – I think, in all Baltic countries. This can be part of empowerment: education makes free and improves the quality of life. Studying as prosocial activity is one of the most effective tools. Lifelong education should be included into life-plans from the very beginning. According to Webb, the personal security comes about through foresight, self-control and individual responsibility. Life-plans are forms of reflexive governance in the face of risk or what Giddens calls ‘manufactured uncertainty’. Since many aspects of our lives have suddenly become open, they are organized in terms of ‘scenario thinking’. Plans are attempts to domesticate them in order to grant us some security of being able to predict and control future events. In securing ourselves, one wishes for assurances against surprises, against an open and an uncertain future (Webb 2006, 95).

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UNIVERSITETAS IR / ARBA PROFESINĖ MOKYKLA - KADA IR KODĖL?

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Santrauka

Estijoje pastebima nauja tendencija – universitetinių studijų absolventai renkasi tęsti studijas profesinio mokymo institucijoje ir / arba baigę vieną profesinio mokymo programą renkasi mokymąsi kitoje. Išsilavinimo siekis ir noras tobulėti visada teigiamai vertinamas reiškiny, tačiau kokios tokio pasirinkimo priežastys - ar toks elgesys byloja apie mokymąsi visą gyvenimą, ar netinkamą pasirinkimą? Šio straipsnio tikslas yra išanalizuoti, kodėl daugelis suaugusiųjų Estijoje turinčių profesinį išsilavinimą (36%) arba aukštąjį išsilavinimą (20%) pradėjo mokytis profesijos kartu su suaugusiais be profesinio išsilavinimo (44%).

Šiuo tikslu buvo surinkti dviejų skirtingų tyrimų empiriniai duomenys taikant kokybinę metodiką. Pirmasis tyrimas – asmens, turinčio du magistro laipsnius ir ketinančio pradėti mokymąsi profesinio mokymo institucijoje, atvejo analizė. Tyrimo strategija siekta pereiti nuo konkretaus atvejo tyrimo iki apibendrintos jaunosios kartos nuomonės. Todėl 2017 m. pavasarį 39 Talino universiteto Socialinio darbo instituto bakalauro studijų pirmojo ir antrojo kursų studentai atsakė į klausimą „Kodėl universitetas, o ne profesinė mokykla?“

Remiantis tyrimų rezultatais, nustatyta, kad viena ar kita aukštoji mokykla pasirenkama dėl praktinių ir/ar atsitiktinių priežasčių. Studentai savo atsakymuose pabrėžė, kad profesinio mokymo institucijos yra vertinamos kaip užimančios stiprią ir saugią poziciją šalia universitetų. Taigi, klausimas yra, ne ar tai yra geriau ar blogiau, bet tik apie vertybes ir praktines aplinkybes.

Analizuojant visą gyvenimą trunkantį mokymąsi, svarbu prisiminti faktą, kad pasitenkinimo gyvenimu jausmas yra tarsi raidės U forma - jaunesni ir vyresni žmonės yra labiau patenkinti savo gyvenimu, tuo tarpu vidutinio amžiaus žmonės labiau kritiškai vertina savo gyvenimą. Akivaizdu, kad tai dar vienas impulsas pradėti dar kartą mokytis įgyti naują profesiją (ypač vidutinio amžiaus periode).

Straipsnio autorės veikia universitete susijusi su socialinių darbuotojų ir socialinių pedagogų rengimu. Šiame kontekste pabrėžiama «įgalinimo» sąvoką: jei klientas nori keisti savo gyvenimą, socialinis darbuotojas ir/ar socialinis pedagogas turėtų suteikti greitą pro-socialinį impulsą. Net pasidalinimas informacija ar skatinimas yra naudinga. Remiantis atliktu tyrimu, išsilavinimo (aukštojo) tipas ne visada yra svarbus: yra ir kitų pamatinių veiksmų, turinčių įtakos sprendimui - daugiausia socialinės ir / ar psichologinės priežastys.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: aukštasis mokslas; profesinė mokykla; prosociali elgsena

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