

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS IN VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING FOR ADOLESCENTS WITHOUT A VALID FAMILY SUPPORT

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Abstract

In many countries the concept of institutional support in vocational counselling for risk group youngsters has rather wide understanding and interpretation. Presented theoretical and practical Christian issue reveals a profile, as much as possible close to the Model of Vocational Counselling for teenagers without a valid family support. The needs that are common to this group of youngsters have special characteristics, and in this way could be described as special needs. To these special needs and necessities are added those deriving from the ways of management of living in a community, when this is based on the pedagogical methods of the so-called self-government. Therefore, the role of institution and institutional support plays significant role in the successful integration process of teenagers without a valid family support into the labour market.

Key words: institutional support, Christian community, vocational counselling.

Introduction

Theory and practice applied in the community of Città dei Ragazzi presents educational action carried out by Msgr. J. P. Carroll-Abbing (1965), the main issue of which is support, assistance and love for youngsters coming from different parts of the world. Community of Città dei Ragazzi actively exists in Italy since the Second World War. At the same time Christian Community as a type of institution must cherish values and serve for at-risk youngsters as a family. It supposes some specific characteristics of institutional management, contacts with environment, selection of high skilled staff.

Analyzing scientific reviews (Friesen, 1981; Marinelli, & Dell Orto, 1999; Sharma, 2005; Stott, 2009; Merton, 2010) it is obvious that talking about institutional support in vocational counselling the main attention is paid to the person's motives, his/her maturity for choosing occupation, culture and family traditions, but there are not enough studies about

institutional support in the process of vocational counselling. Especially, talking about closed type institutions that belong to determinate ideological backgrounds. The youngsters who live in Christian community of Città dei Ragazzi, have no valid family support: family is almost completely non-existent, due to the death of one or both parents, for separation or divorce, for juridical problems, abandonment of the family, or for economic-social conditions such as poverty, being a refugee, social disadvantage. Youngsters that are brought up in Città dei Ragazzi Community could be assessed as having different special educational needs, because before their placement to the institution all of them have experienced social, emotional and cognitive deprivation, some of them have health problems. These indications let consider them as youngsters whose process of development must go under specialists' care.

As Christian paradigm says, "work involves assisting others in working through their life issues" (Friesen, 1981), it means that any job is valued and meaningful. It means that institution being of closed-type at the same time must keep and coordinate relations with the society into which members of community would be integrated.

Youngsters (7–18 years) living in Community of Città dei Ragazzi, pass through first two phases of vocational development (Table 1).

Table 1

Stages of vocational development

VOCATIONAL	AGES	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS / DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS
Crystallization	14–18	Developing and planning a tentative vocational goal
Specification	18–21	Firming the vocational goal

Career development theory (<http://taracat.tripod.com/careertheory1.html>)

As it was mentioned earlier, closed type institution and its rules are significant concerning the age of youngsters who are living without sufficient support of family. At this age family plays a significant role discussing and getting acquainted with different jobs and possibilities of further education. That is why the role of educator in closed type institution is important and significant, consulting vocational challenges and forming child's personality, as well.

High-skilled, conscious educator with specialized knowledge, feeling a great passion for education is capable to meet a great number of needs of the youngsters who are in situation of insufficient support of their families. Educator who makes difficult choice and individualizes himself in this situation must be open to the general and individual needs of the teenager and community, to serve, taking essential factors in developing youngster's personality, strengthen his inner sources for future life. In such situation structure, operation and management of community life must secure adequate and efficient vocational counselling.

Naturally, career stages which are closely related to age or life stage are more strongly associated with developmental theories, while age-independent, task-relevant stages are derived from a more sociological or economic foundation. Further the focus of interest shifts from the individual to the organizational or societal level (Wrobel, Raskin, Maranzano, Leibholz Frankel, & Beacom, 2003). Mentioned authors amplify E. Schein's "career anchors" (Hogan, & Blake, 1999) that have provided a conceptual understanding of individual career development within the current reality of impermanent organizational ties. He posits that an individual's self-concept, basic values, motives, and needs serve to provide a foundation from which to make difficult life choices, including decisions regarding career and family. So, institution organizing support in vocational counselling must take into the mind the youngsters' further ties with society, economic reality and child's individuality as well.

Talking about Holland's theory of career choice (Hogan, & Blake, 1999) some accentuating statements could be discussed in the context of institutional support in vocational counselling process. Holland distinguished six basic types of work environment: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. For the closed type organization it is important to organize environment in which youngsters, during their life in the community, have a possibility to explore as many as possible work environments. While getting acquainted with different types of works, tasks, materials, knowledge, etc., a child could reveal the best inborn abilities and rights. At the same time the high skilled professionals, able to recognize and develop child's abilities must be close to him. It corresponds to the second Holland's statement that claims that people search for environments where they can use their skills and abilities and express their values and attitudes. In this context institution intercept functions of family that is mostly responsible for transferring traditions, inculcation of traditional values, development of social experience of the child.

Institution, successfully performing in vocational counselling, has to base this work on issues that correspond to the requirements and strategies of state economy, development of friendly environment, psychology of teenagers and needs of labour market. Sociologists stress the forces in the society as the major determinants of vocational choice. However, the wide range of occupations that an individual will consider in choosing a career is determined largely by the status expectations of the social class to which he/she belongs. Parents often influence their children in the choice of a career. It reasons child's choice of occupation within the range acceptable to parental values, expectations and social class. In community it must be ensured that every child will have enough sessions for adequate choice. Educational opportunities clearly influence vocational choice, that is why quality of education in the community must correspond to the youngster's abilities and needs (Baranauskienė, & Juodraitis, 2008; Baranauskienė, Radzevičienė, & Valaikienė, 2010).

Usually, youngster's vocational choices are related to his/her social class and the social origins of an individual limit the range of occupational opportunities available to the person. Students who come from lower class homes often find it difficult to continue their education while those from upper class homes obtain much encouragement from their families and peers to continue their studies (Friesen, 1981).

Economists say that opportunities of the labour market strongly influence the vocational choices people make. If the opportunities for making a living are limited, the person will seek out a career which has a potential to meet his physical needs even though the career is, in many ways, unsuitable for him. To assist in broadening the range of career opportunities, vocational information is very useful (Friesen, 1981).

Summarizing it could be concluded that institutional support in vocational consulting is multimeaningful and complex activity that first must be directed to develop child's personality. Role of institution in organizing vocational counselling for youngsters without valid family support has much more extended functions in comparison with other ones, which are attended by teenagers living in families.

Problem of the research: What are the peculiarities of closed type community organizing vocational counselling for youngsters belonging to social risk group? What main issues of institutional management correspond to Christian values?

Object of the research: Socio-educational institutional support mechanisms in vocational counselling for adolescents without a valid family support in the Christian closed type institution.

The research aims have been drawn:

1) To conceptualize essential categories of institutional support ensuring success of vocational counselling for children and youth having SEN based on the Christian understanding of modern education and social integration.

2) To reveal mechanisms of vocational counselling support in the closed type institution Città dei Ragazzi.

Methods and methodology of the research: Observation of scientific literature, analysis of heritage of Msgr. J.P. Carroll-Abbing studies have been used to reveal main issues of Christian standpoints of social integration. Empiric data have been collected by using ethnographic research. This type of research has been chosen because it reflects societal behaviour of people that enables to learn more deeply about the phenomenon and diversity of vocational counselling in different EU countries. Research data have been gained during the natural observation and complemented by the interview method, analysis of documents and assessment by expert groups. The data was processed by logic analysis aiming to reveal completeness of the system of vocational counselling in Italy, on the basis of the theoretical conception of the institutional support mechanisms of the system of vocational counselling for students having SEN, while revealing the links of interaction of assessment criteria. Certain criteria of institutional support mechanisms of the vocational counselling system for students with SEN (see Table 2; authors Baranauskienė, & Juodraitis, 2008) have been defined. It consists of 2 notional blocks that allow describing and understanding the peculiarities of analyzed phenomenon.

Empiric data for the research have been collected using method of structured discussion (free conversations with staff, students, and ex-students), method of observation (observing staff's and students' communication) and narrative method describing and revealing the essential features that let better understand phenomenon of institutional support in vocational counselling of SEN pupils.

Participants of the research: In the research 35 youngsters of Boys' Town from the 11 to 17 years of age have participated and 20 teachers and specialists working in the Boys' Town, as well.

Assurance of reliability of data: It should be taken into account that results of the ethnographic research often leave some doubts concerning reliability of data and validity of conclusions. In order to validate research results the group of experts (counsellors) was formed; group of three people was made and they not only got acquainted with results of a particular research, but got acquainted with the results of the overall research, as well. Remarks of experts and additional information provided by them will help in drawing final generalizations and conclusions.

Theoretical background of the research: According to the analysis of scientific studies (Marinelli, & Dell Orto 1999; Sharma, 2005; Baranauskienė, & Juodraitis, 2008; Baranauskienė I., & Radzevičienė L., 2010) institutional mechanisms of vocational counselling support were defined and basically they are constructed on the socio-educational performance.

Institutional support mechanisms of the vocational counselling system for pupils having SEN were conditionally divided (Table 2) into two blocks: 1. Accessibility of the system of vocational counselling and 2. Flexibility of the system of pre-vocational counselling that is a part of complex phenomenon.

Table 2

Support mechanisms of the vocational counselling system for pupils having SEN

Socio-educational institutional support mechanisms
1. Accessibility of the system of vocational counselling
2. Flexibility of the system of pre-vocational counselling

Baranauskienė, & Juodraitis, 2008

Each block has its indicators according to which institutional mechanisms of vocational counselling support could be clarified. Institution cannot be assessed as a stable area, disconnected with working staff, pupil and environment. To reach goals and to implement foreseen mission the institution must be sensitive to changing challenges of social reality, to meet needs of everyone who participates in this process. Therefore, management and organization of socio-educational activities supporting institutional vocational counselling depend on the deep knowledge and cognition of those who are involved in this process. It means that human factor is significant and must be taken into the mind working in the closed type institutions.

Categorizing two blocks of socio-educational activities supporting institutional vocational counselling some subcategories have been defined (Table 3).

Table 3

Subcategories of institutional socio-educational support mechanisms

Socio-educational institutional support mechanisms
<p>Accessibility of the system of vocational counselling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Systemic organization of pre-vocational counselling ✓ Diversity of forms of pre-vocational training ✓ Acknowledgement of the value of the process ✓ Provision of conditions for pre-vocational “growth” in comprehensive school
<p>Flexibility of the system of pre-vocational counselling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Constant reaction to changes in the labour market ✓ Flexible and modern modifications of forms of curriculum, organization and management of education ✓ Making the conditions for education closer to the market conditions ✓ Compatibility with systems of pre-vocational training of pupils having SEN in other countries

Analysis of research data

It is important to organize vocational counselling as a continuing process in which youngster has a large range of possibilities to get knowledge, to learn in the work environment, to have opportunities for training and discussions, to have possibility to check his/her attitudes and values with others. All these issues are named as accessibility for vocational counselling (Table 4). At the same time ideological background of closed type institution organizes activities for the forming of youngster’s common values through supporting child’s self-government education.

Discussing the results of the first block of socio-educational institutional support mechanisms in the aspect of the accessibility of the system of vocational counselling for the youngsters who have no valid family support some important results have been set up. One of the most important conditions for successful vocational counselling is the whole effectively performing system of vocational training and education. It means that institution, organizing its educational practice, must coordinate and adjust its regulation according to the unanimous state legal background. Four indicators have been set up that prove systemic organization of pre-vocational counselling: agreements of collaboration with large range of outside institutions to ensure permanent and renewing process in the community management.

Table 4

Accessibility of the system of vocational counselling

Area	Acknowledgement	Indicators	Responsible persons
Systemic organization of pre-vocational counselling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relationship with outside vocational counselling organizations. 2. Relationship with outside education institutions. 3. Relationships with labour sector 4. Relations with local and national authorities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of collaboration agreements with outside counselling organizations. 2. Number of agreements with education institutions for in-service training for educators. 3. Number of agreements with enterprises in which vocational counselling is performed. 4. Coordination of vocational counselling activities according to the local and national legislation. 	Administration of institution; Vocational counselling specialists; Social pedagogues; Social worker.
Diversity of forms of pre-vocational training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Different school areas to get acquainted with professions. 2. Different methods and content of induction of professions. 3. Purposeful involvement of specialists into vocational counselling activities. 4. Inclusion of the content of vocational counselling into after school activities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas of gardeners, foodstuff, handcrafts, stock-raising, garage, library, art and sport. 2. Innovative teaching methods, based on self-governance and creative learning. 3. Meetings, excursions, training sessions outside community under the guidance of high skilled professionals. 4. Public, religious, community celebrations, competitions, meeting with pupils from outside schools, participation into the city actions and entertainments. 	Administration of institution; Vocational counselling specialists; Tutors; Social pedagogues; Social worker; Representatives of Christian community; Pupil.
Acknowledgement of the value of the process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of pupil involved in certain professional training. 2. Stable reversible relationships with enterprises, planning number of needed workers. 3. Extension of the number of partners that could be potential work givers. 4. Exhibitions, marts celebrations, presenting pupils handworks. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of groups and pupils in which they tentatively do some objects. 2. Meetings with administrations of partners; planning visits; further needed work places; methodical basis for vocational counselling 3. Invitations of partners to participate into presentations of new technologies, professions, training courses; 4. Activity in participating and presenting in and outside school pupils' handworks. 	Administration of institution; Vocational counselling specialists; Tutors; Social pedagogues; Social worker; Representatives of Christian community; Pupil.
Provision of conditions for pre-vocational "growth" in community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extension processes of social integration of the community. 2. Enriching community's environment with additional "professional" areas. 3. Setting closer relationships with community graduates. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To extend process of social integration not by single pupil, but community, as well. To initiate participation of community in local and national levels. 2. To establish areas that could orientate youngsters to officeholders' professions, that require higher level of education. 3. To invite constantly community graduates to share experience, knowledge with youngsters, to help administration to set up contacts with enterprises in which community graduates are working. 	Administration of institution; Vocational counselling specialists; Social worker; Representatives of Christian community; Pupil; Graduates.

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Apart from common state legal regulation Community of Città dei Ragazzi has specific mission that goes through every educational and social activity: youngsters that live in Community are educated in the Christian spirit. So, the idea of serving others, the idea of work as common value and wellness is being implanted during youngsters' life in the Community.

Other significant indicator of accessibility in the system of vocational counselling is diversity of forms of vocational counselling (4 indications). Administration of Community with the help of Maecenas established variety of areas with modern equipments, materials, plachets for performance of vocational counselling, applying innovative methods of education. The diversity of vocational counselling reveals through the visits to the partners' enterprises, meetings with high skilled professionals, participation in the outside entertainments, celebrations and competitions.

Acknowledgement of the value of the vocational counselling is significant in the aspect of bettering mentioned process and mostly it goes through the outside societal relationship. Analyzing indicators (4 points) it has been revealed that acknowledgement of the value of the vocational counselling is set inside and outside of the institution. Inside indicator (1) it is the number of pupils in groups in which youngsters tentatively try to work. Other ones reflect outside activities in the acknowledgement of the value of the vocational counselling: it is meetings with partners; planning visits; activities that improve methodical basis for vocational counselling; presentations of new technologies, professions, training courses, etc.

To understand institutional support mechanisms in vocational counselling for youngsters without a valid family support it is important to find the provision of conditions for pre-vocational "growth" in community, because pupils live in close environment, so their social experience is rather limited. Analyzing indicators (3 of them have been set up) it was revealed that process of social integration could be extended first of all through visits, participation in outside public activities. Sometimes, following the principles of Christian world-view, that is a background of Community existence, it is hard to match participation in social events, to assess demonstrated values (or their decay) and at the same time to keep high self-governance that is crucial idea in child's upgrowing process.

Another idea that could provide better conditions for pre-vocational "growth" in community is larger orienting of youngsters to the officeholder's professions that require higher level of education. Basically, vocational counselling is linked to the professions that require lower level of education. It is a lack of vocational counselling activities that directs youngsters to seek higher education and to orient them into the level of officeholder's.

Graduates of the Città dei Ragazzi Community could be involved more actively in the process of institution's management. For this day graduates help in taking care about younger foster children in everyday activities.

Summarizing the research data on the accessibility of the system of vocational counselling in Community of Città dei Ragazzi it might be mentioned that present situation reflects the general requirements for educational institutions in this area. To say more, the practical basis for vocational counselling is better than in other public regional schools; high skilled professionals ensure continuation and quality of this process; active collaboration with enterprises let the administration of Community organize vocational counselling effectively (Table 5).

Institutional support mechanisms in vocational counselling for adolescents without a valid family support could be discussed in the aspect of flexibility of the system of vocational counselling. Flexibility of the vocational counselling system is assessed according to four categories: a) constant reaction to changes in the labour market; b) flexible and modern modifications of forms of curriculum, organization and management of education; c) making the conditions for education closer to the market conditions; d) compatibility with systems of pre-vocational training of pupils having SEN in other countries.

Table 5

Flexibility of the system of pre-vocational counselling

Area	Acknowledgement	Indicators	Responsible persons
Constant reaction to changes in the labour market	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meetings with representatives of enterprises. 2. Meetings with representatives of education services of local community. 3. Changes in the management of community according to challenges in the labour market. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of planned meetings; Year plan for further collaboration. 2. Number of planned meetings; Year plan for further collaboration. 3. Corrections in the community management corresponding to changes in the labour market. 	<p>Administration of institution; Representatives of enterprises; Representatives of education services of local community; Vocational counselling specialists; Social worker; Representatives of Christian community.</p>
Flexible and modern modifications of forms of curriculum, organization and management of education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Application of new teaching methods and forms. 2. Changes in number of professional areas, according to labour market needs. 3. Involving new specialists into vocational counselling according to the community needs. 4. Involvement of new partners into vocational counselling according to the changes in labour market. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interest of pupils in the new activities of vocational counselling when new teaching methods and forms are applied. 2. Establishment of new areas for pupils to know more about professions that are needed in the changing labour market. 3. Increasing or decreasing number of vocational consulting teachers, according to the institutions' needs performing process of vocational counselling. 4. New agreements with partners who are ready to assist in vocational counselling in the changing labour market. 	<p>Administration of institution; Vocational counselling specialists; Tutors; Social pedagogue; Social worker; Representatives of Christian community; Representatives of enterprises.</p>
Creating the conditions for education closer to the market conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extensive visits, training in the partners' enterprises; 2. Comfortable conditions for youngsters to learn specific features of professions. 3. Setting up possibilities to work guarantying social security. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Usage of after-lesson time for visits and trainings in partners' enterprises; 2. Getting ready to present shift-work system for youngsters. 3. To ensure social insurance for youngsters during their tentative training. 	<p>Administration of institution; Representatives of enterprises; Vocational counselling specialists; Social worker; Representatives of Christian community.</p>
Compatibility with systems of pre-vocational training of pupils having SEN in other countries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsibility and collaboration of Local authorities for ensuring vocational counselling in Education Institutions. 2. Legal background of youth work and promotion of children rights. 3. System of vocational training 4. Content of vocational consulting. 5. Learning environment for vocational counselling. 6. Readiness of enterprises for collaboration with education institutions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility of authoritative governance in performing processes of vocational counselling in education institutions. 2. Accordance of Legal background of youth work and children rights in different countries of EU. 3. Accordance of System of education system and vocational training in each EU country. 4. Accordance of content in vocational consulting, depending on socioeconomic needs in each EU country. 5. Differences in learning environment for vocational counselling. 6. Insufficient readiness of enterprises to collaborate with education institutions in vocational counselling. 	<p>Administration of institution; Representatives of enterprises; Representatives of education services of local community; Vocational counselling specialists; Social workers; Representatives of Christian community.</p>

Analyzing constant reaction to changes in the labour market the process of vocational counselling shifts according to actual needs and institutional possibilities. Vocational counselling activities are organized in meetings with representatives of enterprises, in which older students have their practical placements; in meetings with local authorities and staff of city education council. Administration of Città dei Ragazzi Community schedules plans for constant collaboration with mentioned institutions, but if there is a need to do any corrections, to add additional activities, to discuss and react to the changes in labour market, flexibility of any activity is obvious.

Constant reaction to changes in the labour market process is closely connected with other category: flexible and modern modifications of forms of curriculum, organization and management of education; 4 indicators have been set up that describe the category. Specialists working in the Community are open to challenges and due to their professionalism they are able to react to the changing reality in the labour market in an adequate way. Administration of Community creates good working conditions to the staff; encourage them to attend in-service courses, to intercept good experience collaborating with other specialists from the similar institutions. Other indicator that was distinguished from mentioned category is a large number of high skilled professionals working in the Community. Administration of Città dei Ragazzi Community pays a great attention to staff composing, besides professional qualification staff members must be with the highest moral features – it is the Community the performance background of which is Christianity and these values must be communicated to the youngsters.

Establishment of new areas for pupils to learn more about professions that are needed in the changing labour market is one more indication that corresponds to the flexibility of the system of vocational counselling. Administration of the Community is open to the changes and as a response to the changing situation in the labour market computer, garage, and stock-raising educational areas there have been established.

Flexibility of vocational counselling system depends on the increasing (or decreasing) number of vocational consulting teachers, according to the institutions' needs. During the last decade the number of new staff members has started to work in Community of Città dei Ragazzi. Mostly it is associated with renewal of whole educational area, application of new innovative teaching methods that are closely connected with the rising of new technologies, professions, and need of the new knowledge.

Flexibility of vocational counselling ensures new contacts with new enterprises, institutions, factories, farming units. According to these agreements pupil has more possibilities to learn environment to gain more social experience, so they are more skilled and more responsible in their future choice.

Conclusions

Generalizing what has been discussed earlier such conclusions could be drawn up:

1. Institutional support mechanisms in vocational counselling for adolescents without a valid family support include categories of accessibility of the system of vocational counselling and flexibility of the system of pre-vocational counselling.

2. Accessibility of vocational counselling in the Community of Città dei Ragazzi manifests by:

- close relationship with outside vocational counselling organizations; relationship with outside education institutions;
- application of new teaching methods and forms, number of professional areas, according to labour market needs, involving new specialists into vocational counselling according to the community needs;
- number of pupils involved in certain professional training; stable reversible relationships with enterprises, planned number of needed workers; extension of the number of

partners that could be potential work givers; exhibitions, marts celebrations, presenting pupils' handworks;

- extension processes of social integration of the community; enriching community's environment with additional "professional" areas; setting closer relationships with community graduates.

3. Flexibility of the system of pre-vocational counselling in the Community of Città dei Ragazzi manifests by:

- meetings with representatives of enterprises; meetings with representatives of education services of local community; changes in the management of community according to challenges in the labour market;

- application of new teaching methods and forms; changes of number of professional areas, according to labour market needs; involving new specialists into vocational counselling according to the community needs; involvement of new partners into vocational counselling according to the changes in labour market;

- extensive visits, training in the partners' enterprises; comfortable conditions for youngsters to learn specific features of professions; setting up possibilities to work guarantying social security.

4. Comparing systems of vocational counselling of pupils having SEN in other countries the differences have been set up in:

- responsibility and collaboration of Local authorities for ensuring vocational counselling in education institutions;

- legal background of youth work and promotion of children rights;

- system of vocational training;

- content of vocational consulting;

- learning environment for vocational counselling;

- readiness of enterprises for collaboration with education institutions.

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