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The fourth-year university student future professional career: career management competency, study influence and work values aspects

Introduction

Future specialist professional career questions are actual both in the university study process itself, and in a perspective meaning, the latter joining the labor market. University study period is not only about the acquisition of professional qualification and corresponding competence. It is also a consistent step to the heights of the future profession. Thus, it is undoubtedly important, that the students evaluate the emerging possibilities as early as possible, purposefully prepare for professional activity after graduating the university. From the first days of the studies, it is necessary for the students to start planning their career, to analyze career questions that worry them. Besides, it is also important to analyze professional competence development, value formation demands of the future specialists. It is obvious, that employee competence remains one of the most important factors that can have influence on organization competitiveness, their activity effectiveness (Čiutienė, Šarkiūnaitė, 2004). On the other hand, a tendency is observed that expectations and demands of the people starting their working career are much bigger than possibilities, abilities, etc. Very often, dream work (activity) is imagined as a place, where a good payment and corresponding social guarantees are ensured.

It is understandable, that people differ in their abilities, demands, values, interests, personality traits and other. Speaking about future educators, it is important to emphasize that the choice of this profession is closely related to the person's value system. Person's life, from the social and/or economic point of view, becomes more constructive and more adequate if career is coordinated with personal and/or work values. In Lithuania, comparatively not much research have been carried out, related to student work value choice and successful career changes. Student professional calling and value links have been analyzed (Tolutienė, 2014), when it was stated that calling and values arise one from another, exist not separately but together, complement each other and depend on personality traits. Value of cognitive level peculiarities of the future social workers were investigated, stating that students consider social and humanistic values and economic/work values the most important value spheres (Verbylė, 2012). The problem is highlighted that when planning career young people do not pay necessary attention to work values and do not relate them

to the choice of profession (Liobikienė, Bukauskienė, 2014). Work value structure research was carried out in which university first course students participated. It was stated that the most significant factor is *Responsible activity values*. This factor consists of three work values: truthfulness, conscientiousness, dutifulness. These work values are the most important for students realizing their professional activity and seeking successful career. Also, it was revealed, that reward values (good job salary, high position, comfort) and activity style values (autonomy, altruism, evaluation of efforts) have lower evaluation. Social status values (prestige activity, social prestige, status, achievements high position) have the lowest evaluation. Also, the main differences were ascertained between female and male work value structure. Responsible activity values, active work values and harmony values are more important for female students than for male (Lamanauskas, Augienė, 2017).

Various research were carried out in foreign countries. The research carried out in Malaysia showed that pre-service teachers prefer quality supervisory relationships, good working environment/surroundings, and quality co-workers relationships, whereas achievement, security, and intrinsic work values are of secondary importance (Sock Leea, Kee Mui Hungb, Cheng Lingc, 2012). The research conducted in the Philippines showed that the majority of students have high to very high work values. Achievement was regarded by the respondents as the most dominant value while comfort as the least dominant (Torres, Ballado, 2014). In any case, values are the key characteristics of a true teacher (Lim, 2014).

L. Harvey (2000) marks, that higher education only does not guarantee students' successful integration in the labor market, because not only acquired knowledge and abilities influence integration but also other important factors, such as personal student traits and labor market changing demand in the region at national and international levels. Higher schools provide professional qualification, prepare for professional activity, however, insufficient attention is paid to career education. Effective career realization requires extra knowledge, ability and skills. Over the last decade, university graduate employability raises a big concern. Therefore, universities have to be especially interested to ensure student career management competitiveness education in the study process – students have to learn to identify personal improvement possibilities and limits, to know their value, knowledge and ability determined career planning possibilities and to foresee successful career decision making and realization perspectives.

Research object is the fourth year university student position on the question of the future professional career.

Research aim is to analyze by quantitative analysis the evaluation of student work value and ability importance in professional activity and also the evaluation of study influence on further professional activity.

Methodology of Research

General Research Characteristics

The carried out research Successful career factors is grounded in mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative research approaches are applied). Research

type is survey. This is a research of limited amount, not seeking to apply the obtained results for the whole Lithuanian university student population. Research is focused on social and humanitarian study field. However, it is hoped, that the conducted research will allow to prepare and carry out an exhaustive all-student population research. The research was carried out between January and May, 2016.

Research Sample

Bachelor study students of three Lithuanian universities: (Šiauliai – ŠU, Lithuanian University of Educational sciences – LEU, and Klaipėda – KU) participated in the research. The sampling contained pre-service primary school, physical education and sport, music, ethics teachers and speech therapists and kinesiotherapists, health education specialists. 200 questionnaires were prepared. On the whole, 185 questionnaires were acknowledged as acceptable. Reversibility quota is 92%. Sampling was structured applying a consecutive “bunch” system. Research sample is considered sufficiently representative according to the chosen research amount.

Research Instrument

The authors' prepared questionnaire which was comprised of closed and open questions to be used in the research. The respondents were asked to evaluate the statements about career, to evaluate work values and competencies, and also to evaluate study influence on future professional career. Four open questions were also presented in the research instrument. The results obtained from the presented answers have been analyzed and published (Lamauskas, Augienė, 2014). In this article, the results are presented giving the evaluation of the fourth course student work values, competence/ability and study influence on career.

Ranking scale was applied in the instrument: *agree/important, partly agree/important, do not agree/not important*. The questionnaire also included a demographical part (respondent sex, course, study program). Research content validity was checked by two independent experts.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze research data, measures of descriptive statistics are applied (absolute and relative frequencies). To identify differences between variables, non-parametric chi-square (χ^2) criterion is applied. Every analyzed statement/parameter is given popularity (significance) index ($0 \leq PI/SI \leq 1$). Therefore, the ranking scale was transformed to relationship scale. The closer the PI/SI value is to 1, the more important, more significant is the statement to the respondent, or the respondent better approves of it.

Results of Research

The evaluation of the importance of work values to professional career has been analyzed (Fig. 1). It can be seen, that basically all values are considered significant.

The research revealed that the most important work values for students are: *evaluation for efforts* (SI=0.94, SD=0.17), *interesting activity* (SI=0.92, SD=0.19), *dutifulness* (SI=0.92, SD=0.18), *conscientiousness* (SI=0.91, SD=0.19), *truthfulness*

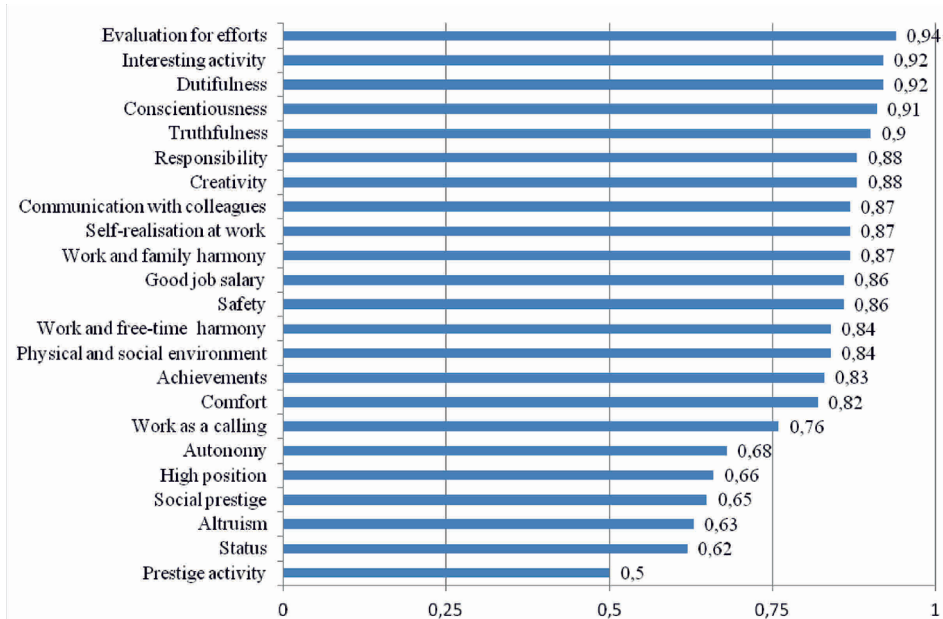


Fig. 1. The importance of work values to professional career (SI).

(SI=0.90, SD=0.21), *responsibility* (SI=0.88, SD=0.24). One can assert that these work values reflect the moral side of professional career and demonstrate high standards raised by the students for professional career and responsibility for their activity.

In students' opinion values such as *creativity* (SI=0.88, SD=0.22), *collaboration with colleagues* (SI=0.87, SD=0.23), *self-realization at work* (SI=0.87, SD=0.24), *work and family harmony* (SI=0.87, SD=0.25), *good job salary* (SI=0.86, SD=0.23), *safety* (SI=0.86, SD=0.25), *work and free-time harmony* (SI=0.84, SD=0.28) occupy a high position in professional activity. These values demonstrate students' modern attitude to career, in which harmony prevails among various life spheres and demands of a person.

The least important for successful professional career, in students' opinion, are *high position* (SI=0.66, SD=0.29), *social prestige* (SI=0.65, SD=0.33), *altruism* (SI=0.63, SD=0.31), *status* (SI=0.62, SD=0.31), *prestige activity* (SI=0.50, SD=0.35). These work values reveal person's occupied position in society, i.e. social status. Social and humanitarian sphere activities are not considered prestige in society, do not guarantee a high social status and a good payment. It is obvious that students choosing to study social and humanitarian sciences, realize their values and social status values are not the most important for them.

After analyzing students' opinion about the importance of work values for their professional career some significant differences regarding sex were defined (Table 1).

Table 1. Value differences according to sex (N (%)).

Value	Evaluation level	Sex		Total	Chi-square criterion application result
		Woman	Man		
Interesting activity	<i>Important</i>	126 (90.0)	33 (73.3)	159 (85.9)	$\chi^2=7.85$, $df=2$, $p=0.020$
	<i>Partly important</i>	13 (9.3)	11 (24.4)	24 (13.0)	
	<i>Not important</i>	1 (0.7)	1 (2.2)	2 (1.1)	
Responsibility	<i>Important</i>	116 (82.9)	32 (71.1)	148 (80.0)	$\chi^2=11.97$, $df=2$, $p=0.003$
	<i>Partly important</i>	23 (16.4)	8 (17.8)	31 (16.8)	
	<i>Not important</i>	1 (0.7)	5 (11.1)	6 (3.2)	
Communication with colleagues	<i>Important</i>	115 (82.1)	27 (60.0)	142 (76.8)	$\chi^2=10.44$, $df=2$, $p=0.005$
	<i>Partly important</i>	24 (17.1)	16 (35.6)	40 (21.6)	
	<i>Not important</i>	1 (0.7)	2 (4.4)	3 (1.6)	
Work as a calling	<i>Important</i>	93 (66.4)	17 (37.8)	110 (59.5)	$\chi^2=11.72$, $df=2$, $p<0.003$
	<i>Partly important</i>	39 (27.9)	24 (53.3)	63 (34.1)	
	<i>Not important</i>	8 (5.7)	4 (8.9)	12 (6.5)	
Self-realization at work	<i>Important</i>	116 (82.9)	26 (57.8)	142 (76.8)	$\chi^2=12.78$, $df=2$, $p<0.002$
	<i>Partly important</i>	22 (15.7)	16 (35.6)	38 (20.5)	
	<i>Not important</i>	2 (1.4)	3 (6.7)	5 (2.7)	
Work and free-time harmony	<i>Important</i>	112 (80.0)	22 (48.9)	134 (72.4)	$\chi^2=17.33$, $df=2$, $p<0.000$
	<i>Partly important</i>	22 (15.7)	20 (44.4)	42 (22.7)	
	<i>Not important</i>	6 (4.3)	3 (6.7)	9 (4.9)	
Work and family harmony	<i>Important</i>	122 (87.1)	24 (53.3)	146 (78.9)	$\chi^2=23.45$, $df=2$, $p<0.000$
	<i>Partly important</i>	15 (10.7)	18 (40.0)	33 (17.8)	
	<i>Not important</i>	3 (2.1)	3 (6.7)	6 (3.2)	
Status	<i>Important</i>	42 (30.0)	24 (53.3)	66 (35.7)	$\chi^2=8.22$, $df=2$, $p=0.016$
	<i>Partly important</i>	83 (59.3)	17 (37.8)	100 (54.1)	
	<i>Not important</i>	15 (10.7)	4 (8.9)	19 (10.3)	
Truthfulness	<i>Important</i>	124 (88.6)	28 (62.2)	152 (82.2)	$\chi^2=16.54$, $df=2$, $p<0.000$
	<i>Partly important</i>	15 (10.7)	15 (33.3)	30 (16.2)	
	<i>Not important</i>	1 (0.7)	2 (4.4)	3 (1.6)	

The research revealed that work values such as *work and family harmony*, *work and free-time harmony* are much more important for females than for males. One can assert that this reveals female traditional attitude to family. It is important for female to coordinate career with family demands, to have enough free time. *Work as a calling*, *truthfulness*, *self-realization at work* are much more important for females than for males in professional activity. However, for males a much more important work value than for females is *status*. A person's status is often determined by their professional activity, occupied position, carried out functions, given responsibility, management, leadership. It is obvious that for males all this is more important than for females.

Ability importance in seeking successful career has been analyzed (Fig. 2).

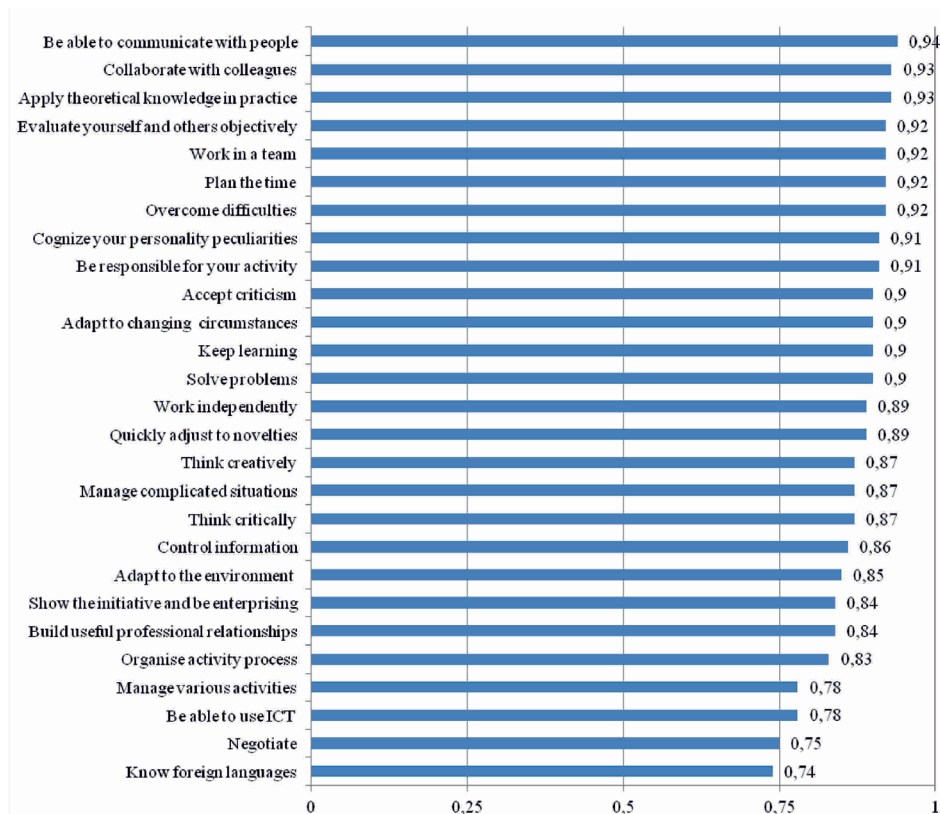


Fig. 2. Ability importance in seeking successful career (SI).

The most important for successful professional career, in students' opinion, are abilities related to human relations: *be able to communicate with people* (SI=0.94, SD=0.18) and *collaborate with colleagues* (SI=0.93, SD=0.17). It is obvious that students, having chosen social and humanitarian sphere activities, which are usually referred to as professions "person to person", understand, that human relations are the basis for their successful career.

Students value very highly theoretical and practical preparation for professional career [ability to *apply theoretical knowledge in practice* (SI=0.93, SD=0.19)].

Students also value very highly such abilities, which can influence successful career: *value yourself and others objectively* (SI=0.92, SD=0.18), *work in a team* (SI=0.92, SD=0.18), *plan the time* (SI=0.92, SD=0.17), *overcome difficulties* (SI=0.92, SD=0.18).

Highly valued abilities, which can influence successful career development, such as: *accept criticism* (SI=0.90, SD=0.21), *adapt to changing circumstances* (SI=0.90, SD=0.20), *keep learning* (SI=0.90, SD=0.20), *solve problems* (SI=0.90, SD=0.22), *work independently* (SI=0.89, SD=0.21), *quickly adjust to novelties* (SI=0.89, SD=0.22), *think creatively* (SI=0.87, SD=0.24), *manage complicated situations* (SI=0.87, SD=0.23),

think critically (SI=0.87, SD=0.22) show that students have formed modern attitude to career and understand social transformation impact on career changes.

The least important abilities for successful career, in students' opinion, are *manage various activities* (SI=0.78, SD=0.27), *be able to use ICT* (SI=0.78, SD=0.27), *negotiate* (SI=0.75, SD=0.29), *know foreign languages* (SI=0.74, SD=0.29). These data allow for the assumption that the majority of students plan their career in Lithuania and manager's position and functions are of no interest to them.

After analyzing students' opinion about ability importance for successful professional career, some significant differences regarding sex were defined (Table 2).

Table 2. Evaluation of ability importance in seeking successful career according to sex (N (%)).

Ability	Evaluation level	Sex		Total	Chi-square criterion application result
		Female	Male		
Accept criticism	<i>Important</i>	119 (85.0)	31 (68.9)	150 (81.1)	$\chi^2=9.91$, df=2, p=0.007
	<i>Partly important</i>	21 (15.0)	12 (26.7)	33 (17.8)	
	<i>Not important</i>	0 (0.0)	2 (4.4)	2 (1.1)	
Evaluate yourself and others objectively	<i>Important</i>	128 (91.4)	30 (66.7)	158 (85.4)	$\chi^2=18.49$, df=2, p=0.0001
	<i>Partly important</i>	11 (7.9)	15 (33.3)	26 (14.1)	
	<i>Not important</i>	1 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	
Keep learning	<i>Important</i>	124 (88.6)	28 (62.2)	152 (82.2)	$\chi^2=17.45$, df=2, p=0.0001
	<i>Partly important</i>	16 (11.4)	16 (35.6)	32 (17.3)	
	<i>Not important</i>	0 (0.0)	1 (2.2)	1 (0.5)	
Think critically	<i>Important</i>	116 (82.9)	27 (60.0)	143 (77.3)	$\chi^2=10.26$, df=2, p=0.006
	<i>Partly important</i>	22 (15.7)	16 (35.6)	38 (20.5)	
	<i>Not important</i>	2 (1.4)	2 (4.4)	4 (2.2)	
Solve problems	<i>Important</i>	125 (89.3)	31 (68.9)	156 (84.3)	$\chi^2=11.16$, df=2, p=0.004
	<i>Partly important</i>	13 (9.3)	11 (24.4)	24 (13.0)	
	<i>Not important</i>	2 (1.4)	3 (6.7)	5 (2.7)	
Be responsible for your activity	<i>Important</i>	124 (88.6)	30 (66.7)	154 (83.2)	$\chi^2=13.21$, df=2, p=0.001
	<i>Partly important</i>	16 (11.4)	14 (31.1)	30 (16.2)	
	<i>Not important</i>	0 (0.0)	1 (2.2)	1 (0.5)	
Be able to use ICT	<i>Important</i>	96 (68.6)	19 (42.2)	115 (62.2)	$\chi^2=10.07$, df=2, p=0.006
	<i>Partly important</i>	41 (29.3)	24 (53.3)	65 (35.1)	
	<i>Not important</i>	3 (2.1)	2 (4.4)	5 (2.7)	

The biggest difference regarding sex when assessing ability importance for successful career development is *keep learning*, *be able to use ICT*, *evaluate yourself and others objectively*, *think critically*. Females value the importance of these abilities for successful career much higher than males. Females also higher than male value the ability *be responsible for your activity*, *solve problems*. These results show that females value more the abilities that are necessary to manage career change, understand the importance of those abilities in professional activity. This allows for the assumption that females have chosen a study program more successfully than males and are preparing for professional career more responsibly. Attention has to be paid that females traditionally more often than males choose to study social

and humanitarian sciences, therefore also possible is the influence of accident, inappropriate professional decision, which could influence the evaluation of the abilities important for successful professional career.

Evaluation of study influence on future career has been analyzed (Figure 3).

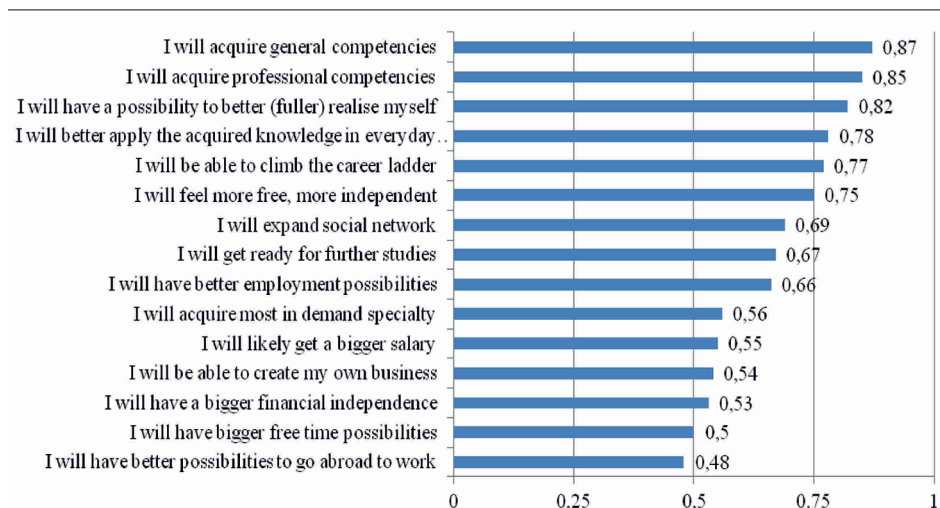


Fig. 3. Study influence on future career evaluation.

In students' opinion, studies have the biggest influence on acquiring necessary competencies for future professional career [*I will acquire general competencies* (SI=0.87, SD=0.21), *I will acquire special (professional) competencies* (SI=0.85, SD=0.23)]. Students think that studies will create the possibility for self-expression [*I will have a possibility to better (fuller) realize myself* (SI=0.82, SD=0.25), *I will better apply the acquired knowledge in everyday activity* (SI=0.78, SD=0.28)].

Studies, in students' opinion, open new career and improvement possibilities [*I will be able to climb the career ladder* (SI=0.77, SD=0.28), *I will feel more free, more independent* (SI=0.75, SD=0.29), *I will expand social network* (SI=0.69, SD=0.34), *I will get ready for further studies* (SI=0.67, SD=0.32), *I will have better employment possibilities* (SI=0.66, SD=0.35), *I will acquire most in demand specialty* (SI=0.56, SD=0.34)].

Some of the students think that studies will improve their financial possibilities [*I will likely get a bigger salary* (SI=0.55, SD=0.37), *I will be able to create my own business* (SI=0.54, SD=0.32), *I will have bigger financial independence* (SI=0.53, SD=0.36)], the students hope the least, that studies will provide them with *bigger free time possibilities* (SI=0.50, SD=0.37), that they will have *better possibilities to go abroad to work* (SI=0.48, SD=0.35).

After analyzing students' opinion about study influence on future career, some significant differences regarding sex were defined (Table 3).

More females than males think that studies will influence their better position on the labor market (*I will have better employment possibilities*) and will create

better possibilities for self-expression [I will have a possibility to better (fuller) realize myself]. More males than females think that studies will influence their better position on the labor market, because they will acquire a perspective specialty (I will acquire most in demand specialty) and will expand their social network.

Table 3. Evaluation of study influence on future career according to sex (N (%)).

Influence factor	Evaluation level	Sex		Total	Chi-square criterion application result
		Female	Male		
I will have a possibility to better (fuller) realize myself	Agree	106 (75.7)	26 (57.8)	132 (71.4)	$\chi^2=7.64$, df=2, p=0.022
	Partly agree	34 (24.3)	18 (40.0)	52 (28.1)	
	Do not agree	0 (0.0)	1 (2.2)	1 (0.5)	
I will expand social network	Agree	41 (29.3)	22 (48.9)	63 (34.1)	$\chi^2=8.60$, df=2, p=0.014
	Partly agree	62 (44.3)	19 (42.2)	81 (43.8)	
	Do not agree	37 (26.4)	4 (8.9)	41 (22.2)	
I will have better employment possibilities	Agree	91 (65.0)	18 (40.0)	109 (58.9)	$\chi^2=9.11$, df=2, p=0.011
	Partly agree	44 (31.4)	25 (55.6)	69 (37.3)	
	Do not agree	5 (3.6)	2 (4.4)	7 (3.8)	
I will acquire most in demand specialty	Agree	26 (18.6)	18 (40.0)	44 (23.8)	$\chi^2=12.42$, df=2, p=0.002
	Partly agree	68 (48.6)	22 (48.9)	90 (48.6)	
	Do not agree	46 (32.9)	5 (11.1)	51 (27.6)	

Conclusions

The research revealed that the most important work values for students are those reflecting the moral side of professional career (*evaluation for efforts, interesting activity, dutifulness, conscientiousness, truthfulness, responsibility*). High position, in students' opinion, occupy work values which demonstrate students' modern attitude to career (*creativity, collaboration with colleagues, self-realization at work, and other*) and harmony among various person's life spheres and demands (*work and family harmony, work and free time harmony*).

The research revealed, that the least important for successful professional career, in students' opinion, are the values related to social position in society: *high position, social prestige, status, prestige activity*.

The research highlighted some work value importance for professional career differences regarding sex: for females much more important are work values such as *work and family harmony, work and free-time harmony*, for males – *social status*.

During research it was found that the most important abilities in professional career, in students' opinion, are related to human relations: *ability to communicate with people and to collaborate with colleagues*. Students very highly value theoretical and practical preparation for professional career (ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice).

The research results revealed that students have formed a modern attitude to career and highly value the abilities which can influence successful career development: *accept criticism, adapt to changing circumstances, keep learning*,

solve problems, work independently, quickly adjust to novelties, think creatively, control complicated situations, think critically. The least important abilities for successful career, in students' opinion, are *manage various activities, be able to use ICT, negotiate, know foreign languages.*

The research highlighted some ability importance for successful career development evaluation differences regarding sex. For females more than for males, more important are the abilities *keep learning, be able to use ICT, evaluate yourself and others objectively, think critically, be responsible for your activity, solve problems.*

The research results allow for asserting that studies, in students' opinion, have the biggest influence on acquiring needed general and special competencies necessary for successful professional career, open new career and improvement possibilities. Only some students think that studies will improve their financial possibilities.

The research revealed different female and male attitude to studies influence on their future career. Females point out that studies will provide better conditions for employment and to better (fuller) realize oneself, and males think that studies will help to acquire a perspective specialty and expand their social network.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Abstract

Career management as a lifelong lasting process becomes very actual in modern society due to numerous reasons. In a general sense, the environment becomes turbulent; therefore it is natural that career environment is chaotic as well. Nevertheless, career for many people is, undoubtedly, very important as it is directly related to life quality. Professional activity satisfies almost all human needs: physiological, safety, social, attainment, self-realization, independence, autonomy, and other. The efficiency of the mentioned activity and the ability of the person to construct their career are closely related things.

Individual's career process studies have become especially popular recently, because deeper career perception helps to understand the most important relations between man and work, career management and constant learning, helps not only to know person's abilities, but also the abilities to give oneself to modern environment, to understand career projection possibilities, to plan one's professional future.

Seeking to analyze final-year university student position regarding career questions, a written survey was carried out. The research was carried out between September 2015 and March 2016. The research sample (185) was structured applying a consecutive "bunch" system. The respondents from three Lithuanian universities – Klaipėda, Vilnius and Šiauliai – were selected in the sample. Professional career parameters were evaluated: career management competency, study influence and work values. The research is grounded in a mixed strategy, with quantitative and qualitative research approaches combined. The obtained results, based on qualitative analysis, are presented in this research.

Key words: career management, quantitative analysis, professional career, work values, university students

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