

Counselling Services – Important Factor in Lifelong Employment and Career in the Slovak Republic

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Abstract:

The aim of the paper is to describe characteristic features of contemporary counselling in the Slovak Republic and propose some solutions leading to a more comprehensive form of providing career counselling services in Slovakia and to an integrated system of career guidance. The paper contains three chapters. Chapter 1 deals with history of career counselling; Chapter 2 starts with exploring the causes of the changing concept of career; its first subchapter depicts legal environment of career counselling in Slovakia, and the second one deals with conditions for providing counselling services in relation to tasks of education, while the conditions for providing counselling are analysed on the basis of own research data on the cooperation between educational institutions and enterprises and on methods of studying labour market developments. The focus of Chapter 3 is on the role of institutions providing counselling in Slovakia (employment offices, clubs of work, and other special-purpose facilities). Ideas and suggestions on improving career counselling resulting from the analysis are summarised in the conclusion.

Keywords:

Counselling, career guidance, employability, employment office, Slovak Republic.

Introduction

Counselling services may be defined as the exchange of information between advisor and client which is carried out by highly qualified professionals/experts from counselling institutions or employees of personnel departments. Career counselling/guidance should be done at all stages of man's life, i.e. during pre-school period, within formal education, after an employee's commencement of employment, or within further education as an important part of lifelong education in the case of unemployment.

Counselling services are built on the following fundamental pillars:

- the knowledge of individuals;
- their innate and acquired dispositions;
- the knowledge of information about the labour market;
- comparison of the information about the labour market.

This comparison is needed for setting forth career path. The choice of an individual's education, occupation/profession and career path has to be based on personal dispositions of an individual, but it also has to correspond to fields that offer individuals the chance self-realisation on the labour market. Low employability of university graduates often results from the surplus of graduates from a given field of study, or from the decrease linked to some fields of study, while the numbers of graduates do not adjust to this situation. On the other hand, in some professions we can observe lack of graduates. These disproportions may be partially eliminated by an adequate system of career counselling.

Career counselling is becoming an important part of lifelong education and its focus is on solving specific problems connected with preparation for one's career and fulfilment of career objectives. Lifetime education is seen as any target-oriented educational activity, whose aim is to continually improve knowledge, skills and competences. In connection with the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, lifelong education is described by the European Commission as the concept encompassing all educational systems (formal, informal and non-institutional education) and all cycles of education (pre-school education, primary school, secondary school, higher educational institution, and further education). The importance of correctly designed and organised career counselling services is increasing, and European Union countries and the OECD introduce strategies of lifelong education and counselling in order to increase their citizens' chances for employability.

The aim of the paper is to describe characteristic features of contemporary counselling in the Slovak Republic, and on the basis of comparing theoretical ideas and concepts and their

implementation in practice propose the solutions leading to a more systemic character of providing counselling services. The paper is a presentation of partial outcomes of research project KEGA 006EU-4/2013 – “Methods and principles applied in the preparation of structure and content of subjects supporting the development of students’ knowledge of economics and business skills in non-economic study programmes of the second cycle of higher (university) education”.

The basic requirements of education are actual abilities of individuals for lifelong career and their ability to assert themselves on the labour market. An individual has to be not only well qualified in their field but also has to have other personality features, which support their performance and flexibility and enable them to adapt to continual changes on the labour market.

1 Roles and Historical Roots of Career Counselling

The role of counselling is the development of human resource quality by means of target-oriented development of personalities of individuals. Personality is seen as a set of inherited and acquired under pressure of upbringing and society of properties, abilities, skills and qualities of psychic processes, which are connected with the choice of field of study and with chances to assert oneself in the national economy. Likewise characteristic features of personality structure and the creation of personality typology, also career counselling has its roots in the period of Ancient Rome and Greece. We can say that they used to have close (or common) bases of development. The knowledge of basic human personality typologies, which are part of personality psychology, is of crucial importance in choosing the field and level of education, which, in fact, constitute the basis of one’s professional life. Typologies are elaborated on the basis of human psychic properties, dynamics of man’s psychic activities, emotional stability; and they are important in the course of career planning and preparation for career. The findings are used also by employer entities in recruitment and selection of employees in the organisation, in deployment of employees to job positions, in the creation of work groups as well as in delegating responsibilities.

Man’s career is an important factor, which affects all human life, enables self-actualisation needs and experiencing success. A wrong orientation of one’s career and wrong choice of profession may produce a negative influence on man’s quality of life and make one’s life stressful. It is an uneasy task to define the problems of choice of occupation/profession clearly and in an exhaustive way, despite the fact there are a lot of theories on the subject. The choice of occupation/profession is seen by each theory from differing aspect, while the emphasis is placed on various variables. When choosing one’s occupation/profession requirements of occupation/profession should be in harmony with personality properties, e.g. traits, abilities, and interests. Apart from the wishes in early school-age, interests and abilities in puberty, also the value factor is emphasised the choice of one profession. J. Holland’s personality types (1985) enable to anticipate professional behaviour and satisfaction with occupation. The choice of profession (or one’s career/professional orientation) in J. Holland’s personality types is determined mostly by interests and abilities. There are numerous theories and approaches (e.g. matching theory, developmental theory, the theory of occupational allocation (Career guide for schools. Report on Effective Career Guidance Socrates/Comenius, co-financed by the European Council, 2008. Education and Culture), which can be used by an individual in the choice of profession; at the same time, these theories are significant in counselling and human resources management. The evaluator considers each individual separately, which he or she subsequently uses in determining career orientation and the choice of profession.

It was a well known Ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus (55 – 135 AD), who claimed that before choosing our occupation people needed to consider whether their abilities were in harmony with the requirements for the performance of the career chosen. Epictetus formulated one of the fundamental theoretical problems, which relates also the present-day career counselling: the issue of an optimum harmony between man and his activities. Philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, doctors, and later also other academics and practitioners were interested in the relation between man’s personality and man’s genetic innate dispositions and capacities for further development under the influence of socio-cultural factors and via education in accordance with the conditions of one’s future job. The first textbook of differential psychology entitled *Examen de los ingenios para las ciencias* was written in the year 1575; its author, a Spanish doctor Juan Huarte y Navarro reflected on the possibilities of testing and professional counselling to ensure harmony between man’s properties and human behaviour, while fully utilising their talents. He dealt with, e.g. examining various conditions and influences which cause differences in human psychic and concluded that a higher level of civilisation and better conditions for the development of intelligence were in mild weather. These ideas gradually developed into the ideas and opinions about the importance of selection processes for

study purposes. Unless one achieves a particular level of psychic properties, one is not able to successfully complete their studies and achieve the results required also in other work activities. Jan Amos Comenius (1592 –1671) speaks about it in his great work *Didactica Magna*: “The work of the academy will be easier and more successful, firstly, if only youths of definite talent, the elite of mankind, are sent there, while the others will be left to the ploughs, crafts and trade, each to the end to which he was born.” (Kohoutek, 2009). B. Pascal’s (1623 – 1662) comment about the choice of occupation which is often a matter of chance, although it is the most important thing in life, is relevant even nowadays. This statement also reflects the contemporary situation, when increasing demands on intellectualisation of labour necessitate paying close attention to this matter. (Kohoutek, 2009, p. 57).

Higher demands placed on work gradually led to the idea of professional or career counselling, which appeared at the end of the 19th century. This phenomenon was connected mainly with the possibilities of differential psychology studies in psychic and an individual’s personality and formulation of general assessment criteria of differences in quality and quantity between people. The development of progress in technology, accompanied with increasing demands on human resources in the nineteen-twenties led to the rise of a new applied psychology discipline, the so called “psychotechnique” with its specific methods of work. Scientific foundations of this discipline were laid down by H. Münsterberg (1863 – 1916), representative of the behaviourist school of management (Majtán, 2009, p. 47), and by Harvard University Professor W. Stern (1871–1938), author of the concept of psychotechnique.

Frank Parsons (1854 – 1908) is well-known as the father of vocational guidance”. F. Parsons responded to changing needs of industry, focused on the transition of students from school environment to working environment (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2012, p. 7). F. Parsons suggested to introduce special occupational counsellors and started to organise courses for them. Apart from techniques and methods of implementation of counselling he designed a specific profile of the counsellor and stressed the personality traits of a counsellor, e.g. smart mind, university education, several years of experience in social work or experience in other similar occupations, extensive knowledge of psychology and experience in teaching; as for age, he recommended the age more than 25 years (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 19). H. Münsterberg explored the responsibility of human factor for a rising number of accidents at electric tram lines in large US large cities before the First World War. He applied results of his research (including also the modelling of tram drivers reactions in the course of the work process) also to other occupations, and emphasized in his conclusions it was important for an individual to have a set of mental properties, while each of these properties had to exist on some level and achieve determined limits.

In professions which involve obligatory selection, small psychological experiments have to be used, since traditional methods of selection are becoming inadequate (Kohoutek, 2012). The knowledge gained from psychological selections was verified during the First World War, and its results were preferably used in the aircraft industry for the first time in France, then successively also in England, Germany, Italy, and in the United States.

The career counselling development is a significant issue in the European Social Charter, a document adopted in Torino on 18 October 1961, and supplemented later. The topic of the right to counselling in the choice of profession is dealt with in Article 9: In order to ensure an efficient performance of the right to counselling in the choice of occupation/ profession contractual parties commit themselves to ensure or support, if needed, services to assist all persons, including the disabled, in dealing with problems related to choice of occupation or advancement in it, with respect to personal dispositions and chances on the labour market. This kind of help should be granted to adolescents, including school-age children as well as adults (European Social Charter. [Online]). This document highlighted the importance of counselling services and promoted their development and broader application in securing employability and career.

2 Lifelong Career and Counselling: the changing concept of career as a result of labour market developments

Changing conditions on the labour market require to pay greater attention to preparation of individuals not only in the course of preparation for their careers, but also during their entire lives. Career is understood as a life-time process of self-development, which enables to improve one’s personality potential and acquire and develop it so that one remains competitive on the labour market and is able to pass individual career stages on the basis of one’s own free choice, own capacities and possibilities on the labour market. Career is a man’s professional living path, on which man’s personal potential develops and accomplishes. One acquires new knowledge and skills through working

activities (by doing) or by means of educational activities carried out in various ways. Until relatively recently, people in the Slovak Republic were gradually preparing for one occupation, which they performed for their working life time, and usually were employed in one organisation. Nowadays, career is not connected with a single employer and career and personality development is becoming the matter of each individual. His career is determined by the personality structure and the rate of intellectual, mechanical a psychomotoric abilities. A changing concept of career is considered as the result of labour market changes.

Counselling enables an individual to find their basic work orientation. Labour market participants have to face the following basic changes and shifts:

- From employment certainty to employability certainty;
- From loyalty to organisation to loyalty to work performed, (which is frequently subject to criticism on the part of employers who require loyalty to one's own organisation);
- From gaining target education to permanent lifetime education;
- From the work performed on the permanent contract of employment (work contract for unlimited period) to short-term (flexible) employments;
- From career stability and linear course of career to cyclic course and career instability, but to a possible unlimited career development,
- From a continuous, uninterrupted and cohesive course of career characteristic of the building of position, power and authority, to an interrupted and irregular course of career, with a strong emphasis on continuous acquisition of required competences and achieving success.

There are three principal aims of counselling: choice of occupation, choice of suitable education and adjustment to education (http://www.navigaciavpovolani.sk/kariérne_poradenstvo). The fulfilment of these three basic aims is facilitated by the process of coaching. Coaching is a non-directive way of leading people (HORSKÁ, 2009, s. 124); it is a specific and long-term care of people and their growth in their professional and personal lives. At the same time, it is a counterpole to commanding and control. The term *coach* in itself (from English) comes from the 16th century (FISCHER, 2006, p. 15) and means a "chariot", i.e. a means of transport which people used when they set out on a journey and it helped them reach the destination. Since the year 1884 the designation of coach was used to refer to a private tutor or guardian for university students. Coaching is a relationship and process, in which the coach helps the coached in achieving their visions, aims and wishes. It is a type of individual counselling with practically oriented training and a personal feedback to secure future progression. The aim of coaching is to improve perception of reality and strengthen responsibility and self-confidence. Instead of receiving facts from his or her coach, clients reveal facts themselves, with the help of the coach. Forms of providing counselling services developed on the basis of counsellor – client relationship. The individual counselling based on counsellor – client relationship, gradually developed into group counselling, mass counselling, and self-service counselling. These forms came into being as a result of rising interest in counselling services and also due to acceptability of these services by specific clients.

2.1 Legal Environment of Counselling and Its Legislative Bases in the Slovak Republic

The Government of the Slovak Republic approved the Strategy of Lifelong Education and Lifelong Counselling in April 2007 with prospects to its fulfilment by the year 2015. The principal aim of the strategy is to strengthen an individual's awareness of the need for permanent education, which will equip them with the skills and competences for sustainable employment, for asserting themselves in society, as well as for the development of their personal interests. One of the Strategy 2007 outputs adopted in December 2009 Act No. 568/2009 Coll. On lifelong education and on amending and supplementing of some acts, which provided some important institutes for further development of lifelong education and of lifelong counselling systems. When developing the lifelong education system, the focus shall be on a coordinated activity of all stakeholders in the system of lifelong education, i.e. citizens themselves, educational institutions, counselling centres, employers, professional and trade associations, but also of local and regional self-government, personnel agencies and non-government organisations. At the centre of attention of lifelong education is a learning individual, who has access to school education (guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic), as well as to further education, while maintaining the principles of quality and equal opportunity at any age and regardless of their previous education.

Every preparation for work qualification requires some period of time; graduates' needs have to be brought in harmony with demands of the national economy for some occupations and professions. This is especially true of the first educational path in formal education, when the preparation period

lasts longest. The choice of education for the performance of a particular job and professional career has to be in harmony with employer needs of industries. The government branch for education as a guarantor of lifelong education and lifelong counselling should ensure the problems of lifelong education were understood in a wider context, i.e. as issues crossing the limits of branches and regions.

The relevant government branch in the SR arranges counselling related to psychology, pedagogy and career, i.e. study and professional counselling. The counselling system of education is to offer a survey of formal and informal education, to provide detailed information about current fields of education and study programmes. In the Government branch of education in the Slovak Republic, providing counselling and upbringing services is amended by Act No. 245/2008 Coll. On education as amended: Act No. 462/2008 Coll., Act No. 37/2009 Coll., Act No. 184/2009 Coll., Act No. 37/2011 Coll. (School Act, as of 1 March 2011). Part 3 deals with school establishments of upbringing counselling and prevention.

Our translation of relevant paragraphs is given in the following text.

§ 130

"In school facilities of upbringing counselling and prevention mainly psychological, educational and special education, including logopedic and curative educational activities and social activity with focus on optimisation of upbringing, educational, psychic, social, and children career development from birth through to completion of preparation for education. A special attention is paid to children with special upbringing and educational needs. Counselling services are provided also to statutory representatives of children and teachers.

Basic components of upbringing counselling and prevention are facilities of upbringing, psychological and special education/pedagogy counselling and prevention (further only "counselling facility"), consisting of:

1. *Centre for pedagogical and psychological counselling;*
2. *Centre for special educational counselling.*

§ 132

Centre for Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention *provides a comprehensive psychological, special education, diagnostic, upbringing, counselling and prevention care to children except for children with health handicaps mainly in the area of optimising their personality, educational and professional development, care for developing talents, eliminating failures of psychic development, and dealing with behaviour disorders. Statutory representative and teachers are provided with counselling services.*

Centre for Educational and Psychological Counselling and Prevention may be divided into the following departments:

- a) *counselling of personality development;*
- b) *counselling for education development;*
- c) *counselling for social development and prevention;*
- d) *counselling in career development;*
- e) *psychotherapy;*
- f) *methods of upbringing counselling;*
- g) *special education counselling.*

§ 133

Centre for special education counselling *provides a comprehensive special educational activity; psychological, diagnostic, counselling, rehabilitation, prevention, methodological, upbringing and educational and other professional activities and a set of special education interventions for children with medical handicaps including children with developmental failures in order to achieve an optimum development of and social integration.*

§134

The role of upbringing counselling is to perform counselling in dealing with personality, educational, professional, and social needs of children and of career counselling.

§ 135

Psychological counselling *provides professional counselling services to children, statutory representative and teaching staff to secure their healthy personality development and psychic health."*

– According to Act No. 199/2010 Coll. amending and supplementing Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Universities on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended, according to which every higher education institution provides applicants for study, students, and other persons information and counselling services connected with the study and employability of graduates from higher education institutions.

Under the Government branch of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, SR counselling is amended by Act No. 120/2011 Coll. amending and supplementing Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended and by the regulation of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, SR No. 31/2004 Coll., in §11 on arranging professional counselling services.

In the Government branch of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, counselling is provided to job applicants and employers, while target groups are mainly:

- low-qualification employees,
- persons endangered by loss of job;
- the unemployed;
- applicants for employment (job-seekers);
- employees of higher age groups (50+);
- persons with disabilities, medical or other handicaps.

Counselling is becoming one of the key activities of employment offices, and information and counselling services are provided for free. Counselling for the choice of occupation on the level of employment offices includes mainly giving information and professional advice on kinds of occupation and on conditions and requirements placed on the performance of some occupation/profession. Counselling for the choice of occupation, its change and the counselling in the recruitment and selection of employees deals with:

- assessment of professional and personal competences and on subsequent search for suitable employment with respect to identified capabilities of the citizen who is recorded as unemployed, or the one who wants to change their present employment;
- acquiring information and professional advice related to mainly health and qualification requirements, which are placed on citizens in connection with the performance in particular work positions.

Counselling is provided by employment offices by means of individual, group and mass counselling on two basic levels, namely as:

- information and counselling services;
- professional counselling services, in terms of quality, method/manner, scope, and aims of advice provided.

Activities of employment offices are coordinated by the Central Office for Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF).

Individual counselling is carried out at employment offices in client – counsellor interaction. This form of counselling is preferred mainly by introvert types of clients (the unemployed), who either do not want to or cannot speak about their problem situation, from subjective or objective reasons, in a group of people. Individual counselling, carried out by means of individual interview of professional counsellor pursuant to §43 Art. 3 of Act on with a job applicant contains:

- all-round evaluation of job applicant's personality abilities and professional competences;
- determination of aims needed for the return to the labour market;
- determination of possible obstacles to achieving targets set forth;
- elaboration of a proposal for overcoming possible obstacles to their employability and application on the labour market.

The most important method of work in the process of individual counselling for the unemployed is a counselling interview, which has its traditional stages, e.g. introduction of an interview, exploration – survey of problem situation, consolidation – summary of information acquired from the client and information provided by the counsellor; action plan – agreement on procedure; and steps to be made by the client in order to achieve the target set forth. The time scope and interval of meetings of the client with the counsellor determines the counsellor after the agreement with the client according to the development of situation.

Group counselling for the unemployed characterise relations and communication links of the type counsellor – group, counsellor – each group member, and reciprocal evaluation of group

members. This form of counselling is suitable for communication clients, who suffer from lack of social contacts.

The most important methods of work in group counselling for the unemployed include role playing, modelling, small-group work, discussion, brainstorming, training including relaxation training, feedback, which support active social learning in group. These methods are characteristic of a high rate of participation of those who take part in group counselling on achieving the aim of each session, which increases the level of learning efficiency, self-cognition, motivation and activating work aspirations of the unemployed. In order to relieve the atmosphere and contribute to creative environment the following rules must be observed:

- the rule of prohibition on criticism;
- the rule of free imagination;
- the rule of mutual inspiration;
- the rule of equality of participants.

Mass counselling at employment offices is a specific form of counselling for the unemployed, employers and for the public at large with focus on:

1. information about new legislative provisions in the area of employment;
2. shaping of citizens' awareness in relation to :
 - the phenomenon of unemployment;
 - personal responsibility of each citizen for their own application on the labour market;
 - active cooperation with employment office in the case of unemployment;
 - active approach to dealing with one's own employability;
 - assuming an attitude to persons who are "between jobs", which is particularly important in the case of employers.
3. Information about rights and duties of employers in relation to employment office and about advantages that employers can obtain in particular situations when dealing with problems of the labour market.

Information counselling services can be described as primary, basic information counselling activity, which includes the data on:

- The possibilities of employment according to current situation on the labour market and requirements placed on the performance of a particular employment;
- Education and re-qualification arranged via employment office, support of unemployment, obligations and rights of recorded unemployed, support to employing those who are listed and recorded as unemployed, possibilities of counselling, etc. These data are provided by employment office workers, who get into the first contact with an unemployed citizen, or with those interested in changing their employment.

Professional counselling services at an employment office are provided by professional advisors. These are services sought for by citizens, alternatively, they can be recommended or offered these services after citizens have acquired basic information, but their problem situation, which is connected with employability or choice of employment, persists. These services are connected with:

- establishing harmony between a citizen's personal and personality abilities and the requirements placed on the employee in connection with performance of some job;
- supporting the citizen's decision making and behaviour the aim of which is to obtain a suitable employment;
- issues of a citizen's social and working adaptation.

Specialist counsellors are invited to offer their services in the following situations: (ŽILOVÁ, 1998, p. 61):

- A citizen is unable to decide (subjective indecisiveness as they do not understand or know the job offered, or have doubts of their own capabilities and personality competences to perform a particular job.
- A citizen overestimates their abilities and capacities in relation to own aspirations;
- Job mediator, i.e. an employment office employee of the first contact with citizens, is uncertain for any reasons about the correctness or suitability of mediating a particular employment.
- Psychically highly demanding work is mediated.
- An unemployed person is an individual with a strong negative experiencing of their own unemployment, with negative consequences on their self-confidence.
- A citizen has no or very little experience with searching for employment and asserting themselves on the labour market.

Counselling is becoming a partial activity in the process of career development also in separate employer entities. It is significant in the stage of coordinating personality and qualification assumptions of an individual and needs of society in connection with the performance of required or assumed activities of each person. Until recently an individual was gradually preparing for one occupation, in which they worked for a lifetime as an employee of a single company (HŘEBÍČEK, 2008); and that company would look after their careers, and personality development. According to this approach, employees not only rise on the ladder of hierarchy within a single organisation, but are expected at the same time to remain working for the company during the entire period of their working activity. In this connection, it holds therefore, that it is largely the organisation that is responsible for the course of their career; the organisation acts as an advisor in career planning as well as a career management entity. Nowadays, career is no longer connected with the individual's operation in a single organisation. The concept of career as a sequence of promotions and progressions upwards in a work-related hierarchy during life in one organization, was replaced with the concept of career:

- With several employer entities;
- As professions in certain kinds of occupation, where the pattern of systemic progression is clear and unchangeable (e.g. doctors, university teachers, lawyers) regardless of the organisation where the career is made);
- As a lifelong succession of employments – on the basis of this concept all workers pursue their careers without their performance being evaluated and assessed in terms of type of occupation or direction of the employee's development;
- As a lifelong sequence of role experience ensuing from an individual's work history.

It was not only a classic view of career as a advancement in one's job held with one employer, where discussions about career and career counselling were indirectly secured by personnel units in employer entities. Linking one's career with several organisations during one's life resulted in eliminating indirect and permanent career counselling, which was carried out by personnel units in individual organisations.

Counselling activity is a process of assistance to an individual and the assistance to self-help in the scope and by means of such methods of work, so that citizens recognised and were able to utilise their sources and powers and make optimum decisions about their application at work with respect to their inherent abilities, while considering the situation on the job market. A thorough monitoring of requirements on the part of employer entities to acquire credibility is significant, as it enables them to provide advice based on the knowledge of real life. The client is made to choose the kind of field of study required by employers. This may result in a significant shift in clients' thinking and attitudes, who not only prefer a particular educational institution or cycle of education but also think about the future and career after completion of education, while employability as one of important factors is getting to the forefront.

2.1 Possibilities and Conditions of Providing Counselling Services in terms of Tasks of Education

The quality of education is dependent on a close link with orientation of educational activities to the knowledge of the labour market requirements. Given that graduates can meet exacting requirements of their future employers only if there exists efficient interaction between employer entities and educational institutions. For this purpose we did research in employer entities and in school institutions, so that we were able to evaluate their mutual efforts and cooperation in this area.

Respondents who took part in the research project KEGA 006EU-4/2013 – “Methods and principles applied in the preparation of structure and content of subjects supporting the development of students' knowledge of economics and business skills in non-economic study programmes of the second cycle of higher (university) education” were employer entities from 14 industries (listed in Tab. 2), represented by 105 enterprises of various size and 80 school establishments of various levels. Our aim was to cover the following spectrum:

- Employer entities from the following aspects:
 - size structure – made up from micro-enterprises, small, medium-sized and large enterprises, where the criterion for inclusion was the number of employees;
 - proprietary relationships – state, cooperative and private,
 - sources of capital – foreign, Slovak, mixed;
 - method of financing – contributory, budgetary and other;
 - area of business – production, offer of services;
 - place of residence of an enterprise within Slovakia's territory.

- Educational establishments from the following aspects:
 - level of education – primary (20 respondents), secondary (30 respondents, tertiary (30 respondents)
 - ownership relations – public, state and private institutions
 - fields of study,
 - spatial location of school institutions within Slovakia's territory.

Under the research we tried to cover an entire spectrum of typical representatives of economic life and school establishments in the Slovak Republic. We addressed employees of personnel departments, educational units, or managers in charge. In the case of small and micro-enterprises we approached their owners. In the case of school institutions, we focused on teaching staff and non-academic staff of study departments. Educational institutions were classified in questionnaires into public, state and private schools. Since respondents did not state any distinct differences between education and the results of education of these groups this classification is not presented in research results. The entire research was carried out by means of the questionnaire method. The cooperation of both significant groups (enterprises and educational institutions) is documented and evaluated in Tables 1 – 5.

Tab. 1 Evaluation of cooperation between employer sphere and educational institutions

Form of cooperation	Assessment of the cooperation criteria by employer entities				
	Minimum level 1	2	3	4	Maximum level 5
Consideration of labour market requirements in education at secondary schools	94	6	0	0	0
Consideration of labour market requirements in education at HEIs	83	10	7	0	0
Participation (cooperation) in educational processes in schools	48	32	15	2	0

Source: Own processing.

Respondents were representatives of employer sphere.

The research results (Table 1) indicate that schools respect requirements of the labour market to a minimum extent at least, but also there is a minimum participation of employer entities in educational process. In the question concerning the participation of enterprises in educational process at schools respondents were asked to indicate concrete forms of cooperation, e.g. direct participation in education by experts from enterprises, specific formulation of content objectives in education, with respect to future developmental trends, financing of specialised classrooms, purchasing specialised technique in selected schools and the like. The most frequent form of cooperation mentioned by respondents was lectures delivered by well known managers of enterprise, which tends to fulfil advertising purposes of the firm rather than help in fulfilling educational objectives. The level of cooperation was evaluated only by employer entities. These respondents, in turn, gave very negative responses to questions concerning the consideration of needs of practice in education. Another important problem, not mentioned by respondents, is a time shift between the period of education and that of applying graduates in practice, which under present-day fast development of technique and technology makes the disproportions between requirements and acquired knowledge and skills make even more prominent.

Tab. 2 Evaluation of cooperation between enterprises and schools in acquiring practical skills of pupils/students in %

Areas of cooperation	Do businesses cooperate with secondary schools and HEIs in providing students' experience?	Are there employees in your business earmarked to communicate with working students?	Are there specialists in your enterprise who deal with career counselling?

Industries	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries	82	18	65	35	18	82
Manufacturing production	66	34	56	44	68	32
Building and construction industry	54	46	44	56	21	79
Wholesale trade and retail trade	63	37	61	39	-	-
Transport and warehousing	27	73	19	81	-	-
Accommodation and catering services	85	15	85	15	9	91
Information and communication	89	11	77	23	33	67
Financial and insurance services	97	3	96	4	99	1
Activities in the area of realties	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional, scientific and technical services	94	6	83	17	-	-
Administrative and support services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	-	-	-	-	-
Health service and social aid	95	5	95	5	-	-
Other activities	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: own processing.

The research sample was composed of 105 opinions of respondents from employer entities of individual industries (also opinions of respondents were taken into consideration who are not employed in a given industry). In part S – Other activities, the research was organised only in divisions 95 – Computer repairs, chattels personal and household utensils and 96 – Other personal services. Not all the sections listed in the Industry classification of economic activities were involved in the research; neither were the sections belonging to the group of natural monopolies, those in which respondents were not interested in answering the questions, or those that were of little relevance for the research.

Responses to questions related to arranging short-term placements for students were studied within industry classification (Tab. 2), show there are considerable differences between individual employer entities as well as between individual industries ranging from a complete disinterest, through to creating suitable conditions for student placements, which is reflected also in earmarking employees whose responsibility is to look after students. In human resource management (HRM) departments of numerous enterprises, or HRM development departments there are specialists who perform the tasks of advisors/counsellors, who advise young or new employees as well as those who wish to re-qualify or adjust to new requirements on job performance in their present career in an enterprise and future career path.

Tab. 3 **School activities promoting development of student skills and contact with practice in %**

	Level of education
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Activities promoting development of knowledge and practical skills	Primary level of education	Secondary level of education	Tertiary level of education
Instruction in specialised classrooms and school workshops	95	83	30
Practice in business or non-business entity	0	30	50
Discussions with invited specialists (business practitioners)	40	67	73
Excursions	0	77	57
Other	0	10	13

Source: Own processing.

Respondents were employees of several school facilities (more than one activities could be chosen so the total sum may be higher than 100)

It is in particular graduates' skills and doing practical activities that are frequently criticised by employers. However, when considering also such activities as student placements in firms, discussions, excursions, or specialised classrooms, which often make use of computer simulations developed by school establishments, and the frequency of their application in education (which is reflected in results of our research) we can say that schools do make efforts to apply theoretical findings in practice. Naturally, the number of in-class hours of instruction or practice-related courses in the curricula may be increased. However, is it what employers expect? In this context, it would be suitable to develop modular instruction with a strong assistance of employers for certain groups of students, who would be employed by these employers after completing their studies; these graduates would have adequate training for job positions which they will fill.

When studying the labour market developments in connection with graduate unemployment we conclude schools could be actively involved in applying their graduates in the labour market. It means it is not enough to detect employability of their students by means of statistics or the numbers of students who did not find the kind of employment corresponding to their field of study. Instead, ideally, schools also could try to find out information about the possibilities of their graduates' future development, show interest in their career promotion, and maintain continual contacts with their graduates (work with alumni). To be able to perform these activities, educational institutions need to monitor developments on the labour market. The following two tables show opinions of representatives of educational institutions of methods used to record these developments (Table 4) and their evaluation of these activities on the scale from 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (excellent).

Tab. 4 Methods used by educational institutions in monitoring the situation on the labour market

Applied methods of monitoring of the labour market	Level of education	
	Secondary level of education	Tertiary level of education
Cooperation with state institutions	10	23
Own research	13	20
Monitoring of the development of macroeconomic indicators in a given field (trends in graduate unemployment)	33	23
External advisors	7	3

Face-to-face communication with employers	17	17
Not monitored	20	14

Source: Own processing.

Respondents were school institutions.

The table above shows that respondents from higher education institutions tend to ascribe the same importance to cooperation with state institutions as to their own monitoring of unemployment trends. Also own research in this area is performed by almost the same number of higher education institutions. It is interesting to observe that in comparison with secondary schools, less than a half of higher institutions rely on the assistance of external advisors. The only concord in answers given by these two groups was found in the case of "face-to-face-communication with employees" as a method of cooperation. As many as 21 secondary school respondents sincerely admitted their institution did not monitor the labour market to gain information.

Tab. 5 Assessment of cooperation of educational institutions with enterprises in the area of practice, according to educational institutions

Assessment of cooperation	Level of education	
	Secondary level of education	Tertiary level of education
Unsatisfactory 1	17	0
2	20	30
3	30	30
4	23	37
Excellent 5	10	3

Source: Own processing.

Respondents were school institutions.

The level of cooperation of education institutions with employer entities could be strengthened in accordance with the interactions between the labour market and educational market. It is only by mutual interaction that human resources can develop both the professional and personality levels required by the performance of work activities. This cooperation should also be shifted to the level of determining educational objectives and designing study programmes with the professional and financial co-participation of business entities. There has to be formed a close link on the labour market between education and employment as an **outcome of professional will** and the potential of an individual as well as the possibilities of educational system optimised by counselling.

3. Discussion on the Needs for Development of Career Training, Career Guidance and Work Adaptation

Counselling can be described as a specific human activity, as the process of assistance, the aim of which is to use existing resources and opportunities for personality development, so that recipients/clients of counselling were able to cope with problems encountered in their lives. The need for quantitative and qualitative development of counselling services is determined by social, economic, and cultural changes of our society, which increase demands on each individual as well as on society as a whole, on its managing and regulatory functions. Counselling activity can also be described as a specific, form of human communication developing in history, which fulfils various functions in people's lives, in relationships between them, in the learning process, in interpersonal communication, and in satisfying specific needs.

Counselling for the unemployed is part of the social counselling concept within the framework of social care provided by various social institutions and facilities.

Career counselling services are influenced by a combination of several factors (qualification requirements and abilities, interests and work values, personality properties, emotional properties, etc.), which can direct and adjust an individual's behaviour. Counselling services in the Slovak Republic are mainly provided to problem groups of youths and the unemployed from various age groups. In every society the unemployed represent a distinctly disadvantaged social group. The unemployed pose a heavy economic burden, and so measures need to be taken to decrease the rate and scope of unemployment. For this reason, it is in this area that special counselling services are designed and are carried out via employment offices.

The establishment of clubs of work plays a special role in the course of implementing counselling. These clubs act as special-purpose counselling and information and educational units at employment offices as self-help centres, and are initiated by various institutions, e.g. municipal offices, church, educational institutions, the youth, and organisations. They focus mainly on cooperation with the long-term unemployed, the persons with disabilities (persons with medical handicaps or maladjusted citizens), and otherwise marginalised groups of persons (persons after the execution of sentence, ethnic minorities, women after maternity leave, and the like.). Clubs of work are set up by employment offices and are also financed by them; their operation is regulated by methodological instructions, which are modified by clubs for local purposes. The professional standard of the head of club is the responsibility of an employment office. Some clubs of work are established also outside employment office as self-help centres, which are financed from pooled funds and often by various sponsors. Their activities can adjust to local needs, and in fact they are identical with the activities of clubs of work, set up by employment offices. In order to support socially disadvantaged groups on the labour market non-governmental organisations are founded; these too, should substantially extend the scope of their activities and offer also counselling services with preventive effect. Counselling in the third sector is e.g. provided by Euroguidance, EURES, ANDRAGOS, and Eurodesk.

The role of work clubs and other special-purpose organisations is to focus on the development of training of behavioural skills, whereby a certain kind of mode of behaviour is trained. It is essential to prepare applicants for interviews with future employers. The interview, in general, belongs to basic methods of personnel work. The focus of an interview for a job is on acquiring, analysis and processing the information about job applicants and enables them to obtain as much information as possible related to their work, professional, and psychic abilities.

Comprehensive and reliable data are the basis of adjustment to labour market conditions, and, in turn, form the basis of self-service counselling. One of the possibilities of acquiring information about the labour market is also the Integrated System of Type Positions (ISTP) software, which is made up from three subsystems:

- file of type positions, which is based on the system of occupations and type positions and is created in cooperation with experts from each industry on the labour market;
- analysis of individual potential, where the module serves as counselling instrument, which, through various questionnaires enables the client to be evaluated in terms of qualifications, personality, and health;
- catalogue of jobs, which is designed for personnel workers and human resource managers and offers a simple method of job description, their electronic message and data archives.

Individuals who are interested in changing their present employment or looking for a new job can acquire adequate information about job requirements in Internet applications, and should be able to, evaluate their chances on the labour market on the basis of analysis of their potentials.

An individual's success on the labour market is perceived not only in finding a good job and "going to work"; instead, it rests in working and developing one's knowledge, skills and abilities, which will enable them to achieve the kind of performance that in turn will lead to their maintaining their present job or to developing competences of facing the competition and acquiring new and more lucrative work position.

Applying for jobs and adjusting to qualifications required and personality competences have to be based on thorough long-term analyses of the labour market, so that on the basis of this information an individual was able to adjust to changing requirements on the work performance. An important role in this process is played by career counselling/or career guidance, whose role is to encourage individuals to involve in corresponding educational activities, either within primary education, which requires a longer time, because the aim is to acquire some level of education, or in further education, which focuses on supplementary qualification preparation, or in re-qualification programmes. Re-qualifying programmes are held on three levels – all-nation, region, and enterprise – and focus on the development of human resources potential. By means of re-qualification flexibility of human resources, which is the core of one's applicability on the labour market, is increasingly becoming a basis of employability/application on the labour market.

Shortcomings may be found in the development of counselling at secondary schools and tertiary education institutions, which, as mentioned above, focus on problem groups of population. However, counselling should also provide guidance to learners and students in finding orientation and in the choice of occupation/ profession. Similarly, also counselling for the employed is inadequately developed; it would be suitable to set up a mobile centre for its employees. Mobile centres would deal mainly with internal movement in the organisation, but they also could inform employees about the possibilities of work opportunities outside their organisations. External professional consultants should have at their disposal evaluations of needs for professional preparation of individual employees. To ensure the development of career counselling also trade organisations could be involved, which would train their own counsellors, who in turn would act as supporters/adherents of education and encourage their members to gaining an all-round preparation which would enable them to progress in their careers.

We can state that a crucial decision-making part of the implementation of counselling activity in the Slovak Republic to date is the responsibility of employment offices. They cooperate with educational institutions and various types of organisations in regions concerned, which facilitate their uneasy activity, and this way assist them in solving partial problems which may arise. With respect to the scope of activities, which are closely connected with providing quality counselling, it would be more suitable and efficient to have specialised institutions to perform this exacting activity and social role. These institutions would operate on a non-profit principle and would have space to deal with the situation from all aspects, in accordance with the needs of self-realisation on the labour market, which is based on close collaboration with individual employer entities, as well as on analyses of information about each potential recipient of counselling services. This kind of comparison of demand and supply of labour force could lead to eliminating labour market disproportions and contribute to developing an adequate system of education.

Table 6 Possibilities of Counselling for employability on the labour market in the Slovak Republic

Applicants for counselling (career guidance)	The unemployed	Problem Groups of youth	New university graduates	Under-graduates	Employees (existing employees or wishing to change their present job or position)	Employers	Children with special needs	School-leavers from secondary schools	Marginalized groups of population	Senior citizens	Disabled persons
Providers of counselling/ career guidance											
<u>Government</u> Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	x	x	x			x		X	x	X	x
Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Sports								x	X	x	x
Employer sphere				x	x (existing employees)						
Third sector counselling institutions		x	x		X (in case of change of job)		x				

	S, Andra gos, and Euro- desk																		
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*Employment offices are established within the province of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. There exist also some employment offices outside the state sector.

Conclusions

On the basis of findings from our research as well as the sources on the subject which are referred to in this paper, we can conclude that the focus of the theory and practice of career counselling should be on individuals or groups of individuals (while respecting their needs and competences) on the one hand; and on reliable sources of information (including suitable software applications) available to both providers and recipients of counselling services, on the other hand.

The labour market disproportions (manifested, e.g. in low employability of university graduates) may be partially eliminated by an adequate system of career counselling. In order to develop this kind of system, both existing forms of counselling service need to be improved and new forms and counselling providers need to be established.

Some activities of employment offices related to counselling can be performed by specialised organisations acting outside employment offices, e.g. clubs of work, mobile counselling centres, and trade union organisations.

Employers could use the services of external consultants in mobile centres. These consultants would elaborate evaluations of professional training needs and deal with intra-enterprise matters.

Trade union organisations could be involved, in particular in training their own counsellors, subsequently encouraging their members to gain an all-round preparation and progress on their careers.

Counselling at secondary schools and higher education institutions should be improved: apart from providing guidance to problem groups to youth (which is its present predominant activity); it should offer guidance in the choice of occupation/profession. Some employer entities in Slovakia provide counselling to undergraduates in the course of student placements in their businesses or institutions. Moreover, we suggest to set up specialised institutions, which would operate on a non-profit principle and have space to deal with the situation from all aspects and in accordance with the needs of learners' future self-realisation on the labour market, and on the basis of close collaboration with individual employer entities, as well as on the basis of analyses of information about each applicant or potential recipient of counselling services. Further, universities could be more actively involved in developing contacts with their former graduates – alumni, from whom they can obtain valuable feedback on the viability of their study programmes and teaching methods.

Collaboration between business and academia may be improved by developing modular courses with a strong involvement of employers for certain groups of students, who would be employed by these employers after completing their studies these graduates would have adequate training for the positions they will fill.

Outcomes of research findings from EU projects with focus on education and the labour market could become a valuable source of information and inspiration about career guidance.

As a follow-up to the first paragraph of this conclusion, we can state that the only way how to accomplish the basic aim of counselling activity is to assist employees/or potential employees in adjusting their actions to employers' needs, while maintaining their behaviour in harmony with social needs, legal and moral norms, so that they may achieve intrinsic balance and fulfilment of living needs, while using their inherent capacities at work.

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