

Bazaka Roman

PhD in Social Communications, Associate Professor

Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University

(Kherson / Kropyvnytskyi)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3000-6166>

Базака Р.В.

Херсонський державний аграрно-економічний університет

(м. Херсон / м. Кропивницький)

CAREER GUIDANCE OF SCHOOL STUDENTS AS A TOOL FOR HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT IN THE MODERN ECONOMY

ПРОФОРІЄНТАЦІЯ ШКОЛЯРІВ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ УПРАВЛІННЯ ЛЮДСЬКИМ КАПІТАЛОМ У СУЧАСНІЙ ЕКОНОМІЦІ

The article examines the role of career guidance for school students as a key tool for managing human capital in the modern economy. It emphasizes the importance of early professional self-determination in shaping a high-quality workforce and aligning educational pathways with labor market needs. Career guidance is presented as a mechanism that develops students' abilities, interests, and competencies, enhancing their future employability.

The study highlights the components of human capital, including education, professional skills, competencies, and experience, and underscores that effective management of human capital begins during the educational process. The paper analyzes the current state of career guidance in Ukraine, identifying challenges such as weak school-business collaboration, limited student awareness of career opportunities, and the absence of a systematic national policy.

Drawing on European experiences, particularly from Poland and the UK, the article proposes measures to improve career guidance in Ukraine, including the

development of school career counseling, partnerships between education and industry, integration of practical activities into curricula, and the use of digital career platforms.

In conclusion, career guidance is not only an educational practice but also a strategic tool for human capital management, fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce, reducing labor market mismatches, and supporting sustainable socio-economic development.

Keywords: *career guidance, human capital, human capital management, professional self-determination, labor market, school students, educational management.*

У статті досліджено роль професійної орієнтації школярів як важливого інструменту управління людським капіталом у сучасній економіці. Автор обґрунтовує значення раннього професійного самовизначення молоді для формування високоякісного трудового потенціалу та забезпечення ефективного функціонування ринку праці. Профорієнтація розглядається як ключовий механізм, що допомагає поєднати освітні траєкторії учнів з потребами економіки та сприяє підвищенню конкурентоспроможності майбутніх працівників.

Особлива увага приділяється сутності людського капіталу, його складникам та значенню для соціально-економічного розвитку держави. У статті підкреслено, що людський капітал включає освіту, професійні навички, компетенції та досвід, а ефективне управління ним починається ще на етапі освіти. Розглядаються теоретичні підходи до формування людського капіталу та роль профорієнтаційної діяльності у створенні бази для подальшої професійної реалізації учнів.

Автор аналізує сучасний стан профорієнтації в Україні та виділяє основні проблеми, серед яких слабка взаємодія шкіл і бізнесу, недостатня інформованість учнів та відсутність системної державної політики у сфері професійної орієнтації. Показано, що чинні заходи часто мають

фрагментарний характер, що обмежує ефективність формування професійних намірів учнів та їх готовності до ринку праці.

На основі досвіду європейських країн (Польщі, Великої Британії, Німеччини) запропоновано напрями вдосконалення профорієнтаційної системи в Україні. До них належать розвиток кар'єрного консультування у школах, партнерство освіти та бізнесу, інтеграція практичних компонентів у навчальний процес, використання цифрових платформ та системний підхід до освітнього менеджменту. Такі заходи сприятимуть більш усвідомленому вибору професії учнями та підвищенню ефективності управління людським капіталом.

Отже, профорієнтація школярів розглядається не лише як освітня практика, а й як стратегічний інструмент управління людськими ресурсами, який забезпечує формування якісного трудового потенціалу, зменшує дисбаланс на ринку праці та сприяє стійкому соціально-економічному розвитку держави. Реалізація запропонованих підходів дозволяє підвищити ефективність використання людського капіталу та підготувати молодь до професійної діяльності відповідно до потреб сучасної економіки.

***Ключові слова:** профорієнтація, людський капітал, управління людським капіталом, професійне самовизначення, ринок праці, школярі, освітній менеджмент.*

Formulation of the problem. In the contemporary context of economic development, the effective formation and utilization of human capital are gaining particular importance. The increasing role of knowledge, professional competencies, and skills in ensuring economic competitiveness necessitates the training of highly qualified specialists capable of adapting to the dynamic changes of the labor market. Human capital thus emerges as one of the key resources of a country's socio-economic development, determining the level of its innovativeness, labor productivity, and economic growth.

At the same time, under current conditions, a certain imbalance is observed between labor market needs and the professional choices of young people. A

significant proportion of school graduates choose their future profession without sufficient awareness of their own abilities, interests, and employment prospects. Often, career choices are influenced by external social factors, including parental opinions, the popularity of certain professions in society, or stereotypical perceptions of the prestige associated with particular types of activities.

Under such circumstances, the development of an effective career guidance system for school students becomes especially relevant, as it contributes to the conscious professional self-determination of youth. Career guidance activities in educational institutions can be considered an important tool for human capital management, as they ensure early identification of students' abilities and interests, facilitate the formation of professional intentions, and help align young people's educational trajectories with the needs of the modern economy. In this context, studying the role of career guidance for school students within the human capital management system acquires particular scientific and practical significance.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of human capital and the professional self-determination of youth has been extensively studied both globally and in Ukraine. The problematics of human capital are addressed in the works of O. Ponomarenko, "Effective Human Capital Management as a Determining Factor of Enterprise Economic Development" [1], as well as Ye. Maslennikov and Ye. Husiev, "Human Capital of a Country and the Impact of State Tax Policy on Its Development" [2], which present a comprehensive analysis of human capital in Ukraine and its influence on economic development. In these studies, the authors examine the theoretical foundations of human capital, assess its level within the country in comparison with developed economies, and demonstrate that the existing tax policy does not sufficiently stimulate its development, while also proposing directions for reform aimed at enhancing its effectiveness.

With regard to career guidance, contemporary researcher Yu. Mohylna, in her work "European Experience of Career Guidance for School Students", provides a detailed analysis of how career guidance systems are organized in the countries of the European Union (including Poland, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom), emphasizing that in these countries such systems are more developed and effective

than in Ukraine. The author examines advanced forms and practices of career guidance, highlights that the imperfection of the Ukrainian system leads to a mismatch between education and labor market needs, and offers well-grounded recommendations for improving career guidance activities in Ukrainian schools [3].

Furthermore, the effectiveness of career guidance for school students, as well as the level of formation of professional orientation among students in grades 9–11, has been investigated by Yu. Mohylna and Yu. Boichuk [4]. Thus, the analysis of the existing body of literature convincingly confirms the relevance and timeliness of studying career guidance for school students specifically as an instrument of human capital management within the framework of a modern economy.

Formulation of the purpose of the article. The aim of this article is to investigate the role of career guidance for school students as an instrument of human capital management in the modern economy.

Presentation of the main material. The essence of human capital in the modern economy lies in considering an individual not merely as a bearer of labor power, but as a carrier of knowledge, skills, competencies, and the potential for innovative development. Human capital encompasses the level of education, professional experience, creativity, motivation for self-development, and the ability to effectively adapt to changes in the labor market. In the context of globalization and ongoing technological transformations, the development of human capital becomes a key factor in economic competitiveness, ensuring productivity growth, enhancing the innovative potential of enterprises, and strengthening the resilience of the national economic system. Investments in education, professional development, and public health are therefore regarded as strategic investments that contribute to long-term economic stability and social well-being.

“As noted by prominent American managers J. Grayson and C. O’Dell, it is precisely human capital—rather than factories, equipment, or inventories – that constitutes the cornerstone of competitiveness, economic growth, and efficiency” [cited in 1, p. 169].

Ukrainian researcher P. Demin defines human capital as “a certain accumulated level of health, education, skills, abilities, motivation, and cultural

development – formed as a result of investments – of both an individual and society as a whole, which is purposefully utilized within a particular sphere of social reproduction and contributes to economic growth” [6, p. 17].

In this study, the following definition is adopted: human capital is understood as the aggregate of health, knowledge, skills, and acquired abilities that an individual applies in conscious activity. Within the framework of an enterprise, it reflects the overall level of qualification, as well as the physical and professional potential of all employees.

Human capital comprises a set of key characteristics that determine an individual’s capacity to work effectively and create value. These include education, which forms the foundation of knowledge and general intellectual development; professional skills, which ensure the practical execution of tasks; competencies, encompassing the ability to apply knowledge in diverse situations, communicate effectively, and make informed decisions; and experience, which accumulates over time and enhances both the efficiency and quality of work. At the same time, effective human capital management begins at the stage of education, as it is within the educational system that the foundations for the development of professional qualities, personal potential, and future competitiveness in the labor market are established.

Career guidance for school students, as an element of human resource management, represents an important instrument for shaping high-quality human capital at the early stages of individual development. It is aimed at helping students recognize their abilities, inclinations, and potential, thereby enabling more informed and well-grounded career choices. Through the process of career guidance, a system of professional interests and values is formed, and an understanding of the nature of various occupations, their requirements, and prospects is developed. At the same time, it performs a strategic function by directing young people toward professions that are relevant and in demand in the labor market, thus reducing the imbalance between labor supply and demand. Consequently, career guidance serves not only as an educational tool but also as a managerial mechanism that facilitates the effective utilization of human resources in the future.

In essence, career guidance for school students constitutes an early stage of human resource management, as it is at this level that the foundations of the future labor potential of society are established. Through the identification of abilities, the development of interests, and the orientation of young people toward appropriate professions, an initial allocation of human resources in accordance with the needs of the economy takes place. Such an approach makes it possible, even before individuals enter the labor market, to enhance the effectiveness of their professional realization, reduce the risks of mismatch between education and employer requirements, and ensure a more rational use of human capital in the long term. According to research findings, 67.3% of school students in Ukraine have not participated in school-based career guidance activities. The analysis further indicates that theoretical and diagnostic approaches to career guidance are the most widely implemented, whereas practical forms remain the least developed [cited in 4, p. 69].

The problems of career guidance in Ukraine are complex in nature and significantly affect the effectiveness of human capital formation. One of the key issues is the weak interaction between educational institutions and the business sector: schools often lack close cooperation with employers, which results in students not obtaining a realistic understanding of modern professions, labor market requirements, and actual working conditions [1]. The absence of internships, enterprise visits, and the involvement of practicing professionals in the educational process leads to a disconnection between education and the real economic environment.

Another important problem is the insufficient level of students' awareness regarding career opportunities. Many school students do not have access to high-quality, up-to-date, and systematized information about professions, labor market trends, and sectoral development prospects, which complicates the process of making informed career choices. Career guidance activities are often limited to formal measures without a deep individualized approach that takes into account students' abilities and interests. In addition, Ukraine lacks a coherent and systematic state policy in the field of career guidance [3].

Existing initiatives are fragmented, poorly coordinated, and not supported by sufficient regulatory, methodological, or financial frameworks. As a result, career guidance fails to fulfill its strategic function – namely, the effective alignment of the education system with labor market needs. This leads to an imbalance between the supply and demand of labor, which negatively affects both youth employment and overall economic development.

For professional activity to yield effective results, it must be organized and systematic; disjointed, inconsistent, and occasional measures do not produce the desired outcomes [7, p. 285]. Successful examples of effective organization of career guidance for school students can be observed in Poland, where an internal school-based career guidance system operates. This system is built around school career centers, whose primary task is to coordinate teachers' activities in the field of career guidance. In most cases, the coordinator is the school principal, who appoints a specialist career counselor responsible, among other duties, for analyzing labor market trends, including supply and demand, which has a positive impact not only on the labor market but also on the overall economic condition of the country [5, p. 28].

However, despite the advantages of the Polish system of career guidance, it can be observed that, similarly to Ukraine, it lacks a sufficient practical component – namely, opportunities for students to gain direct exposure to professions and to try themselves in specific types of activities within the framework of career guidance programs [3, p. 5].

Based on a generalized analysis of European experience, Yu. Mohylna proposes a number of approaches to improving career guidance for Ukrainian school students. In particular, she suggests developing a new model and concept of career guidance that would correspond to the current demands and opportunities of the labor market, as well as establishing a high-quality legislative framework to support, organize, and regulate this system. It is also important to adopt the experience of the United Kingdom, which includes the training of qualified career counselors capable of providing high-level guidance to school students, university students, and adults, as well as the development of career guidance competencies among future teachers. Furthermore, according to the researcher, it is necessary to design a comprehensive,

integrated, and interdisciplinary system of career guidance that would become a mandatory component of the educational process in Ukrainian schools [3].

In our view, the directions for improving career guidance in Ukraine involve comprehensive changes aimed at increasing its effectiveness and ensuring its alignment with the needs of the modern labor market. First and foremost, it is essential to develop career counseling in schools, which would enable an individualized approach to each student, taking into account their abilities, interests, and potential. Equally important is the establishment of partnerships between educational institutions and the business sector, which would help bring the educational process closer to real professional conditions through the involvement of practitioners, the organization of internships, and the implementation of practical career guidance activities. A significant role is also played by the use of digital career guidance platforms, which provide access to актуальна information about professions, labor market trends, and educational opportunities, thereby making the process of career choice more informed and accessible. In addition, it is advisable to integrate career guidance into the system of educational management, ensuring its consistency, alignment with educational programs, and coherence with the strategic goals of educational and economic development.

Conclusions. Thus, career guidance for school students constitutes an important instrument of human capital management in the modern economy, as it ensures the early identification of abilities, the formation of professional interests, and facilitates a conscious and well-informed choice of future profession. The analysis has demonstrated that Ukraine faces significant challenges in the field of career guidance, including weak interaction between schools and the business sector, insufficient awareness of students regarding career prospects, and the absence of a coherent and systematic state policy in this domain. The experience of European countries, particularly Poland and the United Kingdom, illustrates the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches to organizing career guidance activities, including the coordination of school career centers, the training of professional career counselors, and the integration of practical components into the educational process.

Based on the analysis of academic literature and practical experience, a number of directions for improving career guidance in Ukraine are proposed. These include the development of career counseling in schools, the establishment of active partnerships between educational institutions and the business sector, the use of digital platforms to inform students, and the integration of career guidance into the system of educational management. The implementation of these measures will enhance the effectiveness of human capital formation, reduce the imbalance between labor supply and demand, and ensure that young people are adequately prepared for professional activities that meet the needs of the modern economy. Therefore, career guidance for school students should be regarded not only as an educational component but also as a strategic element of human resource management and long-term economic development.

Prospects for further research in the field of managing career guidance activities in educational institutions are associated with analyzing the effectiveness of various management models of career guidance in accordance with the needs of regional labor markets, integrating digital tools and online platforms for early professional self-determination of students, fostering partnerships between schools, businesses, and universities, and assessing the impact of career guidance on the development of competencies and the competitiveness of future specialists. Such research will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of human capital formation and ensuring the alignment of the education system with the demands of the contemporary economy.

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