

The motivation of Adolescents to Choose a Secondary Vocational School

Kateřina Šmejkalová¹, Jan Válek²

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Abstract

The authors reflect on the motivation of adolescents to attend secondary vocational schools. For adolescents, this step represents one of the fundamental career decisions. The intrinsic motivation of applicants to study is often interest in the field, employment, or financial reward. Other motivating factors for studying are the transport accessibility of the school and the difficulty of the admission procedure. Aspiring secondary school students are also motivated by the prestige of the school that offers them an educational programme. In addition to the well-known promotions, adolescents can also attend extracurricular activities (hobbies) organised in secondary vocational schools. The authors make their statements based on the opinions of primary school teachers and secondary school students who evaluate their motivation for education in their field of study. At the end of the paper, the authors evaluate and discuss the originality of the possible promotion of secondary vocational education.

Keywords: Student motivation, School presentations, School promotion, Secondary vocational school

1 Introduction

Everyone has three life periods related to work activity: preparation for active life and work (education period), active work activity and retirement age. All these periods are essential in an individual's life because they significantly impact the future quality of his/her life. The preparation of the individual for these periods begins already in kindergarten (ISCED 2011 0) and naturally continues in primary school (ISCED 2011 1) and secondary school (ISCED 2011

¹ Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, Dept. of Physics, Chemistry and Vocational Education, Pořící 7, CZ 60300 Brno, Czech Republic.

E-mail: smejkalova@ped.muni.cz

² Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, Dept. of Physics, Chemistry and Vocational Education, Pořící 7, CZ 60300 Brno, Czech Republic.

E-mail: valek@ped.muni.cz

2). But we often ask ourselves whether secondary school (ISCED 2011 2) graduates are sufficiently prepared for future education at secondary (vocational) schools (ISCED 2011 3). Parents often help their children to choose a secondary (vocational) school. Parents' recommendations are usually based on their experiences in the labour market. The secondary (vocational) school choice is influenced by the social environment in which the pupil grows up, character, needs, beliefs, opinions, life goals, and value system. All the above factors have an impact on the choice of a primary school pupil's future occupation and his/her attitude towards work.

Pupils' lack of interest in secondary vocational education is a global problem. In the Czech Republic, the interest of primary school pupils in secondary (vocational) schools is also declining, which has a negative impact on the number of pupils in secondary (vocational) schools.

2 Factors Influencing Career Choice

The choice of secondary school results from a long process of internal and external factors. Internal factors only play a role in the final career choice. These are subjective perceptions, feelings, interests, and expectations. The choice is mainly influenced by the social context, the socio-cultural environment, and the family environment in which the pupil grows up, but nowadays, the influence of mass media is also growing significantly. An important factor is the economic situation in the student's family, the perception of the prestige of different professions from a financial perspective and the related social status of the individual. One of the indicators in the choice of a future career of pupils is employment in the labour market. We call these factors external factors, which majorly impact occupational choice. The pupil's social community and peers also play an essential role in choosing a secondary (vocational) school and related career. The school and the teachers' personalities also influence the pupil's decision-making process. For undecided pupils, the information and guidance system is crucial. (Walterová & Greger, 2009)

The family fundamentally forms the personality of their children. It is the parents who become great role models in the lives of their children. According to Hlad'ó & Michalicová (2014, p. 37), the family, i.e., the parents, is the most important factor influencing any decision-making.

Čačka (2000, p. 222) characterises the family as the primary group we do not choose, but its relationships are the most significant and deeply formative social environment for everyone. Each child's personality develops appropriately, especially in a harmonious environment where everyone plays a role, which is a generally accepted prescription for social behaviour.

The family is supported in shaping career perspectives and provides primary guidance in choosing a secondary (vocational) school. The period of choosing a secondary (vocational) school is a particular time in the life of a family. It is usually accompanied by a deeper

acquaintance of the child with his/her parents. There is a mutual convergence of the parent's and children's attitudes, reflected in the final decision. (Walterová & Greger, 2009)

Each family member has different participation levels in making career decisions. Ideally, both parents are engaged in the child's career choice. Older siblings also play a specific role as they represent an essential source of information about secondary (vocational) school and are another family factor that affects the formation of plans concerning education and profession (Hlad'ó & Michalicová, 2014, p. 37).

During adolescence, peers are essential to children who share their opinions, values, ideals, and preferred way of life. Being tied to a group reduces individual responsibility and increases self-esteem and self-confidence (Vágnerová, 2005). Research shows that peers have the most significant influence on the provision of information. These are mostly older friends already studying or have studied at their respective secondary (vocational) schools (Hlad'ó & Michalicová, 2014, p. 43). Peers and peer groups play an essential role in career decisions. On the other hand, friends can positively impact an individual, manifesting in pursuing better performance and, thus, better results. Unfortunately, children are often involved in groups that have a negative impact on learning outcomes and overall behaviour. Peers often become informal authority figures who may have a more significant impact than adults in certain situations. Adolescent children often follow the leader or star of the party, and the family, including parents, takes a back seat. In a peer group, individuals compare themselves and become aware of the similarities and differences between other children. A peer group provides emotional experiences better than a family because there are many more differences between adults and children (Vágnerová, 2005).

According to Walter (2009), the school has traditionally been seen as an institution that can and should influence a pupil's decision-making. However, a tiny proportion of pupils believe that the school would significantly influence their choice. However, the school activities are more informative. The school informs pupils about the courses, when and how to apply, and the services other guidance institutions offer. School support, therefore, focuses more on the final stage of decision-making. Pupils and parents may turn to guidance counsellors as part of their decision-making journey, but very few do so (Walterová & Greger, 2009).

Adolescents are increasingly critical of teacher demands and school standards. However, some students are positively influenced by their personalities, which motivates them to work and awakens their interest in the field (Smit et al., 2021). The school plays an indispensable role in this area because, together with the family, it helps children to form realistic career goals and perspectives. Their main task is to equip students with the competencies to use guidance services and information resources effectively and to learn to make independent and responsible decisions according to them. It is all about making them aware of which work and education factors to consider when choosing a career, how important they are, how to assess them and where to get information about them (VYSOČINA EDUCATION, 2000). At school, pupils should learn to know themselves, their interests, possibilities, and limits to navigate the world of work and education better. The fact that the school, together with the family, is one of the key institutions that should prepare children for a career has been

recognised by curriculum developers. They have included systematic education in this area in the Framework Educational Programmes, in which a separate thematic area on the World of work (part of the educational area Man and the world of work), is devoted to the choice of profession. Its concept builds on the educational field of Vocational Education, which has been compulsorily included in previous educational programmes since 2002 based on methodological instructions of the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (it was usually taught within the subjects of Civic Education, Family Education or Practical Activities), (Moderní vyučování, 2016).

The World of Work is now compulsory for all pupils. Given the focus on career choices, schools include the topic in the upper years of secondary school (ISCED 2011 2). A significant emphasis is placed on cross-curricular relationships to lead in a coordinated way to responsible career choices. The main aim is for pupils to learn how to navigate the educational offer of secondary (vocational) school and the work activities of selected professions and to gain the ability to effectively use professional information and advisory services for the choice of education. Furthermore, they should be able to assess the various options when deciding on a suitable career and vocational training.

3 Career Counselling and Guidance Assistance

The guidance and career counsellor performs counselling and information activities. The counsellor's activities include an introductory group survey, an analysis of pupils' career preferences, an individual assessment for career choice and individual counselling in this area. The counsellor cooperates with the class teacher, the pupil's legal representative, and school counselling facilities such as the pedagogical-psychological counselling centre, the education centre, and the educational care centre in providing counselling services beyond the school's remit (VYSOČINA EDUCATION, 2000).

Counsellors arrange group visits of school pupils to the information counselling centres of the labour offices and provide information to pupils and parents on the possibility of individual use of the information services of these centres (VYSOČINA EDUCATION, 2000). Counsellor also Provides moderate diagnosis of special educational needs (initial and ongoing) and intervention activities for pupils with special educational needs. Preparation of conditions for the integration of pupils with special educational needs at school, coordination of the provision of counselling services to these pupils by the school and school counselling facilities, and coordination of educational measures (including special arrangements for entrance examinations and final examinations) for these pupils (VYSOČINA EDUCATION, 2000).

The web portals used by counsellors in secondary school (ISCED 2011 2) are mainly:

- The School Atlas (www.atlaskolstvi.cz) is the most used portal among secondary school counsellors,

- The National Institute for Education website www.infoabsolvent.cz is the second most used portal among secondary school counsellors,
- Frequently used portals among secondary school counsellors include www.stredniskoly.cz and www.volbapovolani.cz.
(This is followed by www.seznamskol.eu, www.gwo.cz, www.stredniskoly.eu, www.istp.cz):

Pupils mainly use the official websites of secondary schools and databases of secondary schools, where they search for specific information about educational institutions and educational opportunities (educational programmes, admission conditions, number of admitted pupils, the success rate of secondary school graduates in entering tertiary education, etc.). In addition to these Internet resources, pupils search for Internet servers with information on how to proceed in choosing a secondary school, and how to prepare for entrance exams, or they search the Internet for personality tests that enable pupils to know themselves, which are essential both for choosing a secondary school and for their future profession (Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání, 2008).

Secondary (vocational) schoolwork with the pupils and their parents in choosing a career and a secondary (vocational) school. They provide detailed information through printed materials, brochures, website information, invitations to open days, etc. Visits to secondary (vocational) schools themselves are very popular with primary school pupils, where pupils are directly involved in various activities, e.g., making a simple product out of wood or metal (Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání, 2008).

Primary school pupils have many printed materials to support the right career choice. These include handbooks, leaflets, textbooks, brochures, and catalogues on the educational offer of high schools, guides on preparing for entrance examinations, tests, labour market statistics, etc. Their advantage lies in their use; we can work with them practically anywhere. The disadvantage is that printed materials are limited in scope and quickly become outdated (Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání, 2008).

Television, newspapers, and magazines are the least valuable sources of information about high schools for pupils. However, the impact of the mass media on the choice of further education and career paths cannot be underestimated. The mass communication media shows important aspects of the labour market and shapes professional stereotypes reflected in educational and professional paths. Identification with characters from the audio-visual world through informal experiential learning significantly influences pupils' career orientation (Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání, 2008).

4 Original and Interesting Presentations of Secondary Vocational School

As part of the project, the Secondary Vocational School of Transport, Trade and Services in Moravský Krumlov addressed undecided pupils or tried to convince those who were already clear about their direction when they entered the school. It prepared several technical clubs to motivate pupils to choose a career and study at a secondary vocational school. The activity was implemented to improve the quality of science and technical education in secondary (vocational) and primary schools and to support the development of cooperation between secondary (vocational) schools and primary schools in the South Moravian Region.

The Secondary Vocational School of Transport, Trade and Services in Moravské Krumlov is an internationally certified International Education Society, London (IES) school. Pupils can obtain an international IES certificate. The school uses a quality management system to administer and manage school management, education, and related services. It is ISO 9001:2009 certified. The school provides education in its facilities with equipment that meets the needs of the fields of education with a school-leaving exam (in Germany means Abitur) and the fields of education with teaching and their perspectives. Almost all workplaces have undergone extensive reconstruction in recent years, meeting the strict criteria set for teaching and learning.

One of the prerequisites for successful vocational education in Moravský Krumlov is the implementation of school educational programmes in practice. The activity aimed to establish a system of long-term and systematic cooperation between the Secondary Vocational School of Transport, Trade and Services Moravský Krumlov and primary schools in the region. Another goal of this cooperation was to increase the interest of primary school pupils in technical fields. Secondary school teachers created particular interest, technically oriented clubs for primary school pupils.

The seven technical clubs, 128 lessons, educated pupils from seven primary schools in various technical areas. The activities included the participation of experts from companies who provided a small demonstration of their field and gave professional presentations at primary schools, combined with a discussion on training and employment opportunities in their field of study. In the 2014/2015 to 2016/2017 school year, 140 primary school pupils could participate in the technical clubs they attended. In terms of production practice, the experts made 35 presentations attended by a total of around 500 primary school pupils. The technical clubs were intended for pupils of the 9th grade of primary school. Both boys and girls attended the club. Registration for the technical club was voluntary. At the first meetings, it was apparent that the pupils enjoyed working, especially if they could make something themselves, even under the supervision of a teacher and older students at the secondary vocational school. Many emphases were placed on allowing the students to create something and take the product home.

The aim was to introduce pupils to individually taught educational disciplines in an exciting and friendly way. Show them how an auto mechanic, an auto technician, a locksmith, a carpenter, a blacksmith or how complicated it is to write a program for machining material on a CNC machine. Pupils learn the basics of car construction in the Aeromechanics and Motorcycles Club and the basics of motor vehicle electronics, including the measurement of fundamental electronic quantities obtained from vehicle sensors, which are further transmitted to the vehicle control unit. Depending on the pupils' skills and abilities, the vocational school in Moravský Krumlov prepared a programme for building a go-kart, which the pupils successfully and enthusiastically assembled. As part of the Locksmith, Machinist club, the pupils were introduced to the basics of manual metal working – contouring, cutting, filing, and sawing. Under the supervision of a high school teacher, the pupils tried their hand at machine tools – drilling, turning, milling, turning, and grinding. They made their products according to the supplied drawing documentation during the lesson. The pupils in the Blacksmith's Club could try out the basic forging operations with metal, learn how to operate the forging furnace, select the correct steel for heating and choose the right heating temperature. Within the framework of the interested club, pupils made simple blacksmithing products. Pupils learned the basics of woodworking in the Carpenter's Club.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Motivating pupils to choose a career is a long and complicated process of increasing interest in vocational education programmes. It cannot show any easy or quick solution. Open Days and Secondary School Fairs are trendy, as are Company Days, which motivate primary school pupils to choose a secondary vocational school as a motivation for their future profession. The results of the projects mentioned above show that career learning theory is a solid basis for organising teaching and guidance in the field of education and careers.

Vocational schools want to show pupils the potential and enthusiasm of their specific programmes and careers in their last year at primary school. A foreign author (Poulsen, 2020) states that in most cases, these are promotional days that allow pupils to gain different knowledge about perspectives of vocational education programs or interact/talk with vocational students. Nevertheless, ensuring that the pupils' experiences are as close as possible to the standard vocational training conditions to achieve real vocational education and training is vital. For this reason, the promotion days are carried out during the regular school lessons. Communication between future students at the secondary vocational school and current students is constructive and can be said to be important when pupils choose a career.

Ivánková et al. (2022) also give examples of science camps to prepare pupils for future careers. Thus, they propose an unconventional approach to teaching science with interest, curiosity, attraction, and fun. Science camps as an experiential form of informal education can help to improve the perspective of pupils and students on science. Pupils see science camps

as an important motivating factor for further study of science, which will influence their future career choices.

Those mentioned non-traditional motivational activities for future secondary (vocational) school students are also implemented in various fields of education in the Czech Republic. The described activities are very popular with primary school pupils, and their participation is always high. For example, a secondary vocational school specialising in polygraphic production organises suburban camps. Primary school pupils are introduced to simple work in a bookbinding workshop, designing book covers on computer software.

The promotion of secondary vocational schools is now moving into informal, experiential education through special interest clubs, camps, or open days. Pupils and their parents have a unique opportunity to discuss with teachers and students at the secondary vocational school. Parents and Pupils can see the material equipment of the school and can compare the different schools. It is important to emphasise that this will give both the primary school pupil and the parent a realistic idea of the specific field of education.

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