

Utena „Saule“ Gymnasium

Experience and prospects of vocational
guidance at school

Utena, Lithuania 2015

Introduction

A person is educated for the whole of his life, from his first steps of self and surrounding world cognition and up to perfected professional skills and to his career way at a mature age. A special age for every person is his learning in school, because namely at this age every personality's professional direction is formed. There and then a person decides what career he would like to choose for the first time. That is why it is so important to expand this sphere; therefore all the community of our gymnasium is involved in this work: heads of the gymnasium, teachers, specialists, librarians, parents. We cooperate with various institutions, we organize meetings and excursions. Students successfully apply gained knowledge and experience in choosing a career. They adopt the corresponding education, choose a profession, consolidate in the labour market.

There are 14 state universities, 6 private universities, 13 state colleges, 10 private colleges, and 72 vocational schools in Lithuania.

In Utena we have one state college and one vocational school.

History

PIT (Professional Information Point) was founded in 2007 in Utena „Saule“ Gymnasium Reading Hall. The aim of it was to inform students about professions, give students qualitative and necessary professional information service according to personal needs. This centre helps foster professional and social skills, as well as personal skills.

In 2008 PIT activities got accreditation and The Service of Professional Information began to expand. Students are given cognitive information about the labour market, various professions and specialities. The librarians store and renew the material and periodicals about possibilities to study both in Lithuania and abroad. Our students can also find such information on websites. Besides that students as well as their parents or tutors are given personal consultations. Moreover, students personally or as a class can perform self cognition tests, but the main aim is to choose their right way of profession. It is very important to note that students have to evaluate their own possibilities in a positive way and respect themselves.

In 2012, July 4th The Lithuanian Education and Science Minister, together with The Lithuanian Social Security and Labour Minister issued order No V – 1090/A1-314. According to this order an act of Vocational Orientation Implementation was approved. This act defines the order of vocational orientation implementation in secondary schools, vocational institutions and

other educational institutions (except higher educational institutions), Centers of Professional Orientation, Labour Exchange and other institutions.

The main aim of vocational guidance is to help students choose educational and occupational possibilities that will suit them best. The aim is also to create such conditions for students that they can gain career competences. Vocational guidance is carried out by giving information and by providing professional consultations services.

Vocational guidance is based on these principles:

1. **Accessibility - This kind of service is given to all persons, ensuring equal possibilities, evaluating their needs and seeking to avoid administrative, financial or other obstacles;**
2. **Impartiality, free choice and personal responsibility for the decisions connected to a career.**

Consultants of vocational guidance help to choose and put to life the best personal career developing possibilities. Every person can freely decide about his career prospects and make final decisions connected to his future studies and work.

3. **Individualization - Vocational guidance is carried out taking into account individual needs of a person.**
4. **Quality of service - Vocational guidance consultants are responsible for a high quality of the service concerning career fostering, career information and career consultation as well as professional behaviour ethics.**

In 2013 PIT (vocational information centre) is renamed UKC (Centre for Career Guidance). Besides, this year our school participates in the work of the project „Fostering a career, creating and expanding models of observation in the context of general and vocational education. (1 stage). Since 2014, January 15th, we have an approved vocational guidance programme for students who learn according to primary, basic, secondary education and vocational education programmes. This program was approved by The Lithuanian Educational and Science Minister (Law V-72).

So, this way fostering a career becomes a purposeful educational and self-educational activity. These activities are aimed at acquiring career competence.

Aims of vocational guidance

- Help students to train their career competence, which is necessary for successful development of their future careers, for further evolution and learning for the whole life in a consecutive order and purposefully.

- Develop students' skills when planning their career, social activity, independence and responsibility.

Tasks:

Teach students how to do self analysis: that is to examine their own abilities, interests, teach how they can evaluate and use them when choosing their professional activities.

- Present constantly and renew the information about the levels of learning, about professions, the system of studies, labour market, entrance possibilities, career possibilities.
- Introduce students to the institution that gives vocational information and consulting service.
- Consult students when they want to choose a direction of studies.
- Cooperate with vocational and higher schools, local Labour Exchange, institutions which give vocational consultation services when organizing vocational information campaigns.
- Expand the net of social partners in the sphere of vocational information.
- Prepare and store teaching material.

Career competence covers 4 spheres:

1 - Self cognition (to know important personal characteristics for the future career, learn to know social environments and social roles);

2 - Knowledge of career possibilities (find and use the information about a career effectively, know possibilities of learning for the whole life, recognize the changing labour world);

3 - Career planning (raise your own life and career aims, accept career decisions, make and renew career plans);

4 - Career realization (apply and perfect the most important competences that are necessary for the career, then transfer to another career environment - studying and labour environment - and finally search for job vacancies successfully).

When following these 4 career competences our students strive to recognize their personal characteristics and connect them with their studies, vocational and other activities, learn to know social environments and diversity of social roles. It is very important for students to understand the diversity of learning and choosing labour possibilities. It is important to teach them how to find the information about careers and effectively use the possibilities of learning for the whole life. It is important for students to make suitable career decisions.

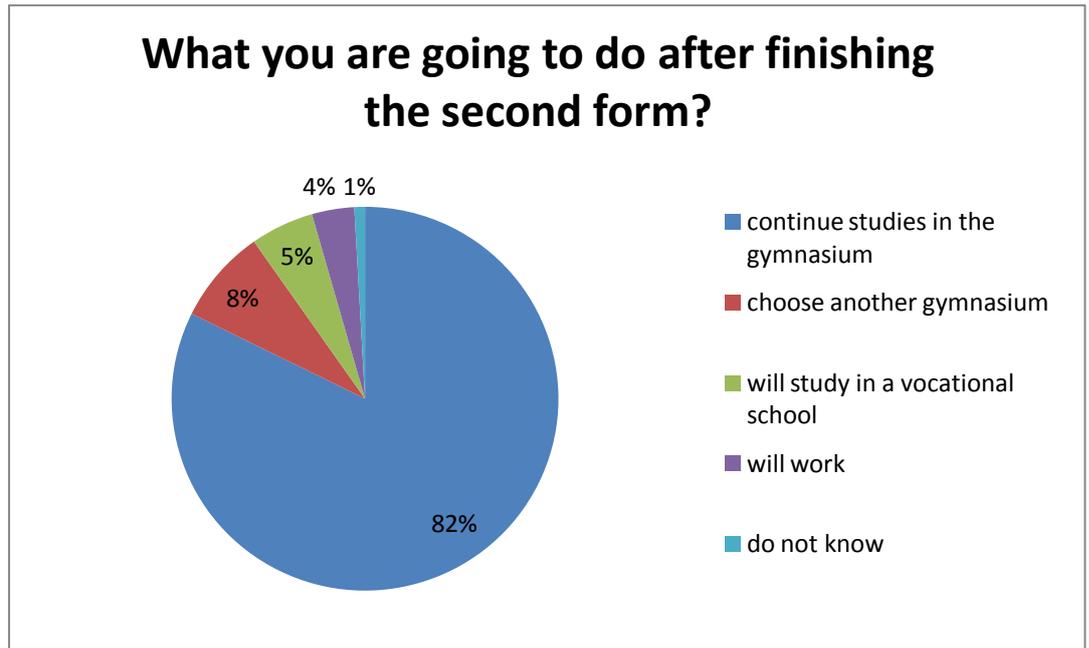
Received results and activities

When coming to our gymnasium, students have already got the understanding of what vocational career education is, as they are introduced to it already in the younger classes in pre gymnasiums. At first we try to discover what are students' needs for choosing a career are. We usually give the test to the newcomers „How I perceive the given information?“ With the help of this test we detect the personal studying style of each student, because it is very important for every student to know how to learn. It is very important for every student to know himself and consequently choose suitable means and ways of learning. The style of learning is everyone's favourite way of thinking, processing of material and perception. We detect if a student is a audial (preference is given to sound information) or visual (visual perception of the surrounding world) or kinesthetic (recognizes the world by touching and by participating).

In the 2013/2014 school year we had 88 students who came to begin studies in our gymnasium. After the test „How I perceive the given information?“ it was detected that 30 students perceive the information in the audial way, 19 students – by visual aids, and 68 the kinesthetic way. This information is helpful for a student as he/she finds out what his/her prevailing learning style is. Our specialists advise the students how to learn, and what can help them to concentrate their attention. We also introduce class teachers and other teachers to the results of the test. It is useful for organizing the work process in the lessons or other activities.

In 2012 our school gave questionnaires for the second and third formers in our gymnasium with the aim to find out needs of the students when choosing vocational career. A total of 113 students out from 131 were second formers who took part in this kind of examination and 120 students out of 141 were third grade students. The aim of such an examination was to find out vocational needs of students and where they seek for information and other issues.

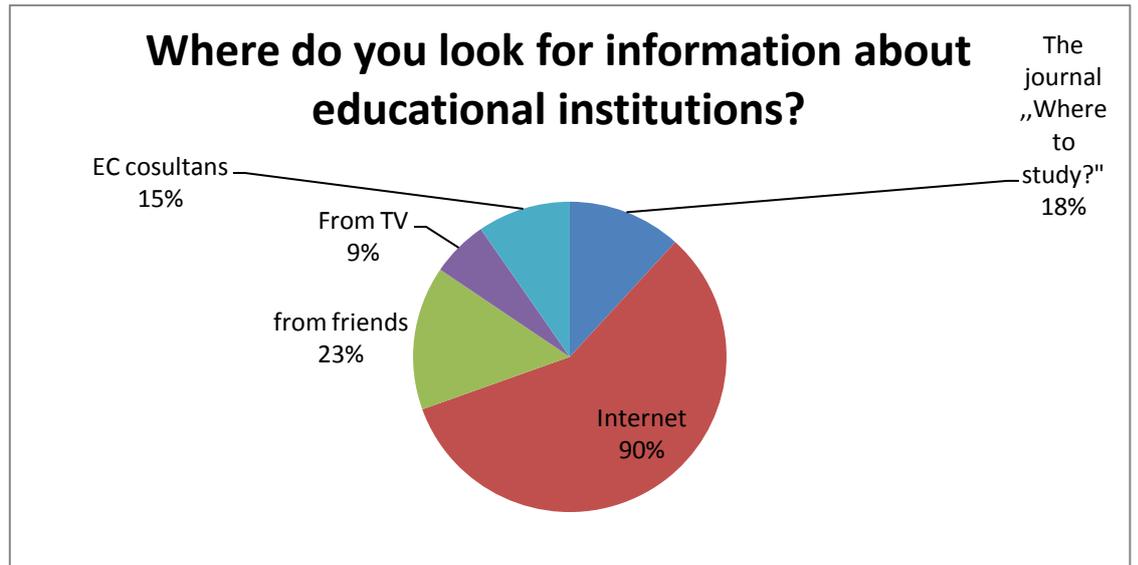
The second formers answers to the question, „What they you going to do after finishing the second form in the gymnasium?“ were as following: 93 students (82 %) said that they were going to continue studies, 9 students (8 %) chose another gymnasium, 6 students (55%) would study in a vocational school, 4 students wanted to start working and 1 student did not know what he was going to do (Picture 1).



Picture 1

The second question was: „Where do you look for information about educational institutions“? The students indicated: second formers - 63 students (56%) - seek for information on the Internet, 33 students (29 %) get the information from their friends, 14 students (12 %) read the journal „Where to Study?“, 11 students (10%) on TV, 10 students (9%) consult our school career consultants, 2 students (2%) indicated other sources. As most of the respondents have chosen the Internet, our career consultants can see there both pluses and minuses. On the one hand, it is enough to indicate only e -addresses where students can find the necessary information, but on the other hand, the amount of information is so vast that students can get lost.

Third formers' answers to the same question were very similar. They chose Internet and friends as the most popular ways for seeking the information. (Picture 2).

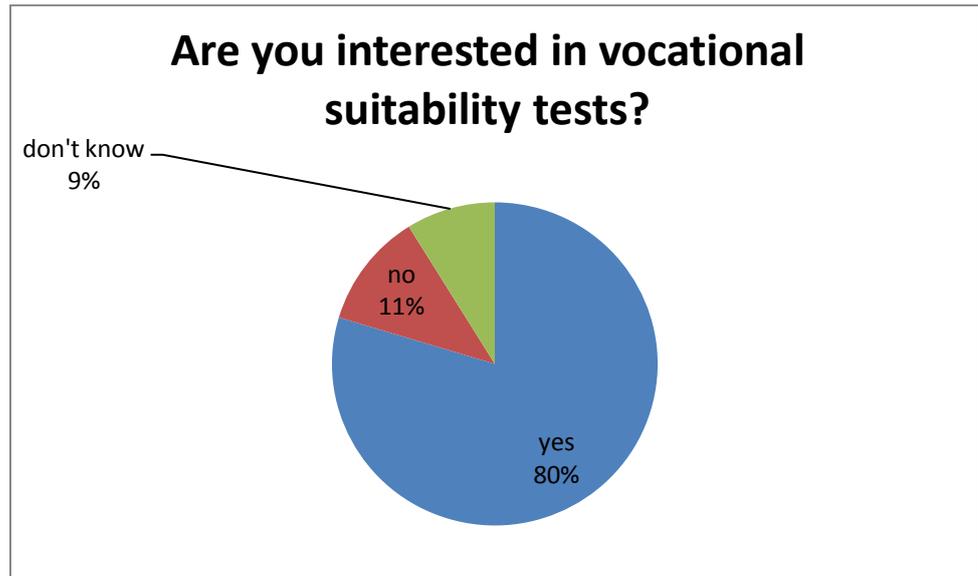


Picture 2

There was another question: „What kind of profession representatives would you like to meet?“. Students wanted to meet mostly doctors, engineers, lawyers, economists, policemen, programmers, beauticians, designers, architects, psychologists, mechanics. All the enumerated professions are valuable. The best is the one which is personally most interesting, most matching personal values, abilities, interests and competences. Every profession has other related professions and that is why they can be considered as alternatives.

When doing the questionnaires it was very important to find out what students would like to talk about during their extra lessons with their class teachers, if they are interested in self cognition tests, if they would like to try doing vocational suitability tests, or others alike.

The results of such questionnaires showed that students would like to speak not only about the matters in the class, excursions and other extra events organized by the class, but they would also like to speak about exams, choice of subjects that are optional, they would like to know more about universities and colleges, their specifications and entrance possibilities. It is very important for the students to know themselves. Self cognition is very important. Students should have to know their personal characteristics, needs, interests, abilities, values. It is good that students are interested in vocational suitability tests. Even 90 students would like to do such tests. (Picture 3)



Picture 3

Students stated that all meetings, tests, discussions about professions, studies and entrance possibilities would be most suitable to be organized during extra classes with their class teacher. These lessons are delivered once a week.

We are glad that when the question was given: „What are you going to do after finishing the gymnasium?“ The third formers answered that 77 students (out of 120) will choose studies in Lithuania, 31 students are intending to go to work abroad, 14 will try to study abroad, 7 will work in Lithuania.

When we asked in what way the students would like to get information from, they noted that their class teacher could do that(68 out of 120 respondents), 30 students would like to see such information in the gymnasium stand, for 27 students it would be nice to see such information in our school’s website. The students would also like to visit study fairs, participate in the seminars, conferences, or meeting representatives of different professions.

So, considering the results of the questionnaire, vocational education in our school is carried out in the following directions:

- We store and constantly renew printed material about learning and studying possibilities, professions, qualifications, labour market and others.
- We deliver brochures and booklets to parents about UKC (Centre of Career Education), where we inform them about service of this centre.
- The information about UKC service is announced on gymnasium website, announcement boards, during open days in the gymnasium.

- Students are given the information about labour market, professions, specialities;
- We organize extra lessons about self cognition, about careers and career planning;
- We consult individually both students and parents;
- We organize excursions to colleges, universities, vocational schools;
- We organize meetings with former students, who come to our school and present their university or college and speak about their chosen profession and its specifications;
- We cooperate with other educational institutions when their representatives not only present their professions but invite us to visit their work place;
- Utena Labour Exchange Office informs about employment possibilities both in our town and abroad.

Vocational education is integrated into moral education, psychology, technology, economy lessons.

We organize trips to other educational institutions, where students have the possibility to get acquainted with study programs such as:

- Students visit Utena Regional Vocational Teaching Centre,
- Utena College;
- Vilnius College of Technology and Design;
- Vilnius Gediminas Technical University;
- Vilnius Law University „Mykolas Riomeris“.

So far 304 students participated in these excursions.

Also 95 students visited Vilnius „Litexpo“ Exhibition Centre, where there was a study fair „Studies 2013“. There they had the possibility to get acquainted with programs and acceptance conditions of various universities and other educational institutions. They had a chance to communicate with students of these institutions and try practical activities.

Students also had the possibility to participate in the Project „Enterprise Lithuania“, which took place in our school. There was the event „Business Involves“ where students could listen to success stories.

The „Career day“ was organized for the 1 -3 gymnasium classes.

In spring we had an event organized for our 1st formers „In the world of professions“. Such an event is organized for the second time. There teams from separate classes not only presented their chosen profession, but also did tasks connected with professions.

During the school year our students have been preparing their career plans. A total of 302 career plans have been prepared. In these plans students named their most important personal

features, made TOP 3 of their interests, values, abilities. They named their most important achievements at school and in personal life. They noted their short term and long term aims, marked professions they are interested in now, what personal qualities you should have for these professions. It was noticed that students filled in these plans irresponsibly as they were asked about their personal opinion, self evaluation, comments. Students avoided to write frankly as they did not want to reveal their plans. So it was decided not to write such plans in the future as it takes lots of time and human resources.

We organized many events during the school year. For instance „My career way, my interests“, „Order and conditions of entering higher schools“, „Your personality type“, „Plan your career step by step“, „Self cognition and positive self evaluation“, „The variety of educational institutions and possibilities to continue studies“.

This year we also had some questionnaires about career education. One of the questionnaires was integrated into the Project „Career fostering , creating and expanding observance modules in secondary and vocational teaching.“ (1 stage) No. VPI -1,3-SMM-01-002; 333 students were involved into this questionnaire:

- 94 1st graders;
- 86 2 nd graders;
- 79 3rd graders;
- 74 4th graders.

There was a question: „What makes the biggest influence to your future career plans“. They had to choose only 3 variants. Different grade students‘ answers were as follows: (Table 1):

Statement	I gymnasium class	II gymnasium class	III gymnasium class	IV gymnasium class
I decided myself	46	45	46	41
Family	27	25	24	14
School	7	6	3	4
Friends	6	5	4	7
Learning results	48	41	41	34
Family traditions	-	3	-	-

(Table 1)

So as you can see the students' own decisions, learning results and family have the biggest influence.

The second question was: „What difficulties do you face when planning your future ?“ They were able to choose only 3 statements (Table 2):

Statement	I gymnasium class	II gymnasium class	III gymnasium class	IV gymnasium class
School does not help me decide	15	21	10	15
I don't know where I could better express myself	37	36	42	29
It is difficult to plan my future	61	55	48	26
I don't have serious difficulties	10	16	16	16
My view and my parents' views don't coincide	15	14	12	13
I know myself too little (I don't know what I want, what I can, what is important for me)	32	31	26	26
I have many choices but I cannot choose the best	40	40	34	27

(Table 2)

There are 3 tendencies in the chosen statements: it is difficult for students to plan their future (they have little practise in this area), they have many choices, but cannot choose the best one (they fear to be wrong when choosing a not suitable decision or one has abilities in some areas and does not know how to coordinate that) and 3rd – one does not know how to Express oneself best (one lacks experience, practice, activities). It was noticed that studets would like to have more help from school .

The next question was: „What will help you to develop your career – raise and seek for career aims?“ They could choose between 3 and 5 statements. (Table 3)

Statement	I gymnasium class	II gymnasium class	III gymnasium class	IV gymnasium class
Better understanding of what I want	64	52	46	35

Bigger self-confidence	46	44	36	25
Ability to learn more effectively	48	34	27	37
Ability to plan my activities	28	24	16	19
Knowing my abilities and strong sides	40	40	37	34
Ability to present myself effectively	23	18	21	22
Possibility to take decisions by myself	28	27	15	14
Understanding what is important for me in life	36	31	25	19
Knowledge of my personal abilities	24	21	17	13
Understanding what jobs will be popular	24	32	33	26
Ability to make important personal bonds for my career	12	14	12	17
Ability to coordinate my learning with leisure.	22	25	20	27
Fewer worries about possible consequences when choosing a career not in the right way.	19	16	25	26
Better skills when accepting decision (ability to decide quickly and right)	17	15	21	20
More information about career (work vs. learning, profession, voluntary work) possibilities	21	22	22	17
Finding reliable and exact information about career possibilities.	18	15	22	19

(Table 3)

Students think very similarly, it does not matter if they are in the first gymnasium form or in the last one. They indicate the statements that will help them to develop their career. The 1- 3 grade students state that in the first place they distinguish that better understanding of what they want will help them. But 4th graders state that for them an ability to learn more effectively is the most

important factor as they are waiting for the exams. The second important factor for the 1st formers is an ability to learn more effectively and for the 2nd graders it is important to confide themselves more. The 2nd important factor for the 3rd formers is the knowledge of their own abilities and strong sides, while for 4th formers is better knowledge of what they want. The third most important factor for 1st and 3rd graders is bigger confidence in their abilities, while for 2nd and 4th formers it is important to know their own abilities and strong sides. On the fourth position, different class groups have chosen different statements: the 1st graders – knowledge about their abilities and strong sides, the 2nd graders – ability to learn more effectively, the 3rd graders – understanding what jobs will be popular in the future , the 4th graders – ability to coordinate learning and leisure time. If till the 5th position the choices of students were very similar, in this position the opinions are different: for 1st graders it is what is important in life, 4th graders name the understanding of what jobs will be popular in future and less thrill about possible consequences if they choose the wrong career.

To organize more effective career fostering at school students were asked to name what priorities for career education activities they will choose. They could choose 3-5 statements.(Table 4):

Statement	I gymnasium class	II gymnasium class	III gymnasium class	IV gymnasium class
Career days	38 V	28	21	25
Help looking for volunteering activities, for a job in summer during holidays.	30	27	29	21
Making career plans	26	26	14	21
Teachers have to introduce how their subject could be applied in life.	31	34	24	28
Excursions to offices, enterprises	57	47	49	36
Compulsory career lessons	19	22	9	19
Career lectures, seminars	39	28	43	31
Career circles, clubs, forums	28	24	18	12
Giving career information	46	38	30	33
Consultation with career specialists	36	44	36	40
Optional career lessons	28	28	17	26

Self testing in practical activities	54	48	52	42
Career events (eg. meetings with representatives from higher /vocational schools, famous people)	38	36	53	36

(Table 4)

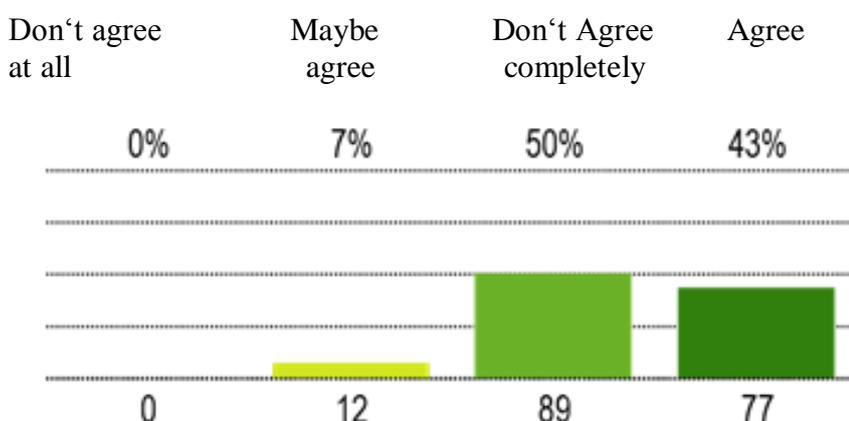
When analysing the results we can see similar tendencies. All students want to try practical activities, students would willingly go to various organizations, participate in career events, will be interested in career lectures, seminars, career days, consultations with career specialists and also would like to see the information about careers in the school website or stand.

One more research was done at the end of 2013. This research was done with the aim to evaluate quality of the school to perfect it. The research was done on the Lithuanian Internet platform of IQES online. IQES online Lithuania is the national school evaluation agency, a free of charge service for all schools. With the help of the Internet we can organize quizzes and get statistical account of quiz results.

Teachers, parents, students were asked about the help for students that could be provided.

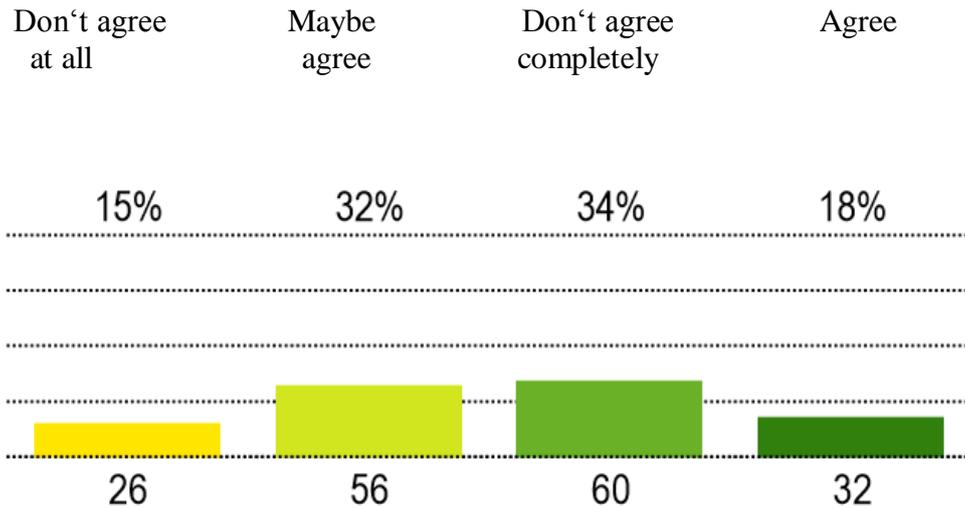
A total of 182 students from 1st and 2nd grades took part in this quiz. We asked about relationships with class friends, teachers, school help, how they feel at school and also about vocational information.

The answers of the students to the statement: „Vocational education at school is useful“ were as following (Picture 5):



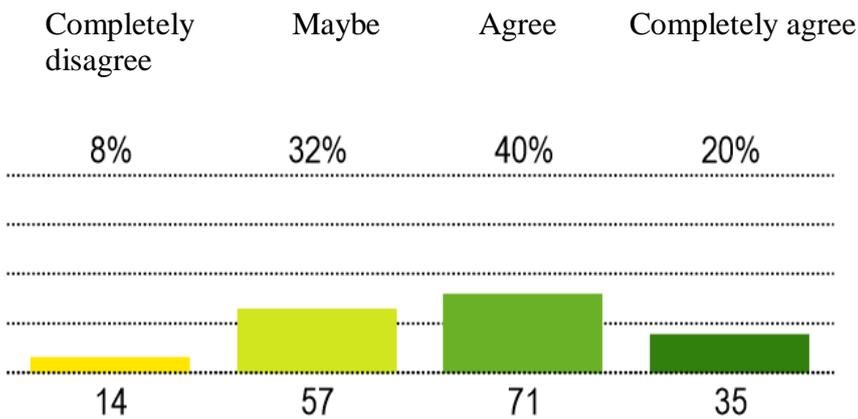
(Picture 5)

For the 2nd statement: „I already know what profession I will choose“ (Picture 6) :



(Picture 6)

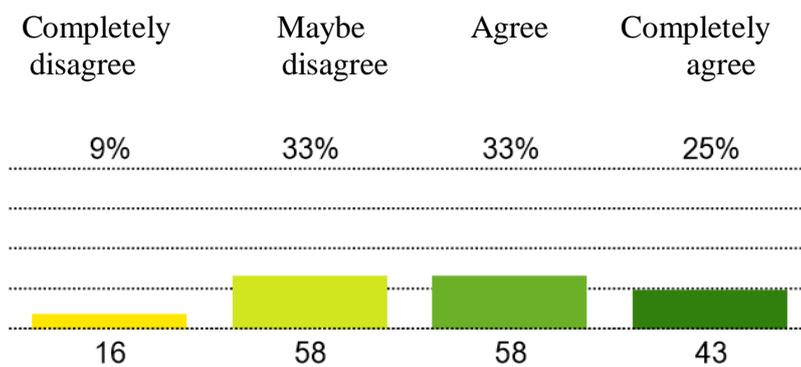
For the 3rd statement: „I know what subjects I must learn and what exams to take so that I could choose the profession “ (Picture 7):



(Picture 7)

For the 4th statement: „I know already where I want to learn after finishing school“

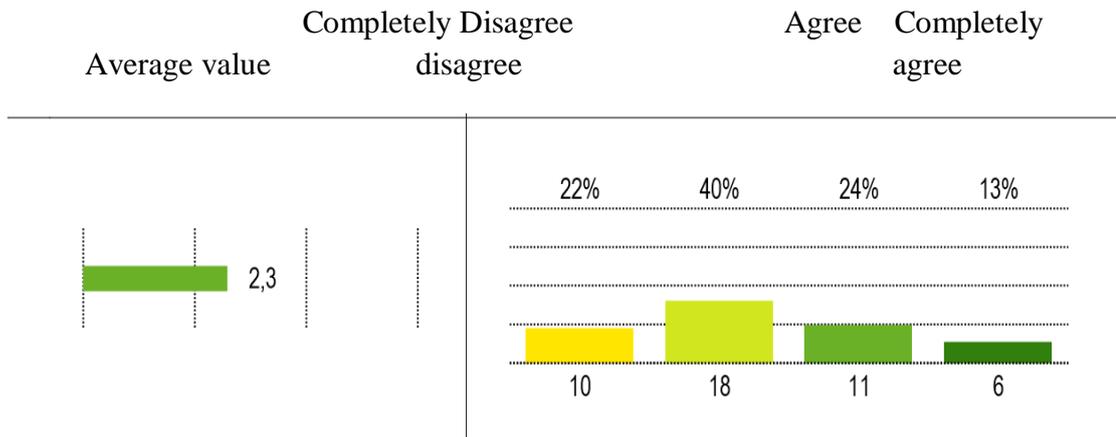
(Picture 8):



(Picture 8)

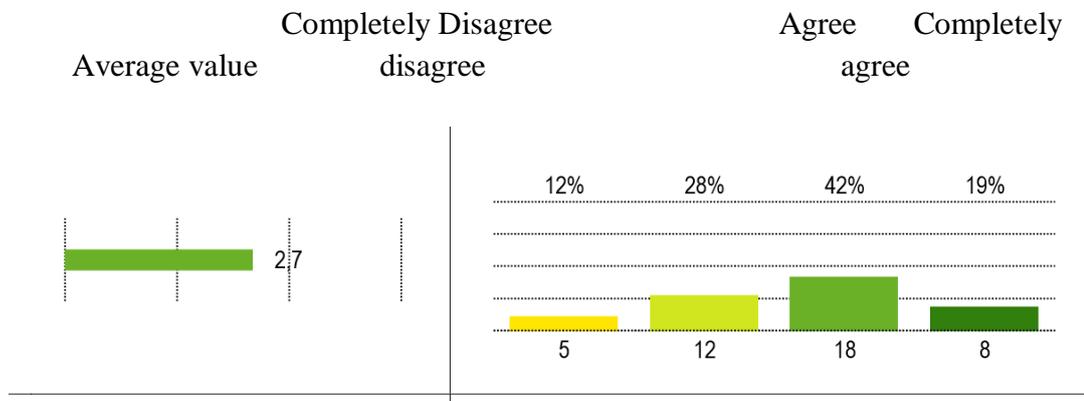
Parents were asked about vocational information (46 parents participated in the quiz). They were asked 5 questions:

1. My child knows where he will study after school.



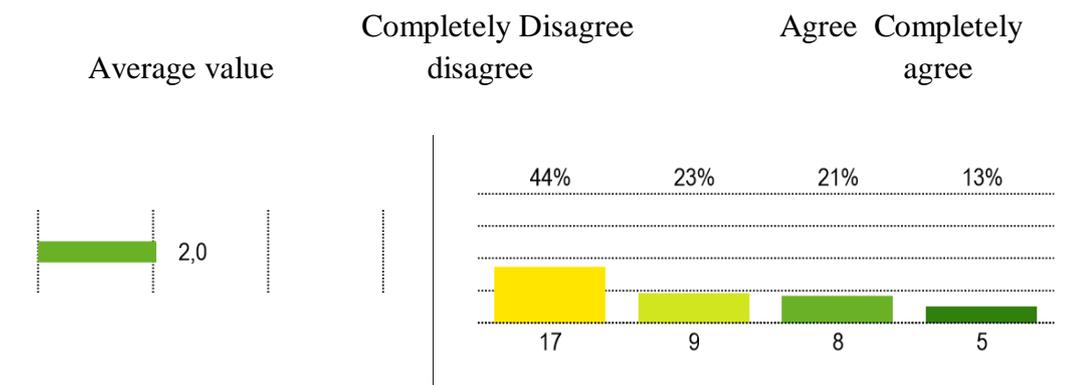
(Picture 9)

2. School gives us parents clear information about further possibilities of a child to learn.



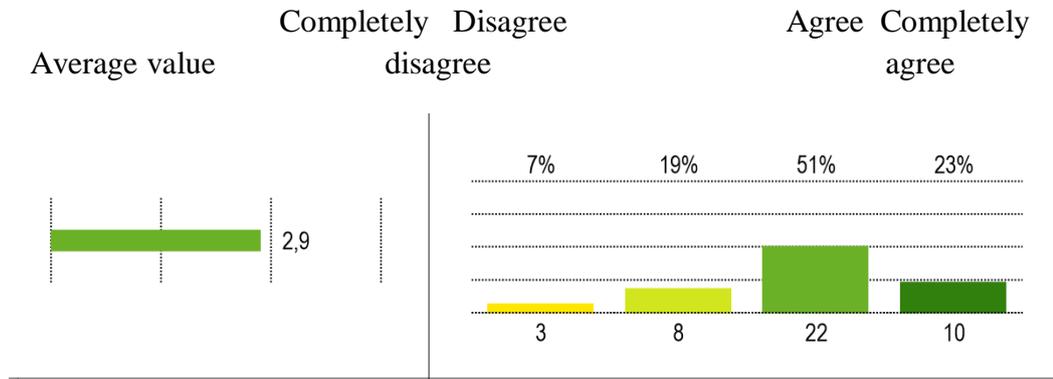
(Picture10)

3. We, parents have had consultations about possibilities for our child to continue studies.



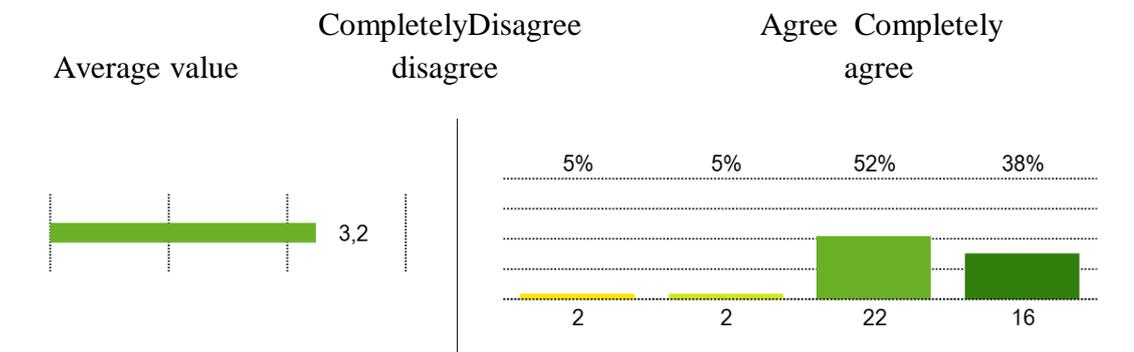
(Picture 11)

4. We state that vocational information takes place at school (students are constantly encouraged to think about their professional future and seek for it).



(Picture 12)

5. Vocational information (career education) at school is beneficial for my child.

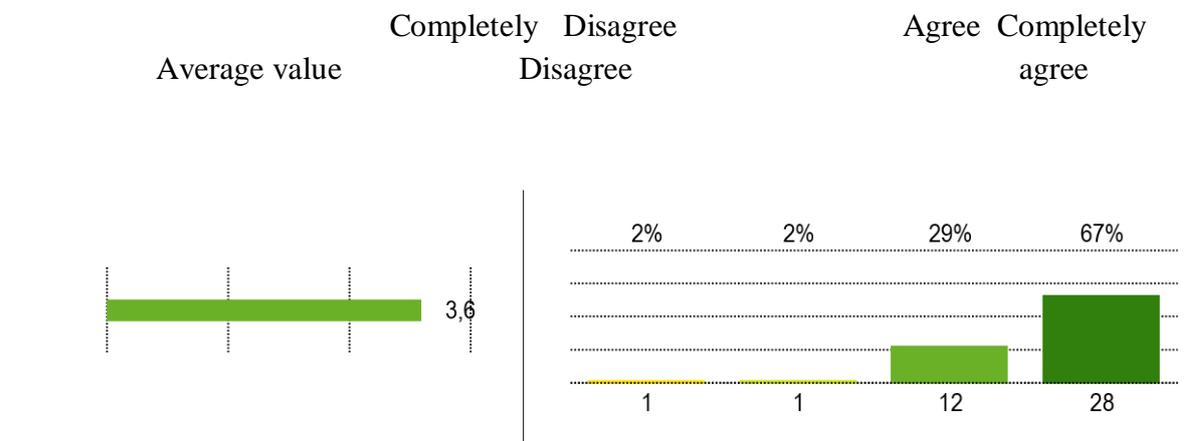


(Picture 13)

From parents' answers we can see that vocational information (career education) is beneficial at school.

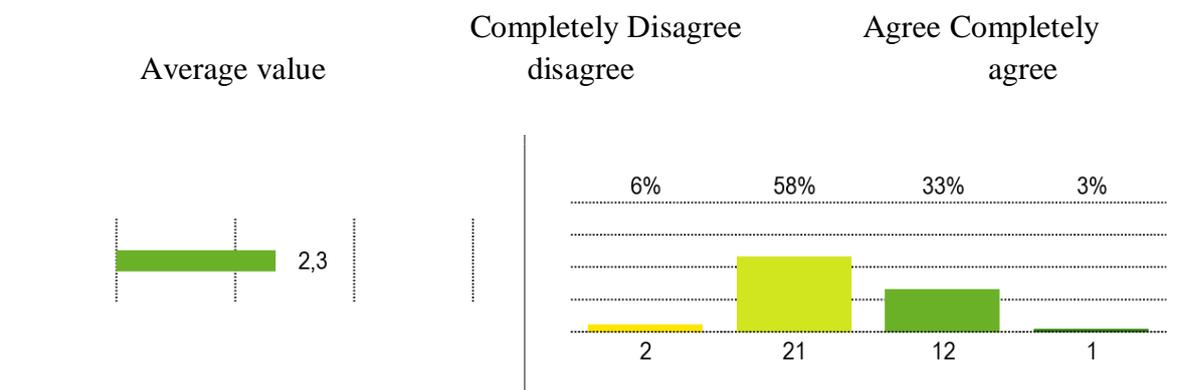
Gymnasium teachers, class teachers (49 people) also recognized that vocational information is good at school.

Teachers and class teachers valued the statement: „Vocational education in our school is good“ (Picture 14):



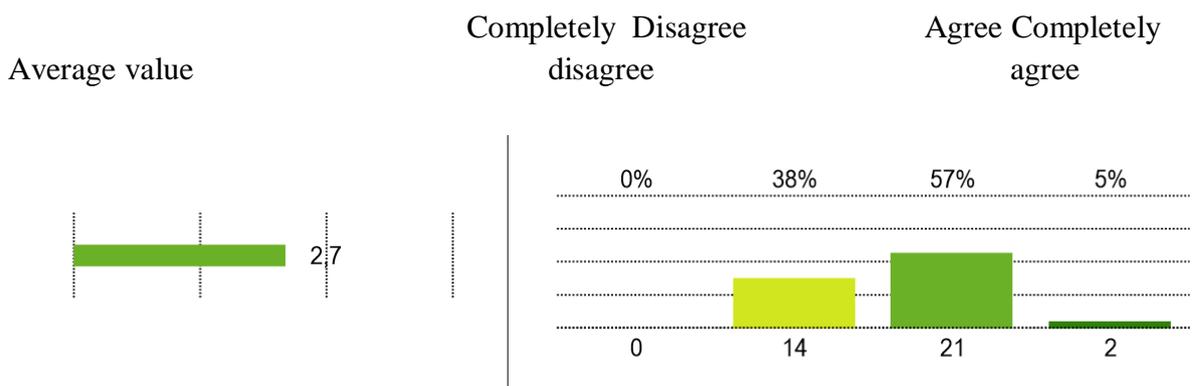
(Picture 14)

The statement: „Parents of our student willingly come to school and participate in educational seminars“ (Picture 15) revealed that interest of parents in this area is poor.



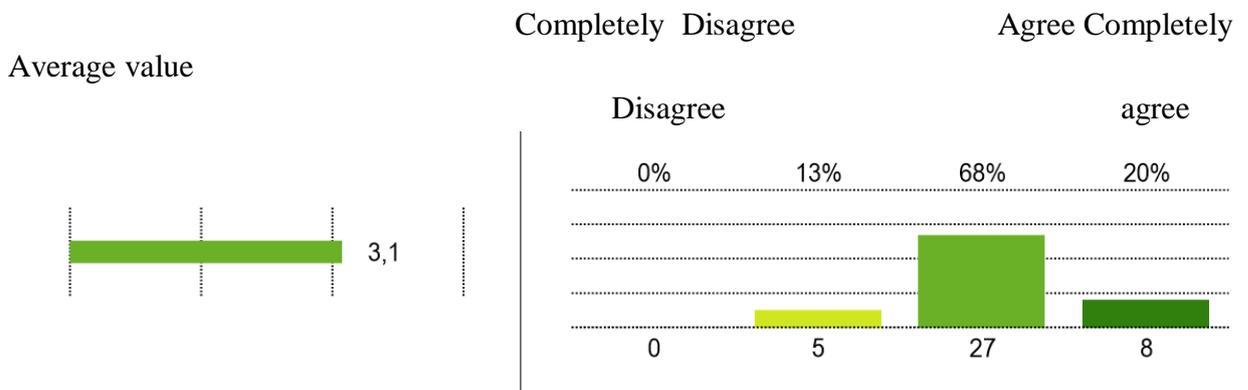
(Picture 15)

The majority of teachers and class teachers approved of the statement that „ We give consultations for those parents whose children find difficulties in learning and try to teach them how to help their children“ (Picture 16).



(Picture 16)

Even 68 % of teachers agree with the statement that „Parents are constantly informed about what help specialists working in our school offer and how they can consult them(Picture 17). Parents get the information from teachers and class teachers on how to help their children.



(Picture 17)

In 2014 we paid more attention to students' practical activities. Vocational activities are such activities with the help of which students can know more about various spheres of engagement, peculiarities of different professions and career possibilities. They also can store work experience, train their vocational motivation and plan their future careers.

Students visited Lithuanian exhibition centre „Litexpo“, where there was a fair entitled „Studies 2014“. There students traditionally get acquainted with studying programs of universities, colleges, vocational teaching centres. They also were interested in the possibilities of studying both in Lithuania and abroad.

Our students have also visited the exhibition „A school without borders“, where they got acquainted with different scientific novelties and made experiments in a mobile laboratory.

Groups of students from different classes visited :

- „Aviva Lietuva“ Insurance Office and got acquainted with the work of a financial consultant;
- Lithuanian Seimas (The Parliament) and were introduced to peculiarities of work here;
- Lithuanian TV studio and saw the work of journalists;
- Joint stock company „Utena Textile Factory“ and were introduced to the profession of clothes designer;

- Utena Regional Police Office where they were interested in a policeman's profession and went around the Office;
- Utena Regional Court where students got acquainted with the work peculiarities there;
- Kaunas Technological University, The Faculty of Integrated Science Studies and Business Centre, departments of chemistry and food technology. Students become acquainted with professions of chemists and food technologist. They were allowed to make some experiments in the local laboratory;
- Sartai Regional Park, The Rokiskis Municipality Museum where they saw activities in the offices, work environments and became acquainted with ecology specialist, history specialist and jeweller professions. Our students also participated in an educational lesson on brass;
- The Moletai Observatory.

It was calculated that 445 students took part in cognitive visits and various activities in 2014.

Our gymnasium also collects information about the activities of our former students.

What educational institutions they entered and other activities	2013/2014 m.m. 136 school leavers
Higher schools:	73,5%
• universities	35 – 25,7%
• colleges	65 – 47,8%
Vocational schools	17 – 12,5%
Study abroad	3
Work in Lithuania	7 – 5,1%
Work abroad	10 – 7,4%
Labour exchange	1
Serve in the army	1