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ORGANIZATION OF EARLY CAREER GUIDANCE WORK WITH SCHOOLCHILDREN

Abstract

This study examines the professional orientation of schoolchildren, their professional self-determination, and the effectiveness of early career guidance in shaping their future career plans. The main aim is to assess the impact of early career guidance on the development of high school students' individual professional interests, abilities, and competencies.

A comprehensive integrative approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods was used. Quantitative diagnostics employed the "Proforientator" program to assess students' professional interests and abilities. Qualitative methods included individual consultations, in-depth interviews, focus groups, soft skills training (emotional intelligence, time management), master classes, and excursions to local enterprises. Data analysis was conducted using an automated diagnostic system. The study revealed the multidimensional nature of students' interests and abilities, with variations across age groups. The highest interests were observed in Technology, Information Technology, Business, and Science. Practical activities enhanced students' self-awareness, goal-setting, and decision-making skills, thereby improving their professional self-determination.

The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of a systematic and comprehensive approach to career guidance for schoolchildren. The proposed methodology supports students in adapting educational programs to their needs, fostering motivation for professional development, and preparing them to make conscious career choices.

Keywords: career guidance, testing, consultation, career guidance counselor, profession, diagnostics

Introduction

Preparing schoolchildren for a conscious choice of profession is an essential component of their personal development and successful socialization. This readiness becomes particularly significant in the context of modern socio-economic conditions. Professional self-determination is shaped by students' individual characteristics and social factors (Klimov, 2005) [1], which requires a systematic approach to supporting students in choosing their future profession and emphasizes the importance of pedagogical technologies for early career guidance aimed at developing students' interests and motivation (Antonova, 2019) [2].

However, most students struggle to decide on their future profession. A significant portion of students relies on their parents' opinions, while parents themselves often lack sufficient information about their children's professional interests and the most in-demand fields of study [3]. An analysis of existing research shows that there is no comprehensive methodology for early career guidance that integrates the assessment of interests, educational practices, and individual support for students.

The literature review indicates the limitations of existing approaches: many studies focus either on the psychological aspects of professional self-determination or on the organization of career guidance in schools, but do not combine them into a coherent, practice-oriented methodology. Thus, there remains a need for a comprehensive approach that increases students' awareness when making career choices, fosters sustainable motivation, and develops professional intentions that align with societal and labor-market requirements.

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of comprehensive early career guidance activities for schoolchildren. In particular, it addresses the following questions: which approaches and activities most effectively contribute to the development of conscious professional choice, and how does the integration of interest assessment, educational practices,

and individual support affect students' professional self-determination? Based on these questions, the purpose of the study is formulated: to determine the effectiveness of a comprehensive methodology for early career guidance that combines diagnostic, educational, and practice-oriented approaches.

Literature Review

According to research described in the scientific literature, the issue of early career guidance is examined at the intersection of psychology, pedagogy, and vocational education. Studies in this field are typically divided into several key areas: psychological models, pedagogical technologies, organizational and pedagogical support, diagnostics and identification of professional interests, and international practices.

The psychological aspects of career guidance are most extensively explored in the works of E. A. Klimov. The scholar describes the structure of an individual's professional self-determination, the mechanisms by which interests and aptitudes are formed, and the internal and external factors that influence career choice. His professional typology and diagnostic tools form the foundation of many contemporary methodologies. These studies serve as a theoretical basis for identifying professional interests in children at an early age [1, p. 25].

Among pedagogically oriented studies, the works of M. V. Antonova hold a special place [4]. She developed pedagogical technologies to foster professional interests among primary and lower secondary school students, demonstrating the effectiveness of methods such as introducing students to the world of professions, conducting project-based activities, and organizing professional trials. Her research highlights the importance of systematic pedagogical influence from an early age.

Domestic researchers such as D. Zharykbayeva, K. Balazanova, and N. Rakhmetova examine the organization of career guidance activities in schools, partnerships with higher education institutions, professional trials, and the introduction of profession-oriented electives and extracurricular courses [5]. The authors emphasize the need to improve the management of career guidance systems, develop teachers' career-guidance competencies, and strengthen work with parents. The main strength of these studies lies in their description of an organizational model of career guidance; however, a noted limitation is the insufficient integration of psychological diagnostic tools.

In the international literature, John Holland's RIASEC model is recognized as one of the most widely used career guidance diagnostic instruments [6]. It is based on the principle of congruence between occupational environments and personality types. This model enables an accurate, structured assessment of professional interests. However, in many domestic schools, the model remains poorly adapted, limiting its practical applicability in diagnostic processes.

Table 1 – Key Studies on Early Career Guidance Activities

Author(s)	Field of Study	Main Contribution
D.R. Zharikbayeva, K.M. Balazhanova, N.B. Rakhmetova	Role of higher education institutions in career guidance	Investigated the organization of career guidance work, the practice of school-university interaction, and its influence on students' professional self-determination
E.A. Klimov	Psychological foundations of career guidance	Classical studies on students' professional self-determination, examination of professional interests development
M.V. Antonova	Pedagogical technologies of early career guidance	Developed methods for early career guidance of younger students, support for professional self-determination, and fostering interest in future professions

John L. Holland	Diagnostics of professional inclinations	RIASEC model (“Person–Environment” typology), used for diagnosing vocational interests and developing career guidance tools
Note: compiled by authors		

The conducted literature review demonstrates that both domestic and international scholars offer diverse yet complementary perspectives on early career guidance. Domestic studies provide a comprehensive analysis of the organizational and pedagogical conditions of career guidance, highlighting methodological approaches. Still, they do not adequately address psychological diagnostic tools or the individualization of students’ career guidance. In contrast, international research deeply explores the theoretical and methodological foundations of career guidance, though many studies are not fully adapted to local educational contexts.

Taking these gaps into account, the present study proposes an integrative approach that combines the assessment of students’ career interests and abilities with practical interventions. This approach includes training sessions, workshops, enterprise excursions, professional meetings, and individual consultations. The advantages of this comprehensive model include:

- more accurate identification of students’ aptitudes and interests;
- systematic development of individualized career trajectories;
- fostering a conscious approach to career choice;
- promoting sustained motivation for future professional development.

The proposed methodology not only complements existing theoretical research but also facilitates the practical implementation of early career guidance in schools. This, in turn, ensures a scientifically grounded organization of students’ professional self-determination process.

Early career guidance is considered an essential component of human cultural development. It involves a structured set of activities aimed at supporting an individual’s professional self-determination, taking into account their abilities, needs, and the labor market’s socio-economic conditions.

Researchers O.A. Kirillova and V.E. Evdokimova define career guidance as “a set of activities aimed at supporting a student’s professional self-determination, organized both within and outside the school through comprehensive educational and extracurricular measures” [7].

In various regions of Kazakhstan, there is a high demand for pedagogical personnel. Studies indicate that graduates often underestimate the significance of the teaching profession, which requires deep professional knowledge, developed communication skills, and genuine affection for children. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to foster students’ interest in the teaching profession, create the necessary competencies, and enhance professional motivation.

Domestic researchers A. Raimkulova and A. Abdimatova [8] emphasize the key role of diagnostics in career guidance. Diagnostics enable assessment of students’ professional aspirations and identification of potential career directions. Principles of comprehensiveness, content relevance, clarity, transparency, objectivity, and methodological rigor should guide this process.

T.E. Dus [9] proposes a scientific approach to career guidance that encompasses pedagogical, psychological, social, economic, medical-biological, managerial-organizational, and legal aspects.

Kazakhstani researcher G. Abdullaeva [10] highlights the importance of an innovative approach to career diagnostics that considers the country’s social and economic development characteristics in students’ professional choice.

Career guidance activities in secondary vocational education institutions play a significant role, affecting not only students’ professional self-determination but also the competitiveness of educational institutions in the education services market. Such an approach enables the formation of effective trajectories for students’ professional development.

The study identifies several challenges in implementing early career guidance for school graduates:

- lack of clarity in students' professional self-determination;
- insufficient use of scientifically grounded methods for organizing career guidance activities;
- limited attention from teachers and psychologists to career counseling;
- absence of objective criteria, diagnostic methodologies, and tools.

Thus, the literature review demonstrates that early career guidance is a multifaceted process encompassing pedagogical, psychological, and diagnostic aspects, requiring a comprehensive approach to foster students' professional interests and motivation.

Taking these challenges and researchers' recommendations into account, the present study applied an integrative approach to early career guidance for school students with a focus on the teaching profession.

Materials and methods of research

This study employed a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) to evaluate school students' participation in early career guidance activities. A cross-sectional design was used to assess each participant's professional interests and abilities at a single point in time.

A total of 75 students from grades 8–10 at Binom School in Atyrau participated. Selection considered age, grade level, and level of professional interest.

Quantitative data were obtained via an online questionnaire assessing students' professional interests and abilities. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews (45–60 minutes, online/offline), focus groups (60–90 minutes, offline), observations, and document analysis of school career guidance plans and student portfolios. The multi-method approach allowed researchers to integrate diagnostic results with practical activities and to identify individual career trajectories. Data collection occurred between September and October 2024.

Participation was voluntary. Parents provided written informed consent, and students assented. The school administration approved the study, and participants' confidentiality was maintained.

The study's limitations include a limited sample size, a short data collection period, and reliance on self-reported measures, which may affect generalizability and introduce subjectivity.

Results and their discussion

The study involved 75 students from grades 8–10 at BINOM SCHOOL Lyceum named after D. Qonaev in Atyrau.

During the study, meetings and parent-teacher gatherings were held to identify groups of students who required support in professional self-determination. The meetings covered topics such as “What Does Choosing the Right Profession Mean?”, “How to Prepare for Future Professional Activities?” “Choosing a Profession in the Current Labor Market Conditions,” and “How to Avoid Unemployment?”

In the practical phase, participants for the project were selected: 40 students who expressed individual interest, ensuring the initiative's effectiveness.

Professional interests were diagnosed using the “Proforientator” software. The results were processed using an Automated Workplace (AWP) called the “Diagnostic Data Analysis System” (DDAS), which ran on the .NET Framework, Oracle 11g Express Edition, and the C# and PL/SQL programming languages.

The data analysis included the following blocks: Interests, Abilities, Personal Traits, and the professional profiles of senior students. Diagnostic directions were determined for each block, and each respondent was assigned a profile direction. Based on the testing results, each student received a comprehensive description of recommended professions and educational

profiles, along with recommendations for developing competencies and making informed future professional choices.

The identified professional guidance directions enabled improvements to the mechanism for early career guidance activities conducted with school graduates. The integrated approach included selecting methodologies and forms to prepare students for choosing a profession and professional self-determination. Graduates were provided with professional counseling, informational support, and explanations regarding professions in the labor market.

Making a conscious decision when choosing a profession was facilitated by psychological and pedagogical support: individual and group consultations, emotional intelligence and time management training, meetings with representatives of various professions, and excursions to workplaces. Students were also introduced to the “Atlas of New Professions” resource to independently explore prospective professions and develop their individual career trajectories [11], [12].

The training contributed to the development of soft skills, including recognizing emotions, understanding others’ intentions and motivations, and managing their own emotions to complete practical tasks. Time-management training helped students identify key tasks, plan study and leisure time, and set and achieve goals in both academic and professional activities.

To provide professional guidance, methodologies based on students’ interests and cognitive abilities were applied, including those of E. Klimov and J. Holland (RIASEC). The “Interests” block reflected students’ preferences and needs across areas such as technology, science, arts, communication, business, information, nature, and risk.

The “Abilities” block allowed assessment of students’ achievements in various intellectual domains and their potential to develop corresponding knowledge, skills, and competencies. Diagnostics were conducted across the following scales: calculation, vocabulary, erudition, visual logic, abstract logic, and attention. These indicators reflect both the quality of subject teaching and students’ individual abilities (Figures 1–2).

The “Personal Traits” block was designed to evaluate students’ activity, agreeableness, self-control, emotional stability, and innovation.

The diagrams show the percentage distribution of participants according to the “Interests” block. Only significant indicators (scores of 7 or higher) were analyzed.

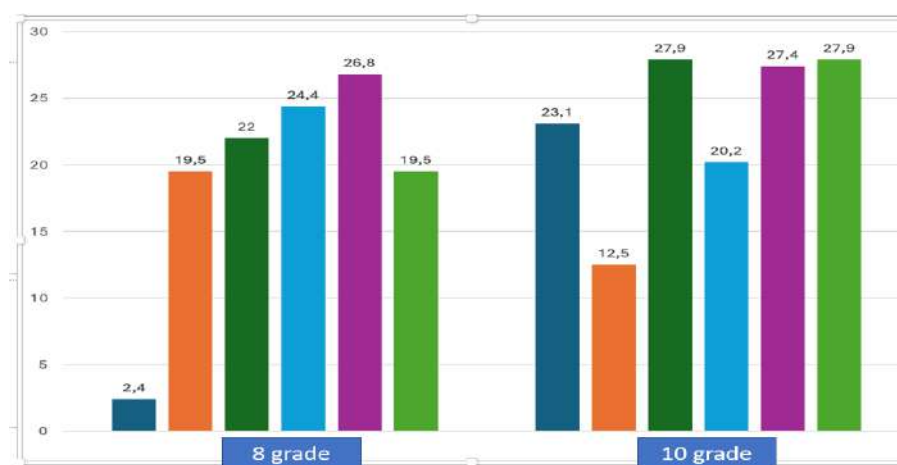


Figure 1- The results of diagnostic block ‘Interests’ of project participants.

Note: Compiled by the authors

Table 1- The results of distribution of interests depending from grade

	Risk	Nature	Information	Science	Technics	Business
8 grade	2,4	19,5	22	24,4	26,8	19,5

10 grade	23,1	12,5	27,9	20,2	27,4	27,9
Note: Compiled by the authors						

The table and diagram present the percentage distribution of students' professional interests by grade. Based on the diagnostic results, students' interests across the areas of technology, science, arts, communication, business, information, nature, and risk were comparatively analyzed. This analysis serves as a foundation for determining students' professional orientation in each grade and for constructing individual career trajectories.

The results indicate that the highest level of interest among project participants is in the Technology area. This is likely associated with the widespread promotion of modern technologies and IT-related professions.

Interest in the Arts reflects students' inclination toward creative and expressive activities, including their design, organization, and evaluation. Such interests align with professions such as jeweler, actor, writer, musician, computer graphics specialist, and tour guide.

Students' interests vary by grade level. For example, among 8th-grade students, the highest levels of interest were observed in Technology (26.8%) and Science (24.4%), while the lowest interest was recorded in the Riskarea (2.4%). In contrast, among 10th-grade students, interest in Nature was the lowest (12.5%), whereas interest in Information and Business significantly increased, reaching 27.9% for each area.

Figure 2 analyzes the differences in abilities across various scales. Only significant values (scores of 7 and above) were considered, allowing identification of the core ability profiles of senior students and their correlation with professional interests.

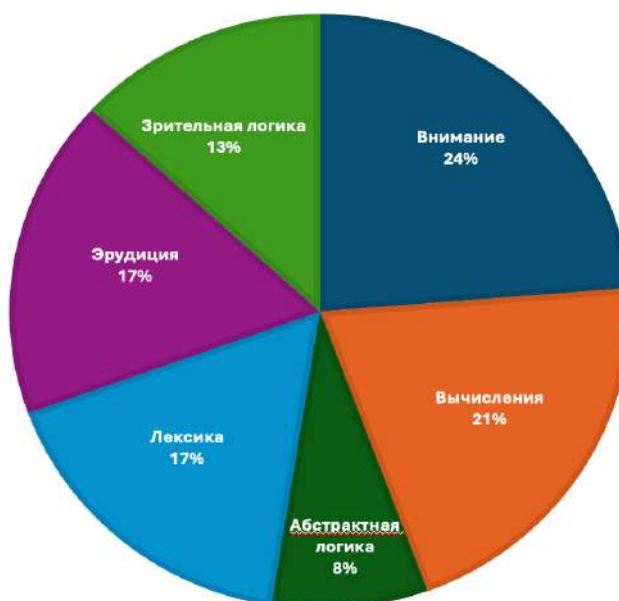


Figure 2- The results of difference in capabilities of project participants.

Note: Compiled by the authors

The analysis of the data presented in Figure 2 revealed that students demonstrated the highest abilities in attention (24%) and calculation (21%), whereas the lowest scores were observed in visual logic (13%) and abstract logic (8%).

Particular emphasis in the study was placed on career guidance activities for school students. These activities aimed to familiarize students with in-demand professions and to foster

their professional intentions, enabling them to understand their career paths consciously while aligning them with the socio-economic needs of society.

In the practical component of the study, recommendations from both domestic and international scholars [13],[14] were taken into account, highlighting the following necessities:

- Preparing students practically to make informed decisions regarding career choice and mastery;
- Applying a differentiated approach that contributes to the development of the individual's comprehensive qualities and professional orientation;
- Establishing a career guidance system as an interconnected set of work forms and methods that function while considering industrial settings, geographical and national characteristics, traditions, and regional specifics.

Based on the study, several key conclusions can be drawn:

1. Early career guidance is necessary to enable students to make conscious decisions about their future professions in accordance with their interests and abilities.
2. The presence of abilities, broad worldview, cognitive activity and erudition, as well as the willingness to work with children, allows for the identification and development of professional aptitude, particularly in pedagogical directions.
3. Comprehensive consultations by career guidance specialists contribute to unlocking students' potential and fostering internal readiness to choose a profession independently and consciously.
4. The effectiveness of career guidance activities is ensured through the availability of informational and methodological resources and the selection of various practical forms and methods. These included training sessions to develop soft skills, workshops, and testing, all of which supported the successful professional orientation of each student [15],[16],[17].

Implementing career guidance activities reduced students' uncertainty about career choices. As a result, students began to better understand their interests and preferences, which facilitated a conscious approach to selecting their future professional paths.

Conclusion

The results of this study clearly demonstrate the importance of early career guidance for school students and its impact on making informed professional choices. Comprehensive activities such as diagnostic testing, individual consultations, training sessions, meetings with professionals, and excursions to enterprises enabled students to identify their interests and abilities, understand their potential, and construct their future professional trajectories.

Data obtained through the "ProfOrientation" program revealed the multifaceted nature of students' professional interests and abilities, as well as variations depending on age. High levels of interest in technology, information technology, business, and science align with current labor market trends.

Training sessions implemented in the practical component (emotional intelligence, time management, and soft skills development) enhanced students' self-awareness, goal-setting, and decision-making abilities. These activities increased the level of students' professional self-determination and facilitated conscious career choice.

Overall, the study confirmed that a systematic and comprehensive approach to supporting students in career identification is effective. Additionally, it highlighted the need to revise the content of career guidance at schools, introduce new digital diagnostic tools, and expand programs focused on developing soft skills.

The findings provide practical recommendations for educational institutions to improve the career guidance process and contribute to students' effective adaptation to the labor market in the future.

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ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ РАННЕЙ ПРОФОРИЕНТАЦИОННОЙ РАБОТЫ СО ШКОЛЬНИКАМИ

Настоящее исследование посвящено изучению профессиональной ориентации школьников, их профессионального самоопределения и успешности в формировании карьерных планов. Основная цель работы – оценить влияние ранней профессиональной ориентации на развитие индивидуальных профессиональных интересов, способностей и компетенций учащихся старших классов. Для достижения цели использовался комплексный интегративный подход, включающий количественные и качественные методы. Количественная диагностика проводилась с помощью программы «Профоринтатор» для оценки профессиональных интересов и способностей. Качественные методы включали индивидуальные консультации, углубленные интервью, фокус-группы, тренинги по развитию мягких навыков (эмоциональный интеллект, тайм-менеджмент), мастер-классы и экскурсии на предприятия. Анализ данных осуществлялся с применением автоматизированной системы обработки диагностических данных.

Исследование показало многогранность интересов и способностей школьников, а также их зависимость от возрастных особенностей. Наибольший интерес проявлен к направлениям «Техника», «Информационные технологии», «Бизнес» и «Наука». Практические мероприятия способствовали развитию самопознания, навыков постановки целей и принятия решений, а также повышению уровня профессионального самоопределения учащихся. Результаты исследования демонстрируют эффективность

системного и комплексного подхода к профессиональной ориентации школьников. Предложенная методика позволяет адаптировать образовательные программы под потребности учащихся, способствует формированию устойчивой мотивации к профессиональному развитию и повышает готовность к осознанному выбору профессии.

Ключевые слова: профессиональная ориентация, тестирование, консультации, школьный карьерный консультант, профессия, диагностика.

МЕКТЕП ОҚУШЫЛАРЫМЕН ЕРТЕ КӘСІПТІК БАҒДАР БЕРУ ЖҰМЫСЫН ҰЙЫМДАСТЫРУ

Андапта

Зерттеу мектеп оқушыларының кәсіби бағдарын, кәсіби өзін-өзі анықтауын және болашақ кәсіби жоспарларын қалыптастырудағы табыстылығын зерттеуге арналған. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты – ерте кәсіби бағдарлау арқылы жоғары сынып оқушыларының жеке кәсіби қызығушылықтары, қабілеттері мен құзыреттерін дамытуға әсерін бағалау. Зерттеу үшін сандық және сапалық әдістерді біріктірген кешенді интегративтік тәсіл қолданылды. Сандық диагностика «Профоринатор» бағдарламасы арқылы оқушылардың кәсіби қызығушылықтары мен қабілеттерін бағалауға бағытталды. Сапалық әдістерге жеке консультациялар, терең сұхбаттар, фокус-топтар, икемді дағдыларды дамытуға арналған тренингтер (эмоциялық интеллект, тайм-менеджмент), шеберлік сабақтары және өндіріс орындарына экскурсиялар кірді. Деректерді талдау автоматтандырылған диагностикалық жүйе арқылы жүргізілді. Зерттеу оқушылардың қызығушылықтары мен қабілеттерінің көпқырлылығын және жас ерекшеліктеріне байланысты айырмашылықтарын көрсетті. Ең жоғары қызығушылық «Техника», «Ақпараттық технологиялар», «Бизнес» және «Ғылым» бағыттарында байқалды. Практикалық іс-шаралар оқушылардың өзін-өзі тану, мақсат қою және шешім қабылдау қабілеттерін дамытып, кәсіби өзін-өзі анықтау деңгейін арттырды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері мектеп оқушыларына кәсіби бағдар берудің жүйелі және кешенді тәсілінің тиімділігін дәлелдейді. Ұсынылған әдістеме оқушылардың білім беру бағдарламаларын өз қажеттіліктеріне бейімдеуге, кәсіби даму мотивациясын қалыптастыруға және мамандықты саналы түрде таңдауға дайын болуына ықпал етеді.

Негізгі сөздер: кәсіптік бағдар беру қызметі, кәсіптік бағдар беру, тестілеуі, кәсіптік бағдар берушінің кеңесі, кәсіптік бағдар беруші, түлектің жеке даму жоспары.

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