

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

In this study the emphasis of selecting a school and profession is put onto the family role in educational and professional guidance in order to help the students to obtain the necessary information for further education, by the help of their parents, more efficiently and more functionally. The study was conducted in Virovitica and Podravina County with two groups of subjects and included 1.063 children—555 of them were eighth grade students of elementary school and 508 were first grade students of secondary school—and 1.063 student's parents.

The study was used to examine the hypothesis that family is a primary, unquestioned, and efficient factor for making choices of further education or occupation of their children, but at the same time insufficiently informed and concerned with other factors. With this study we wanted to test if the awareness of parents is the basis for making right choices of further education and choosing the appropriate school and occupation if it depends upon the information from various factors.

The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis that parents/family are irreplaceable as factors of educational and professional guidance. The parents are successful in carrying out these tasks only when they have enough information to pass on to their children in their process of making choices.

Key words: career choice, educational and occupational guidance, factor influence, family, occupational information.

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous occupations and jobs on job markets some of which are very similar while others differ in work fields, instruments, conditions, etc. Successful completion of an educational program accompanied by prosperous work are to be grounded in one's potential, wishes and interests on the one and job market needs on the other hand. In order to achieve that goal, children and their parents need to be provided with relevant pieces of information on available occupations. An educational program choice has so far proven to simultaneously be a future profession choice [7]. Furthermore, an occupation choice is a long-lasting process built upon an educational program choice. Therefore, in order to make the right decision, we need relevant information and a professional help in their interpretation. Undoubtedly, the most responsible role in a child's development is played by a family. A family supports a child's early development assisting a child in the choice of an educational program and a respective profession.

SOME VIEWS ON THE PHENOMENON OF FAMILY UPBRINGING AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Family is the "community of people, the smallest social cell, and as such a fundamental institution for the life of every society." It is based on love and marriage; it is a "community of love and life" [11]. It is a family where a child acquires his first social experiences and becomes aware of himself. He listens to reactions pertaining his behavior and finds understanding, help, protection and assurance. Therefore, the most important thing in a family is pure unconditional love that strengthens the relationship in the community.

From the standpoint of its upbringing function, a family is an educational community of parents and children characterized by joint housing and economic cooperation of its members based on love and emotions [12].

The Family Act issued by the Republic of Croatia [10] determines the parents' rights for effective child care. Pursuant to Article 95 of the Family Act, parents are bound to take care of the regular obligatory education of a child as well as to encourage the child to his further education. In upbringing, we consider socio-generational, individual and interactional-communicational aspects, therefore, we consider education as a phenomenon, process and an activity [1]. A family represents a bridge between an individual and a society; during one's childhood, a family protects a child from the environment simultaneously preparing a child to live in it. Hence, the family's central position makes it irreplaceable for both an individual and a society making its role complex and responsible [9].

Education is not a simple task indeed. It is a difficult, complex, demanding and unpredictable task [2], yet beautiful and noble. In its essence, it is a creative and unique act. Each and every one of us will perform it in a unique way. Families differ in their structure, type, values and tasks both interculturally and intraculturally. Disregarding the potential differences, family upbringing has the fundamental task of nurturing and preserving educational, traditional and cultural values.

Vocational guidance assists individuals in solving issues related to the choice of employment or advancement in the profession, where attention is paid to characteristics of individuals with respect to the possibility of their employment in the job market. It explores a person's professional development which includes a preparation for vocational

training, profession training, job involvement, undertaking work activities and work specialization [14].

Vocational informing and guidance as specific educational activities provide a participant with information on the characteristics of different areas of work, personal potentials (character, will, interests, preferences) for a specific type of work and information on possibilities of these potentials realization. However, a special attention is paid to a direct confrontation of individuals with themselves, business work and social aspirations. Moreover, vocational informing ensures self-consciousness maturity and eventually leads to making mature decisions on all levels of professional development [6].

A person creates all material and spiritual life necessities with work. Thus, a family's role in youth upbringing is of utmost importance. There are numerous steps and actions parents perform regarding their children's educational program and profession choice. Moreover, some parental actions are so frequently performed regardless of their success or a lack of it.

Here are some examples of negative decisions in occupational choices: a child is advised to study a certain occupation due to "good profit" expectations while he has no skills required for the tasks performed in the occupation; long-term education of a child is suggested even though a financial situation cannot support that; there are medical contraindications as well as occupational demands that a child does not meet; future needs of the economy and employment opportunities are not taken into consideration [3].

In addition to the typical errors in vocational guidance that are related to family participation in the youth career choice, the following situations are very frequent: parents encourage children to choose their profession in order to continue a family tradition, parents discourage children from choosing their profession, parents attempt to realize their past ambitions using children, parents recommend gender-related professions, due to liberal views or a lack of interest, parents let their children make decisions on their own.

In addition to parental participation in children's profession choice and children's independence in decision-making process, situations in which both parents and children know which occupations are best suited for school continuing, yet not fitting a family budget are more frequent. Problems occur when a wanted school is too far away from the place of residence. Further, if enrollment quotas are limited or if a student's performance is too low, it might lead to a potential problem. Finally, educational program duration may cause problems. That being said, many students enroll in programs similar to the desired ones. Such students usually end up with being a part of unemployment statistics. Furthermore, they tend to take various training, retraining and other educational courses to change their current profession. Instant and uneducated decisions may lead to negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction, workplace injuries and illnesses, unhealthy interpersonal relations, poor production quality, reduced work performance and frequent job positions changing [3]. In order to avoid those consequences, important life decisions should be made wisely.

The study [13] established to which extent the socio-economic and cultural level of parents are associated with vocational guidance of students. Moreover, the socio-economic conditions are vital and can affect young people's occupation decisions and future lives themselves. An occupation decision of children living in difficult conditions will more likely be guided with a financial aspect. Their aim will not be to acquire skills and establish themselves as experts but to earn more money in less time. In comparison,

children brought up in wealthy families will work on their personal needs, interests and skills. Naturally, exceptions may occur in both groups of students [4].

RESEARCH AIM AND HYPOTHESIS

The aim of this research is to determine the role, capabilities and skills of family members for the task of their children vocational guidance.

The study aims to test the hypothesis that the family members' insights are a precondition for making the right decisions in their children vocational guidance.

SAMPLE

The sample of the research consists of the parents and 13 240 students enrolled in the primary and secondary schools in the Virovitica-Podravina County. The population was divided in two sub-samples as follows.

A / The sub-sample was selected as an intentional stratified sample of the students attending the eighth grade at seven elementary schools. It includes 555 respondents; more precisely, 271 male and 284 female respondents. Furthermore, the sub-sample includes 508 respondents attending the first grade of five secondary schools; 236 female and 272 male respondents.

B / The sub-sample was selected as an intentional stratified sample of the students' families. It consists of 555 elementary school children's families and 508 secondary school children's families, which gives a total of 1063 respondents.

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

Based on the characteristics of the sample, the authors continued with the further results interpretation in accordance with the hypothesis and research tasks [8].

The question *What you as a parent consider to be essential in the choice of your child's future occupation?* aims at determining the baseline which the family uses in searching for relevant information.

Table 1: Factors that determine the students' occupation choice

	Considered essential	frequency	%
1	interests and abilities	395	61.7
2	easy employment	129	20.2
3	achievements of a child	71	11.1
4	profitability	20	3.1
5	owning a craft	17	2.7
6	other	5	0.8
7	family tradition	3	0.5
	Σ	640	100.0

Most of the parents, 61.7% of them, respond that interests and abilities of their child will determine his future occupation. 20.2% of parents think pragmatically and believe that easy employability is the second occupation choice factor. The results indicate the positive trend of parents' opinion that their child should enroll in professions that best suit the child's abilities.

When it comes to *Have you and your child discussed his/her future profession choice?*, the responses show that parents pay a lot of attention to a career choice. 90.3% of them repeatedly talked with their children about the continuation of their education,

thus confirming the interest of the parents in a future career choice. In comparison, 8.5% of the parents are not interested in their child's choice, i.e. they allow a child to independently enroll in an educational program. Only 0.2% of the parents have never talked about a career choice with their child and 1.1% have only talked once.

When assessing the parental awareness and abilities to participate in a career choice, 57.8% said they do not have enough information. Out of that percentage, 18.2% have no information while 39.6% possess some information on the issue of continuing education; however, information should be completed and systematized. The answers to the question *What information are you missing?* can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Information the parents of elementary school children are missing

	Which information are parents missing	Frequency	%
1	Insight into secondary school networks	28	16.0
2	Information on high-school enrollment	27	15.4
3	Insight into plans and programs for professions	26	14.9
4	Information regarding employment possibilities	25	14.3
5	Printed materials – brochures & leaflets	24	13.7
6	Information on levels and duration	12	6.9
7	Occupations with surpluses and deficits	12	6.9
8	Description of occupations	10	5.7
9	Skill needed for a certain occupation	6	3.4
10	Enrollment quotas	2	1.1
11	Scholarship opportunities	2	1.1
12	Financial demands for a chosen educational path	1	0.6
	Σ	175	100.0

Firstly, 16% of the parents are interested in schools' locations and a child's future profession. Secondly, 15.4% of the parents are interested in prerequisites for the enrollment in secondary school programs. Thirdly, 14.9% of the parents are interested in an occupation curriculum, prerequisites for the enrollment, courses, educational program duration, possible continuing education and pursuing career upon completing the secondary education. 13.7% of the parents wish to have printed materials containing information such as admission criteria, schools' locations and a list of professions whose completion will result in both easy and difficult employment. Further, 5.7% of the parents want to know their child's possible professions upon completing the program. Finally, 3.4% of the parents are interested in medical indications, contraindications and skills required for certain professions.

The next question addressed the students' attitudes of upgrading from elementary to secondary schools. The question *Who was the first person to inform you on future occupations?* was answered as follows: 181 students or 35.6% were informed by their fathers, 96 or 18.9% by their mothers, 13.8% by friends and 10.8% by teachers and other sources.

Who, together with you, most actively participated in your career choice? The answers are compatible with the previous one. Male students placed their fathers with 31.4% on the first place followed by friends with 16%, mothers 15.7%, teachers 9.67% and brochures and leaflets 9.37%. On the other hand, female students placed their mothers on the first place with 22% followed by friends with 17%, teachers 16%, fathers 14% and

printed materials 13%. The results point out to mothers and fathers being the most important sources of vocational guidance regardless of their level of education.

Upon completing the first secondary school semester, the students were interviewed on their satisfaction with the school choice and whether they enrolled in a desired program in the first place. The results indicate that 424 students or 83.5% enrolled in a desired educational program while 84 students or 16.5% are not satisfied with the program. The students who did not enroll in a desired program are usually the ones from the economy field. They are followed by the fields of mechanical engineering, healthcare, catering and other services.

If we compare the wishes of the freshmen secondary school students with their parents' informedness, we can claim that the number of students enrolled in desired programs is associated with their parents' informedness and vocational guidance supported by the chi-square test.

Table 3: Informedness of the first grade secondary school students' parents

Students' satisfaction	F	Do parents have enough information?			Σ / %
		Sufficient	Insufficient	Null	
Enrolled into a desired educational program	Fo	295	115	14	424
	Ft	286.3	117.7	20	83.5
Did not enroll into a desired educational prog	Fo	48	26	10	84
	Ft	56.7	23.3	4	16.5
Σ	Fo	343	141	24	508
%		67.5	27.8	4.7	100
	χ^2				12.958
	d.f.				2
	P >				0.0015

The statistical indicator $\chi^2 = 12,96$ is larger than the threshold value of $\chi^2 = 9,21$ at the significance level of $p=0.01$ with 2 degrees of freedom leads to a conclusion that parents' informedness on occupation choice results in their children enrollment in desired educational programs.

Table 4 illustrates the correlation between students' satisfaction in educational program enrollment and parents' professional qualifications.

Table 4: Professional qualifications of the surveyed parents

Enrolled into a desired educational program	F	Fathers' professional qualifications					Σ / %	Mothers' professional qualifications					Σ / %
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
YES	Fo	110	196	74	16	28	424	174	95	123	16	16	424
	Ft	109.4	199.6	68.5	13.4	25.1	83.5	185.2	95.9	114.3	14.2	13.3	83.4
NO	Fo	31	43	8	0	2	84	49	20	14	1	0	84
	Ft	21.6	39.4	13.5	2.6	4,9	16.5	36.8	19.1	22.7	2.8	2.7	16.6
Σ	Fo	141	239	82	16	30	508	223	115	137	17	16	508

%		27.8	47	16.1	3.2	5.9	100	43.7	22.7	27	3.4	3.2	100
	χ^2						11.400						13.498
	d.f.						4						4
	P >						0.0224						0.0090

As illustrated in Table 4, $\chi^2 = 11.40$ being higher than a limited value of $\chi^2 = 11.07$ with $p=0.05\%$ and 4 degrees of freedom indicate that higher fathers' professional qualifications correlates with children enrolling in desired educational programs. Additionally, $\chi^2 = 13.49$ being higher than a limited value of $\chi^2 = 13.27$ with $p=0.01\%$ and 4 degrees of freedom indicate that higher mothers' professional qualifications correlates with children enrolling in desired educational programs.

For other factors and sources of information, there is no statistically significant correlation.

CONCLUSION

Parents' skills for their children vocational guidance are not equally acquired and distributed in families. Difficulties we encounter whilst working with families on the issue of vocational guidance result from different educational, economic and socio-cultural status.

The research has shown that insufficient informedness on enrollment policies and a lack of parents' knowledge of modern means applied in the educational system itself are grounded in the lack of parents' interest and not information per se. Moreover, brochures, flyers and audiovisual materials containing relevant information are provided; however, they are not adequately used prior to final decision making.

Furthermore, the study results confirm the hypothesis of a family being the most important factor in further education choice. However, the family simultaneously lacks relevant pieces of information, vocational guidance and pedagogical competencies.

Parents themselves need to raise the level of their informedness. The results point to a statistically significant correlation between parents' informedness and children enrollment in desired educational programs. To be more precise, the more parents are informed on educational programs and criteria, the more their children enroll in desired educational programs.

The research results have opened up new questions, further research is necessary to check how much information that parents give their children are subtle and how much are obvious, whether they are based on rational reasons and objective knowledge of their child and child's abilities, and the extent to which parents respect the wishes of their children and their striving to be different from their parents and so on.

Children should be led so that they can successfully find their future profession, not the one with the biggest income, stemming from the belief that they need to cash-out their skills, also not the one that promises social status and esteem, but the one in which children see a certain sense, and for that express personal interest. We must proceed from the standpoint that for each individual, it is best to do that which makes you happy and satisfied in life.

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