EXAMIMIG CAREER READINESS AMONG UNIVERSITY SENIOR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI: DEVELOPMENT OF DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

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This article investigates the importance of career readiness among university students and alumni in today's dynamic job market. It emphasizes the significance of professionalism, advanced qualifications, and adaptability for a successful professional career. The research aims to develop a diagnostic toolkit to assess and measure career readiness, exploring the various components that contribute to students' preparedness. The study involves a comprehensive literature review and employs surveys and interviews to gather data from stakeholders involved in career guidance. The toolkit evaluates values orientation, career motivations, self-efficacy, decision-making readiness, emotional intelligence, and organizational skills. The article provides valuable insights for career counseling and educational programs to enhance students' preparedness for their future careers. By empowering educators and institutions with this comprehensive approach, it facilitates successful career development and helps graduates achieve their professional aspirations in today's competitive job market. The study is presented as a practical integrated career counseling support for university students and graduates to assess how much students' future career readiness is improved.
Key words: students, alumni, university, career readiness, career decision-making.

ЖОҒАРҒЫ КУРС СТУДЕНТТЕРІ МЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ БІТІРУШІЛЕРІНІҢ КӘСІПТІК ДАЙЫНДЫҒЫН ЗЕРТТЕУ: ДИАГНОСТИКАЛЫҚ ҚҰРАЛДЫ ӘЗІРЛЕУ

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Бұл мақала қазіргі динамикалық еңбек нарығында университет студенттері мен түлектерінің мансаптық дайындығының маңыздылығын зерттейді. Ол табысты кәсіби мансап үшін кәсіпқойлықтың, жоғары біліктіліктің және бейімделудің маңыздылығын атап көрсетеді. Зерттеудің мақсаты – студенттің дайындығына әсер ететін әртүрлі құрамдастарды зерделеу арқылы мансаптық дайындықты бағалау және өлшеу үшін диагностикалық құралды әзірлеу. Зерттеуде жан-жақты әдебиеттерге шолу жасалынады және мансаптық кеңес беру саласындағы мүдделі тараптармен сауалнамалар мен сұхбаттар жүргізеді. Құрал құндылық бағдарын, мансаптық мотивацияны, өзіне деген сенімділікті, мансаптық шешім қабылдауға дайындығын, эмоционалды интеллект пен коммуникация мен ұйымдастырушылық дағдыларды бағалайды. Бұл мақалада студенттердің мансаптық дайындығын жақсарту үшін мансаптық кеңес беру және білім беру бағдарламалары бойынша құнды практикалық ұсыныстар берілген. Кешенді тәсілді ұсына отырып, біз студенттер мен мекемелерге табысты мансаптық дамуға жәрдемдесу және түлектерге бүгінгі бәсекелес еңбек нарығында кәсіби амбицияларына жетуге көмектесу үшін қолдау көрсетеміз. Зерттеу студенттердің болашақ мансапқа дайындығының қаншалықты жақсарғанын бағалау мақсатында университет студенттері мен түлектеріне мансаптық кеңес беруге практикалық кешенді қолдау ретінде ұсынылған.
Түйінді сөздер: студенттер, түлектер, университет, мансаптық дайындық, мансаптық шешімдерін қабылдау.

ИЗУЧЕНИЕ КАРЬЕРНОЙ ГОТОВНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ СТАРШИХ КУРСОВ И ВЫПУСКНИКОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ: РАЗРАБОТКА ДИАГНОСТИЧЕСКОГО ИНСИТРУМЕНТАРИЯ

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Данная статья исследует важность готовности карьеры у студентов и выпускников университетов в современном динамичном рынке труда. В ней подчеркивается значение профессионализма, продвинутой квалификации и адаптивности для успешной профессиональной карьеры. Цель исследования заключается в разработке диагностического инструментария для оценки и измерения готовности карьеры, путем исследования различных компонентов, влияющих на готовность студентов. В ходе исследования осуществляется комплексный обзор литературы, а также проводятся опросы и интервью с заинтересованными сторонами, занимающимися карьерным консультированием. Инструментарий оценивает ориентацию на ценности, мотивацию карьеры, уверенность в своих силах, готовность к принятию карьерных решений, эмоциональный интеллект и коммуникативно-организаторские навыки. Данная статья предоставляет ценные практические рекомендации для карьерного консультирования и образовательных программ с целью улучшить готовность студентов к будущей карьере. Путем предоставления комплексного подхода, обеспечивается поддержка студентов и учебных заведений, способствующая успешному развитию карьеры и помогающая выпускникам достигнуть профессиональных амбиций в современном конкурентном рынке труда. Исследование представлено в качестве практического комплексного сопровождения карьерного консультирования студентов и выпускников университетов, чтобы оценить насколько улучшена готовность студентов к будущей карьере.

Ключевые слова: студенты, выпускники, университет, карьерная готовность, принятие картерных решений.

Introduction

In today's dynamic market, individuals must constantly adapt to the changing demands of production and cope with unexpected shifts in their careers or job opportunities. As university graduates enter this environment, they find that success requires a combination of professionalism, advanced qualifications, a competitive edge, and the determination to carve out their own paths to achieve a flourishing professional career. As a result, it has become imperative to create an environment within the higher education system that fosters the psychological preparedness of students to excel in their chosen careers.

Following graduation, young professionals encounter a series of challenges, including securing suitable employment, navigating the job market, and planning their future career trajectories after completing their higher education studies. These obstacles highlight the importance of preparing graduates to face real-world career scenarios and make informed decisions to flourish in their chosen fields [1, p.27]

The research aim is to investigate and develop diagnostic tools that can assess and measure career readiness among senior university students and alumni. The study aims to explore the levels of career readiness in this population, identify factors influencing their career preparedness, and create reliable and valid instruments to evaluate their readiness for the transition to the workforce or further education. The research seeks to contribute to the understanding of career development and provide valuable insights for career counseling and educational programs to enhance students' preparedness for their future careers.

Research Tasks:

–   Conduct a comprehensive literature review to explore the existing theoretical frameworks related to career readiness and career competencies among university senior students and alumni.

–   Develop and validate a set of diagnostic tools, such as surveys or questionnaires, to assess career readiness among university senior students and alumni. Ensure the tools capture essential dimensions of career readiness, including self-awareness, career planning, goal setting, and adaptability.

–   Identify potential areas for further research and the refinement of the diagnostic tools to continue advancing the understanding of career readiness among university students and alumni.

Research methods:

In the process of preparing this article, various methods were utilized, including the analysis of psychological-pedagogical and methodological literature related to career development research, as well as conducting surveys and interviews with stakeholders involved in the career guidance of university students and graduates.

Main part

At the initial stages of the research within the framework of the grant-funded project, we identified the main components of career counseling for university students and graduates, which included (1) Personality and interests assessment of students; (2) Career planning; (3) Job search; (4) Internships and practices; (5) Professional skill development support. (Figure 1) [2, p. 313].

1 • Assess the personality and interests of students

2 • Development of a career plan

3 • Job search

4 • Internships and practices

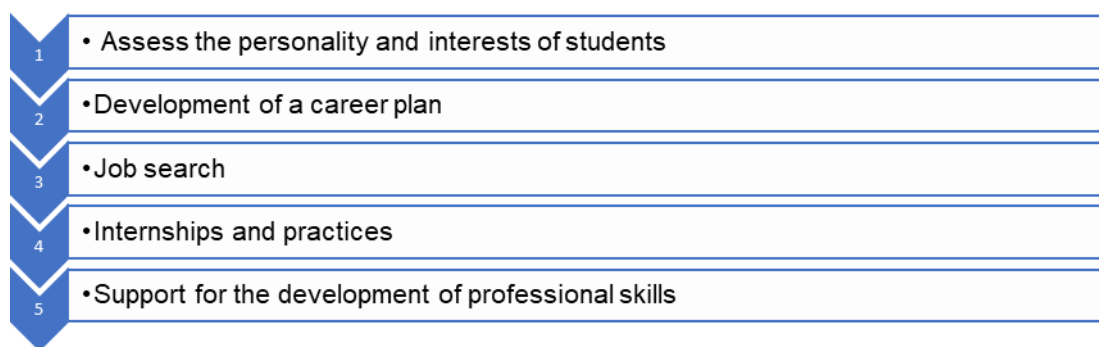5 • Support for the development of professional skills

Figure 1 Components of Career Counseling for University Students and Graduates

The mentioned components form a comprehensive system for supporting the career development of university students and graduates. This comprehensive system includes both group and individual sessions and trainings. Individual work is of critical importance in supporting the career readiness of students and graduates, and it involves creating an individual professional development plan, diagnosing the career readiness of students and graduates, and more. A well-chosen diagnostic toolkit will help career counselors to more thoroughly work with students/graduates in shaping their individual trajectories of professional development and addressing specific qualities and abilities that require special attention.

We analyzed modern methods for diagnosing the career readiness of students and graduates and identified the most suitable ones for use in the conditions of contemporary universities in Kazakhstan. In our previous research, we analyzed the structure of career support for students and graduates within the activities of the university's career center [3, p. 13]. To develop suitable individual career development trajectories for each student and graduate, it is necessary to assess the level of their career readiness. To choose appropriate diagnostic tools, we assessed career readiness using a competence-based approach. Drawing from the views of scholars such as G. Hackett, N. Betz, and M. S. Dotti, and considering career competence as a metacompetence, we can define it as a comprehensive quality of an individual, manifested in their aspirations, preparedness, and ability for professional self-realization. Career competence is accompanied by reflective awareness of one's own capabilities, adequate self-assessment, and it plays a determining role in the purposeful process of professional career development [4, p. 405; 5, p. 176].

Based on the work of I. A. Zimney, we considered competence as a structural phenomenon that includes [6]:

- Motivational and value-based component

The motivational and value-based component of career competencies describes the system of motives, interests, and values that shape an individual's motivation and direction in the sphere of career development. This component plays a key role in shaping and regulating professional aspirations, career choices, and the achievement of career goals.

It includes the following aspects:

- Motivation: Internal and external factors that drive individuals to pursue specific career goals. Motivation may be associated with desires for professional growth, success, personal fulfillment, financial stability, among other factors.

- Interests: Reflect the fields of activity that hold special appeal and satisfaction for an individual. Interests can influence the choice of a professional specialization and help in navigating various career opportunities.

- Values: Representations of what is considered important and meaningful to an individual. Career values may include aspirations for social recognition, creative self-realization, leadership, teamwork, work-life balance, and more.

The motivational and value-based component of career competencies influences processes such as career decision-making, adaptation to new work conditions, and the formation of a career trajectory. It aids in the development of goal orientation and a focus on personal and professional growth, which significantly impact an individual's success and satisfaction in their professional endeavors.

- Cognitive and activity-based component

The cognitive and activity-based component of a student's career competency describes the psychological aspects and abilities that influence the student's capacity to effectively tackle career-related tasks and challenges. This component is related to mental processes, knowledge, skills, and abilities that students employ in their professional activities [6, p. 17]

The cognitive and activity-based component includes the following aspects:

− Cognitive processes: These are mental operations such as perception, attention, memory, thinking, and problem-solving. Cognitive processes enable students to analyze information, make decisions, seek solutions, and effectively address career-related tasks.

−Knowledge and competencies: This refers to the knowledge that students possess in their future professional field. It includes theoretical foundations, practical skills, and specific knowledge about the industry or profession.

−Professional skills: These are practical skills that students acquire during their studies and practical activities. They may involve communication skills, problem-solving abilities, teamwork, planning, and organizational skills.

−Self-management and self-regulation: This is the student's ability to control their thoughts, emotions, and behavior in the process of their career activities. It includes setting goals, planning actions, motivating oneself, and overcoming difficulties.

The cognitive and activity-based component of a student's career competency plays a crucial role in successfully adapting to future professional activities, providing students with the necessary intellectual and practical resources for effectively fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

- The reflective and evaluative component

The reflective and evaluative component of students' career competency refers to their ability to critically assess their skills, knowledge, experience, and professional achievements. This component allows students to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as understand how their personal qualities and abilities impact their professional activities and career path.

The key aspects of the reflective and evaluative component include [2, p. 320]:

−Reflection: This is the student's ability to analyze their actions, decisions, and behavior in the professional sphere. Reflection enables students to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses and make decisions based on past experiences and mistakes.

−Self-analysis: Students can assess their knowledge, skills, and abilities and identify areas that need improvement or development. This aspect helps students better understand their professional needs and directions for growth.

−Self-assessment: This is the student's ability to realistically evaluate their achievements and progress in their career. Self-assessment allows students to define their career goals and compare their current level of competence with the requirements of the job market.

−Planning and development: The reflective and evaluative component also includes students' ability to develop plans for their professional growth and the achievement of career goals. This allows students to consciously choose courses, training, and work experience necessary for success in their chosen field.

The reflective and evaluative component of students' career competency plays a vital role in self-determination, self-motivation, and successful career development, helping students make informed decisions and build their professional path based on their individual needs and opportunities.

We assigned the selected methods to the identified components to obtain a comprehensive table.

Table 1 – Diagnostic instruments

Diagnostic instruments	The aim of assessment	Students' component of career competence
Values Orientation Assessment	To determine the significance of the career in the valure system of senior year students/graduates	Motivational and value-based components
Hierarchy of Career Orientations	To identify the value orientations in career hierarchy	
Academic Motivation	To determine the dominant motive for aspiring to master the profession at the university	
Career Self-Efficacy Research	To determine the level and self-understanding of career effectiveness	Cognitive and activity-based components
Career Decision-Making Readiness	To determine the level of readiness for career decision-making	
Emotional Intelligence Measurement	To assess the level of development emotional intelligence	
Communication and Organizational Skills Questionnaire	To determine the level of communication and organization skills development	The reflective and evaluative components
Self-Assessment Methodology	To determine the correlation between capabilities and abilities, the ability to critically assess oneself, and set realistic goals	
Subjective Well-being Scale (Échelle pour l'évaluation subjective du Bien-être)	To define the emotional component of subjective well-being	

The Diagnostic Toolkit for Assessing Career Competence in University Students aims to comprehensively evaluate various components of career competence among students and graduates. By utilizing a range of methodologies, the toolkit seeks to achieve the following objectives:

– Values Orientation Assessment: This component aims to determine the significance of career aspirations within the students' value system. It delves into the motivational and value-based aspects of their career choices.

– Hierarchy of Career Orientations: This segment explores the hierarchical structure of career orientations and aims to understand the students' prioritization of various career aspects.

– Academic Motivation: The toolkit assesses the dominant motivations that drive students' desire to acquire knowledge and skills within the university context.

– Career Self-Efficacy Research: This component focuses on gauging the level of career self-efficacy and self-understanding among the participants, providing insights into their cognitive and activity-related aspects of career competence.

– Career Decision-Making Readiness: By utilizing the Career Decision-Making Readiness Assessment, the toolkit aims to determine the participants' preparedness in making informed career decisions.

– Emotional Intelligence Measurement: This component aims to evaluate the participants' emotional intelligence by examining the development of various emotional intelligence components [7, p. 163].

– Communication and Organizational Skills Questionnaire: The toolkit measures the level of communication and organizational competencies among the participants, contributing to the reflexive and evaluative aspect of career competence.

– Self-Assessment Methodology: The toolkit utilizes a self-assessment approach to discern the participants' abilities to critically evaluate themselves, set realistic goals, and align their potential with their aspirations.

– Subjective Well-being Scale: This component helps gauge the emotional component of subjective well-being, which provides valuable insights into the participants' overall career satisfaction [8].

Through this comprehensive approach, the Diagnostic Toolkit aims to offer a holistic understanding of students' career competence, empowering educators and institutions to tailor interventions and support systems that foster successful career development and realization of students' professional aspirations.

Information on Funding

Conclusion

In this research, we focused on investigating and developing diagnostic tools to assess and measure career readiness among senior university students and alumni. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of career counseling components, we identified key factors that contribute to career readiness, such as motivational and value-based aspects, cognitive and activity-based abilities, and reflective and evaluative skills.

The Diagnostic Toolkit for Assessing Career Competence in University Students was designed to comprehensively evaluate these components among students and graduates. By utilizing various methodologies, the toolkit enables us to assess students' values orientation, hierarchy of career orientations, academic motivation, career self-efficacy, career decision-making readiness, emotional intelligence, communication and organizational skills, self-assessment, and subjective well-being. This comprehensive approach provides valuable insights into the participants' career competence and their overall career satisfaction.

By understanding the levels of career readiness and identifying factors influencing students' preparedness, educators and career counselors can develop tailored interventions and support systems to enhance students' transition into the workforce or further education. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the advancement of career counseling and educational programs, ensuring that university graduates are well-equipped to face the challenges of the modern job market and achieve fulfilling and successful professional careers.

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