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CAREER GUIDANCE TOOLS FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS AS A FACTOR IN SHAPING PROFESSIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

ІНСТРУМЕНТИ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОРІЄНТАЦІЇ ШКОЛЯРІВ ЯК ЧИННИК ФОРМУВАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО САМОВИЗНАЧЕННЯ

The article examines career guidance tools for school students as a key factor in shaping their professional self-determination. In the context of economic transformation, digitalization, and rapid labor market changes, conscious career choice becomes increasingly important. School age is a critical period for developing personality, interests, abilities, and value orientations that influence future professional trajectories. Traditional career guidance approaches are often fragmented or formal, limiting their effectiveness.

The study analyzes modern methods and approaches that promote informed career decisions, including the integration of competency-based education, use of digital platforms, psychodiagnostic testing, training and internships, career counseling, and mentoring. Innovative practical tools, such as shadowing and the “living library” technique, allow students to experience real work conditions, workplace culture, and key professional competencies.

Based on European experience (Germany, the UK, France, Poland), the article demonstrates the effectiveness of a systemic approach combining psychological support, information provision, and practical learning. This approach aligns students' educational and career paths with labor market needs, enhances motivation, and fosters competitive and adaptive individuals. Further research is suggested on evaluating the integrated impact of career guidance tools, developing digital and interactive platforms, and creating adaptive guidance models tailored to students' individual characteristics and labor market demands.

Keywords: *career guidance, digital platforms, human capital, professional self-determination, shadowing, training*

Стаття присвячена дослідженню інструментів професійної орієнтації школярів як ключового чинника формування їхнього професійного самовизначення. У сучасних умовах трансформації економіки, цифровізації та швидких змін на ринку праці проблема усвідомленого вибору професії стає надзвичайно актуальною. Шкільний вік є критичним періодом розвитку особистості, формування інтересів, здібностей і ціннісних орієнтацій, що безпосередньо впливають на майбутню професійну траєкторію. Традиційні підходи до профорієнтації часто виявляються фрагментарними або формальними, що обмежує ефективність вибору професії.

Автор аналізує сучасні методики та підходи, які сприяють більш усвідомленому професійному вибору, серед яких інтеграція компетентнісного підходу в освіту, використання цифрових платформ, психодіагностичне тестування, організація тренінгів і стажувань, кар'єрне консультування та наставництво. Окремо висвітлено інноваційні практичні інструменти, такі як метод Тіні (shadowing) та технологія «живої бібліотеки», що дозволяють учням оцінити реальний робочий ритм, корпоративну культуру та ключові компетентності професії.

На основі європейського досвіду (Німеччина, Велика Британія, Франція, Польща) стаття демонструє ефективність системного підходу до профорієнтації, де поєднуються психологічна підтримка, інформаційне

забезпечення та практичне навчання. Це дозволяє узгодити освітні та кар'єрні траєкторії учнів із потребами ринку праці, підвищити мотивацію до навчання та формувати конкурентоспроможну особистість. Автор підкреслює економічний ефект профорієнтації, включаючи зростання продуктивності праці, зниження рівня безробіття серед молоді та оптимізацію витрат на освіту.

Перспективи подальших досліджень пов'язані з оцінкою комплексного впливу різних інструментів профорієнтації, розвитком цифрових та інтерактивних платформ, а також створенням адаптивних моделей профорієнтації, що враховують індивідуальні особливості учнів і потреби сучасного ринку праці. Стаття підтверджує стратегічну роль профорієнтації у формуванні людського капіталу та конкурентоспроможної молоді, здатної адаптуватися до динамічних соціально-економічних умов.

***Ключові слова:** людський капітал, метод Тіні, профорієнтація, професійне самовизначення, цифрові платформи, тренінги*

Formulation of the problem. In the current conditions of economic transformation, societal digitalization, and dynamic changes in the labor market, the issue of professional self-determination among youth becomes particularly significant. Uncertainty in professional guidance, the rapid disappearance of some professions and the emergence of new ones, as well as the increasing demands on specialists' competencies, create the need for early and conscious career choices.

The school age is a crucial stage in the formation of personality, interests, abilities, and value orientations, which directly influence future professional development. At the same time, practice shows the insufficient effectiveness of existing approaches to career guidance for schoolchildren, which are often fragmentary or formal in nature.

In this context, the study of tools for career guidance among schoolchildren becomes especially relevant as a factor in shaping their professional self-determination. The use of modern, scientifically grounded, and practically oriented career guidance tools promotes a more conscious choice of profession, increases

motivation for learning, and contributes to the formation of a competitive personality in the context of the contemporary labor market.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In recent years, the issue of career guidance for schoolchildren has attracted significant attention from researchers due to labor market transformations, the digitalization of education, and the development of a competency-based approach to learning. Recent studies emphasize the effectiveness of specific career guidance tools and their impact on the formation of professional self-determination.

The development of career guidance, its forms, and methods has been addressed in the works of O. Melnyk (2008), Z. Okhrimenko (2013), V. Kalinin and L. Kalinina (2022), O. Matviichuk (2020), as well as within the context of European experience (2021). Several of these studies deserve closer examination.

In particular, contemporary Ukrainian research by Matviichuk O. and Petroschuk N. highlights the role of information and resource support in career guidance for senior students, analyzes its methods and forms, and emphasizes the importance of the educational environment and collaborative interaction in shaping conscious career choices [1]. Kalinin V. O. and Kalinina L. V. discuss the «Living Library» as an innovative form of career guidance work with senior students, which involves direct communication between students and professionals from various fields. The authors justify the effectiveness of this method in forming a realistic understanding of professional activity, fostering professional self-determination, motivation, and key competencies among students [1].

Yu. Mohylna, in the study “European Experience of Career Guidance for Youth” analyzes the organization of career guidance in EU countries (Poland, Germany, France, the United Kingdom), highlighting its higher effectiveness compared to Ukraine. The author describes contemporary forms of career guidance, points to the mismatch between education and the labor market in Ukraine, and suggests ways to improve career guidance practices [4].

Thus, the analysis of contemporary literature indicates that, although numerous career guidance tools exist, further research is needed on their integrated use as a

factor in shaping professional self-determination among schoolchildren in various educational and social contexts.

Formulation of the purpose of the article. The aim of the article is to theoretically substantiate and analyze the tools of career guidance for schoolchildren as a factor in shaping their professional self-determination, as well as to identify effective forms and methods of career guidance practices in the context of contemporary educational and socio-economic transformations.

Presentation of the main material. In the context of labor market transformation, digitalization of the economy, and the growing importance of knowledge and competencies, special attention is paid to the approaches and technologies of career guidance for schoolchildren as a key tool in human capital development. Contemporary approaches to career guidance involve the integrated use of information and resource platforms, interactive methodologies, practical exercises, trainings, as well as the “Living Library” technology and other innovative forms of student interaction with professionals from various fields.

A mismatch between labor market needs and the professional orientations of youth highlights the necessity of improving career guidance through the implementation of modern methodologies, digital resources, and collaborative partnerships among schools, libraries, employment services, and community organizations.

In this context, human capital is understood as a combination of knowledge, skills, competencies, motivation, and health, which are formed through targeted approaches to professional self-determination. The use of effective career guidance approaches and technologies contributes to increased productivity, personal competitiveness, and the adaptability of the state in conditions of dynamic socio-economic changes.

Career guidance acts as an important management tool in the system of human capital formation and development, providing a comprehensive approach to developing the abilities and potential of youth. It is an integral part of this system, as it allows for the early identification of students’ interests, inclinations, and skills,

enabling a more purposeful planning of their educational and professional trajectories.

Modern career guidance practices include the use of various approaches and technologies: information and resource platforms, interactive methodologies, trainings, innovative forms of communication such as the “Living Library” [1], as well as collaborative interactions among schools, employment services, community organizations, and professional associations. Through these practices, career guidance aligns students’ individual educational and career trajectories with labor market and economic needs, enhancing the effectiveness of future specialists’ preparation and shaping competitive individuals.

Moreover, career guidance helps reduce the risks of inefficient educational investments and unsuccessful career choices, as it allows students to more consciously assess their abilities, interests, and professional development prospects. Thus, career guidance serves as a strategic factor in human capital formation, combining educational, social, and economic aspects of personal and societal development. “Professional self-determination of the individual is the main goal of career guidance. This concept implies a successful choice of profession, taking into account personal professional characteristics and their correspondence with the requirements of the chosen profession” [4, p. 67].

Among the current challenges in career guidance, several key aspects can be identified. First, the rapid changes in professions and the constant emergence of new specialties complicate youth orientation in the labor market and require continuous updating of labor market knowledge. Second, there is a mismatch between educational programs and employer expectations, leading to a shortage of practically trained specialists. Third, insufficient integration among schools, businesses, and state institutions reduces the effectiveness of career guidance, limiting students’ opportunities to gain real exposure to professional activities. Finally, low awareness among students regarding working conditions and the requirements of modern professions increases the risk of poorly informed educational and career choices.

Contemporary innovative approaches to career guidance aim to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of students’ professional self-determination.

Such approaches include the implementation of a competency-based approach in education, which helps develop key skills and practical competencies; the active use of digital platforms and aptitude testing, allowing for the assessment of students' inclinations and the individual selection of career trajectories; the development of dual education and partnerships with schools, employers, and community organizations; and the organization of career counseling, mentorship, and practical internships for students.

The implementation of these approaches allows the creation of an integrated career guidance system that ensures more conscious career choices, increases motivation for learning, and fosters competent, adaptive, and competitive professionals in the modern labor market.

The competency-based approach directs education toward the formation of practical skills necessary for professional activity. Digital tools enable the individualization of the career guidance process and enhance the accuracy of assessing abilities and interests. Dual education combines theory with practice, while collaboration with employers ensures alignment of training with labor market needs. Career counseling and mentorship support students throughout the process of professional self-determination. In this way, these approaches increase the effectiveness of career guidance and contribute to the formation of competitive human capital.

Modern career guidance approaches actively employ practical methods that familiarize students with professional activities, allowing them to assess real working conditions and their own inclinations. One innovative tool is the Shadowing method, which involves observing professionals during their daily work. This method allows students to see real tasks, work rhythms, and the atmosphere of the profession they are considering [5].

The Shadowing method is an effective career guidance tool because it enables students not only to observe the daily tasks of professionals but also to assess the actual work pace, corporate culture, and team interactions. Such experience provides a much deeper understanding of a profession than traditional descriptions or video materials. Moreover, observing professionals fosters the development of students'

professional awareness, helping them recognize the key skills and competencies necessary for success in a specific field and understand the real requirements of professional activity. Shadowing creates conditions for making more informed decisions regarding future education and careers, as students can not only see the work from the inside but also ask questions about challenges, prospects, and specific aspects of the profession. An additional advantage of this method is the opportunity to establish initial professional contacts, which may later become sources of mentorship, internships, or practical experience. Finally, shadowing allows students to “test” a chosen field without long-term commitments, making it a safe and effective tool for early professional self-determination.

In the article “European Experience of Career Guidance for Youth”, Yu. Mohylina presents an analysis and synthesis of the experience of European countries in the field of youth career guidance, focusing in particular on systemic approaches to organizing this process in schools and on practical tools used to support conscious career choices. Based on this research, several key approaches can be distinguished. First, in Germany, career guidance is directly integrated into the educational process and includes the assessment of students’ interests and abilities, the use of workbooks for self-analysis, and familiarization with the actual work rhythm and professional culture. Second, in the United Kingdom, a comprehensive inter-agency approach is applied, ensuring continuous career guidance support from school to adulthood and coordination among educational institutions, employment services, and career centers. Third, in France, emphasis is placed on psychological and informational support for students, including psychological counseling, provision of labor market information, and differentiation of the educational process according to each student’s interests and potential. Fourth, in Poland, career guidance activities are coordinated through school career centers, where career counselors analyze the labor market, organize events, and facilitate students’ practical exposure to professions [3].

Regarding specific tools, the article mentions individual and group consultations with career counselors, the use of psychodiagnostic tests to determine students’ interests, abilities, and professional inclinations, workbooks or specialized materials for self-analysis, simulation and role-playing exercises replicating real work

situations, as well as internships and cooperation with employers, which allow students to gain direct insight into working conditions and professional specifics. All these elements form a systemic approach to career guidance, combining psychological support, information provision, and practical training, thereby ensuring comprehensive preparation for students to make informed career choices.

The economic impact of career guidance manifests in increased overall efficiency of the economy and more rational use of human resources. Specifically, well-organized career guidance contributes to higher labor productivity, as individuals choose professions according to their abilities and inclinations. It also helps reduce youth unemployment by better aligning graduates' training with labor market needs. Furthermore, career guidance optimizes educational expenditures by decreasing the number of cases involving changes in specialization or incomplete studies.

A notable example of economic growth through the development of career guidance in school education is the United States. In this country, under the coordination of the Department of Labor, specialized career guidance and selection centers operate to assist adolescents in determining their future professions. The outcomes of their activities are significant: the proportion of students changing their chosen profession has decreased from 30–40% to 5–8%, work-related accidents caused by human factors have been reduced by 70%, and the efficiency of management processes has increased by 10–25%. Thus, government investments in career guidance not only justify themselves but also provide substantial long-term resource savings [4, p. 68]. More broadly, career guidance acts as a factor in the innovative development of the economy, as it helps form a workforce capable of generating and implementing new ideas and technologies.

Career guidance for schoolchildren is a strategically important tool for managing human capital, ensuring the development of a high-quality workforce for the state. Its modernization should be based on the integration of education, business, and government policy, as well as the implementation of innovative approaches to personal development.

Conclusions. Career guidance for schoolchildren is an important factor in shaping their professional self-determination and a strategic tool for developing a country's human capital. Analysis of contemporary literature and European experience indicates that effective career guidance requires a comprehensive approach combining psychological support, information provision, practical training, and partnership cooperation among schools, employers, employment services, and community organizations.

Modern approaches to career guidance include integration into the educational process, systemic inter-agency coordination, psychological and informational support for students, the establishment of career centers, and the use of innovative forms of communication. Practical tools include individual and group consultations, psychodiagnostic testing, specialized materials for self-analysis, simulation and role-playing exercises, internships, observation of professionals (“shadowing”), as well as digital platforms and interactive methodologies.

The application of these approaches and tools enhances the awareness of career choices, develops key competencies and practical skills, optimizes educational investments, fosters competitive and adaptable professionals, and increases economic efficiency by better aligning youth training with labor market needs. Career guidance for schoolchildren is thus not only an educational and social category but also an economic factor that determines the level of human capital development and the competitiveness of the state. Modernizing this system should be based on the integration of education, business, and government policy, incorporating contemporary technologies and innovative approaches to cultivate students' conscious attitude toward professional development and their life trajectories.

Future research prospects include studying the effectiveness of the integrated use of various career guidance tools, assessing the impact of digital platforms and interactive methodologies on the development of professional competencies, and designing adaptive models of career guidance that consider students' individual characteristics and the dynamic changes of the labor market.

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