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**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PREVENTING
ADAPTATION DIFFICULTIES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

531.01. – Generaly Theory of Education

SUMMARY

of the PhD. Thesis in Education Sciences

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ABREVIATIONS LIST

OECD (engl.) – *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*

AISS (engl.) - *Adjustment Inventory for School Students*

GE – experimental group

GC – control group

EC – finding stage

EV- control stage

CONCEPTUAL MARKINGS OF THE RESEARCH

Timeliness and importance of the issue addressed.

The context of the 21st century differs from that of the early 20th century, which emphasized helping people identify appropriate occupational options and make vocational choices, with the time frame of these interventions being limited as career guidance for vocational decision-making focus on the act of choice and approach the decision-making process as a singular event that occurs at a specific moment in time. M. Savickas argued that career professionals should respond to the societal changes taking place in the new millennium, stating: "Career counseling/vocational education must keep pace with our society's transition to a postmodern era. Consequently, practitioners must renew their career interventions to fit the new *zeitgeist*" [apud 53, p. 268]. On the other hand, "there is a need to develop educational concepts and models that would optimally capitalize on information and communication technologies and help prepare an individual fully integrated in a modern society, but also able to adapt easily to subsequent developments unpredictable" [33, p. 332].

"Adolescents' ideals must match reality, otherwise they will be disappointed. Today society sets much higher expectations, the demand-supply ratio on the labor market is uneven, there are many teenagers who extend their schooling period until 23-25 years (faculty and master's), and then they do not find a job. Career and vocational development are becoming less and less available due to inflation, economic crisis, rising unemployment; adolescents are confused about their role in society" [apud 14, p. 20].

Considering the current *vocational education* as more and more complex, C. Cucuș emphasizes that such a problem must have a permanent character and generate the self-orientation of the educated according to the unpredictable variables of the world of work. For, as M. Debesse claims, "education does not create man; it helps him create himself" [apud 8, p. 112].

Teenagers spend a lot of time in school, without professionalizing themselves, but rather acquiring a general culture. Unemployment leads to a diffusion of identity, those who finish college and do not have a job have negative feelings about their own status" [apud 14, p. 20].

A series of international educational policy documents promote and support the paradigm of student-centeredness and a real adaptation to the possibilities and needs of the student: *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* [58], *the Dakar Framework for Action of the World Education Forum* [56]. "At the level of the European Union, the main challenge remains to guarantee every European a high level of school education. In this context, *psycho-pedagogical assistance/vocational education* is oriented towards *the adaptation of students to the school environment*, but, above all, towards *the adaptation of the school to the specific needs of the students*" [17, p. 20].

In *the White Paper on the future of Europe*, the European Commission states that, given the important technological and digital innovations that lead to changes in the labor market and demographic change, as some of the jobs today did not exist ten years ago, respectively, many new forms of employment relations will also be created in the future. In relation to this phenomenon, "it is likely that most children starting primary school today will end up in new types of jobs that do not exist at the moment". Consequently, to properly address this situation, "massive investments in

skills and a rethinking of education and lifelong learning systems will be necessary", according to the European Commission, 2017 [apud 15, p. 202].

Correlated with educational policies regarding the prevention of adaptation difficulties within vocational education, in the Republic of Moldova we identify the "*Moldova 2020*" *National Strategy*[62], the *Education Code* [57], the *Vocational/Technical Education Development Strategy 2013-2020* [59], the *National Strategy of Development "Moldova 2030"* [63], and in Romania - *National Education Law no. 1/ 2011* [60], *National Health Strategy 2014-2020* [64], *Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (2015)* [55], *Memorandum, "Educated Romania"* [61].

In the context of the above, *vocational education* "represents a long process that requires documentation, requiring the adolescent to include himself in certain activities in order to receive feedback in order to define and form/aware of personality traits/vocation and strategies for choosing education/career" [42].

Another argument for the topicality of the research topic consists in the need to respond to the challenges involved in the previously described context and aims at the preparation for high school, which has been assimilated with positive social and behavioral skills at the age of adolescence, as well as with improved academic results at the high school level. We also note that currently there is a relatively small amount of research in our space on the implementation and use of vocational education programs for secondary education. Aiming at the promotion of the development of vocational identity, but also of a student-centered education to obtain a state of well-being and academic performance, the urgent need for them is distinguished in the current context. The present research is part of these concerns, being evaluated both the perceptions and opinions of some experts and those of some practitioners in relation to *vocational education and the prevention of adaptation difficulties at the age of early adolescence*.

The research was also prompted by the results of some studies in the specialized literature, which state that, at an early stage, career counseling/vocational education helps adolescents to associate their academic effort with their future plans and promotes the adoption of certain moral behaviors -civic" [52].

Last but not least, another argument for the topicality and importance of the research topic is that it proposes a proactive approach to vocational education in the school space, which represents a natural evolution of concerns for anticipation in the sphere of education, an aspect also supported by the point of view expressed by G. Văideanu [apud 3, p. 46]: "the concern to anticipate has intensified in the last decades, it manifests itself in all fields". This idea is also found in St. Bârsănescu who affirmed that "prospective pedagogy studies become a condition for enrolling education and pedagogy on the lines of real development of Romanian society" [Ibidem].

Description of the situation in the research field and identification of the research problem.

Research in the field of educational sciences, sociology, psychosociology, psychology, developmental psychology each expresses the different values, goals and objectives that teachers attribute to vocational education. When given the opportunity, many see work as an opportunity to express themselves and a tool for creating meaning and purpose in life [47, p. 17]. Different aspects

(anthropological, sociological, psychological) of the concepts of: *vocation, career, vocational education, adaptation, adaptation difficulties* are reproduced in a series of specialized works.

In the international space, perspectives and approaches from the pedagogical and psychological point of view of vocation are recorded by the authors: J. Dewey, D.T. Hall and D.E. Chandler [apud 12], E. Planchard [23] and are complemented by explanatory models and theories regarding vocational education.

The level of research on the issue is determined by the evolution of ideas, concepts and practices proposed by the most representative promoters of interventions in vocational education: E. Claparede [43], D.E. Super [51], M.L. Savickas [49], M. Kidd [45], R. Van Esbroeck [53], S.G. Niles, J. Harris-Bowlsbey [47] etc.

In **Romania**, the history and evolution of the concept of *vocational education* were deepened and explored by researchers C. Rădulescu-Motru [28], I. Drăgan [11], Gh. Tomşa [36], L. Stevenson, M. Miclea, A. Opre [34], D. Dumulescu [12], S. Cristea [7], M. Jigău [16], A. Băban [4], G. Lemeni, M. Miclea [18].

Valuable ideas regarding the essence and defining characteristics of *adaptation* can be found in the works of authors A. Coaşan, A. Vasilescu [5], T. Rudică [30], V. Negovan [19,20], L. Tăușan [35]; the forms of adaptation were described by L.R. Gerasim, S. Butnaru [13] etc.

In the Republic of Moldova, the theoretical foundation of the actions and practical strategies of *vocational education/career education* is found in the works of: O. Dandara [9, 10], A. Afanas [1, 2], M. Zubenschi [41], and milestones regarding socio-professional integration are elucidated by M. Cojocaru-Borozan, E. Țărnă, L. Sadovei [6], L. Papuc [22].

The *adaptation* process was elucidated by E. Țărnă [38, 39], M. Pleșca [24], E. Puzur [27], O. Paladi [21], N. Silistraru [31], educational trends regarding *prevention and overcoming school failure* can be found in M. Șevciuc [32], and *resistance to education* was addressed by T. Șova [33], etc.

The problem of adaptation is also mentioned in the project of the "Education 2030" development strategy, highlighting that "the process of psychosocial adaptation of children in educational institutions is a continuous one." The educational environment, the methodological approaches regarding the socialization, psychosocial and educational adaptation of children are constantly changing, being determined by real psychosocial contexts, by the psychological and behavioral peculiarities of children" [apud 21].

Adaptation difficulties in the school environment can occur when moving to a higher schooling level. Changes in the school environment are especially harmful at the beginning of adolescence, considering the information regarding psychological development at this stage of life.

At the same time, we highlight the necessity and importance of vocational education, from the perspective of achieving the following goals for secondary school students/first years of high school: 1. *Increasing the ability to understand one's own person*; 2. *Learning effective ways involved in occupational and educational exploration*; 3. *Career planning* [47, pp. 378-397]. Based on the specialized literature, the vocational education programs applied in various geographical areas, in different forms, the contents of the school programs aimed at the vocational education of

the students, we find that there is a niche that must be covered regarding the *vocational education from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the environment school*.

The analysis of the research in the field and the educational practice allowed the finding of some **contradictions** regarding:

- The rapid changes taking place in the world of work, influenced by technological developments, the emergence of an interdependent global economy and an increasingly diverse workforce and the need to link vocational education interventions to meet the responsibilities facing adolescents/futures adults in the 21st century.
- Inadequate, non-conforming representations about high school life, future profession and objective reality aimed at overcoming the difficulties of adaptation in the school environment.
- The adaptation difficulties generated by the changes to which adolescents (13-16 years) are subjected and the phenomenon of their prevention, to ensure a proper integration.

Research problem: What are the theoretical-applicative landmarks of the development of vocational identity that ensure the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment, providing the premises for a harmonious development of students?

The purpose of the research is to develop and validate the theoretical-methodological foundations of vocational education, structured in *the Pedagogical Model of vocational identity development from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties*, capitalized on the basis of *the Vocational Education Methodology*.

Research hypothesis:

It is assumed that there are significant differences at the level of vocational identity development, if students benefit from activities based on the Vocational Education Methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

Research objectives:

1. Epistemological interpretation of the essence of basic concepts: *vocation, vocational education, vocational identity, adaptation, prevention of adaptation difficulties*.
2. Specifying the evolution of theoretical approaches, principles and practical ways of vocational education, as part of the psychological currents and those of the general theory of education.
3. Analysis of national and international policies regarding vocational education and the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment;
4. Argument of the necessity of *the Correlation Matrix aimed at vocational education from the perspective of preventing school adaptation difficulties* and indicating the defining coordinates of the curriculum in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in the context of the realization of vocational education for secondary school students.
5. The essentialization of the development of the vocational identity of adolescents in the context of specifying the specific difficulties of adapting to the beginning of high school education.
6. Elaboration and validation of *the Pedagogical Model of the development of vocational identity from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment*, which integrates praxiological foundations, structured in *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

Synthesis of research methodology and justification of research methods

The ideas, conceptions, orientations, theories and approaches that substantiated the research belong to the field of pedagogy, general theory of education, psychology, philosophy, developmental psychology, vocational psychology, vocational/educational counseling.

In particular, the included theoretical benchmarks concerned: *the concept of vocational education; theoretical approaches and orientations aimed at interventions in career development; the characteristics of career education and career guidance activities; the principles of vocational education; forms of adaptation; forms of adaptation difficulties; Holland's model; The career self-management model; the causes of adaptation difficulties in the school environment; adaptive career behaviors, organized by life periods, career, and major life roles; The five-dimensional model proposed by K. Luyckx and co-authors; The three-factor model of identity.*

The methods applied in the research:

1. Theoretical methods: documentary exploration in the field; critical analysis and synthesis of information; clarification of concepts and generalization of conclusions; the hermeneutic method for understanding complex texts.
2. Experimental methods: the use of questionnaires for data collection; careful observation of phenomena in real time; conducting pedagogical experiments; investigating case studies and the results of student work.
3. Results analysis methods: mathematical and statistical approaches for data interpretation; graphic representation of the results obtained in the research.

The novelty and scientific originality of the research is objectified by: determining the theoretical and praxeological foundations from the perspective of the development of vocational identity and the prevention of students' adaptation difficulties in the school environment; the development of *the Correlation Matrix aimed at vocational education from the perspective of preventing school adaptation difficulties* and the elaboration of *the Pedagogical Model of vocational identity development from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties*; the design, implementation and experimental validation of *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

The main scientific results that led to the solution of the problem consist in the substantiation, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, of the vocational education, structured in *the Pedagogical Model*, experienced and validated in educational institutions, a fact that confirmed the opportunity of its exploitation, in order to prevent adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

The theoretical significance of the research: establishing the theoretical foundations of vocational education and adaptation difficulties in the school environment, updating the concepts of *vocational education, career education, vocational counseling and school adaptation difficulties*; defining the notion of vocational identity; synthesizing research related to the scientific guidelines regarding vocational education.

The applied value of the research consists in: the design/implementation/evaluation of the Vocational Education Methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties, the values of which are extendable to other levels of education.

The implementation of the scientific results was carried out in the framework of the pedagogical experiment carried out with 8th grade students from four school units in Botoșani County, Romania: three schools in the municipality of Dorohoi - Mihail Kogălniceanu Secondary School, Al. I. Cuza", respectively High School No. 1 and a school unit from the city of Darabani - "Leon Dănăilă" Secondary School.

Approval of scientific results. The research was carried out within the "Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University in Chisinau. The results of the research were examined, discussed and approved during the meetings of the Guidance Committee; of national and international scientific conferences and symposia: Premises of the development of vocational identity from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment. In: Education from the perspective of values, Alba-Iulia, 2018; Elements of vocational education and persuasive communication in the educational and professional development of students. In: International Conference "Ensuring equal opportunities through educational management and psycho-pedagogical assistance services in the European context", Arad, 2019; The valences of vocational development as landmarks in education. In: Education from the perspective of values. Chisinau, 2019; Implications of vocational education in self-realization of adolescents. In: Self-realization – adaptation and social integration, Iași, 2019; Scientific arguments for the vocational development and career counseling of adolescents. In: Materials of the International Scientific Conference "Creativity and personal development: psychological and philosophical dimensions", Iasi: Romanian Academy, Institute of Economic and Social Research, "Gh. Fairies". 2020; The contemporary approach to vocational education. In: International Scientific Conference "Contemporary concerns of socio-human sciences" ULIM, Chisinau, 2018; Vocational identity - conceptualization and impact in career development. In: Materials of the International Scientific Conference "Problems of Social Sciences and Modernization of Education", State Pedagogical University "Ion Creangă", Chisinau, 2020; Prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment. In "Materials of the Republican Conference of Teachers", Chisinau, 2018; Vocational identity development - the premise of preventing adaptation difficulties in high school education. In: Current Issues in the Humanities. Scientific annals of doctoral students and competitors, Chisinau, 2019; Vocational identity assessment process in adolescents. In: Perspectives and Problems of Integration in the European Research and Education Area, Cahul, 2019, etc.

Publications on the topic of the thesis: In total there are 18 scientific publications, of which 5 articles in scientific journals and 13 articles in the collections of national and international scientific conferences and symposia.

The volume and structure of the thesis. The thesis contains: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography from 231 sources, 11 appendices. In total it contains 137 pages of basic text, 34 figures and 15 tables.

Key words: vocation, vocational education, vocational identity, career education, vocational counseling, adaptation, adaptation difficulties, adolescence, prevention, vocational maturity.

THESIS CONTENT

The **introduction** includes the topicality and importance of the research theme, reflecting and analyzing the situation in the field and identifying the research problem. The aim, object, hypothesis and research objectives are presented, the synthesis of the methodology and the methods applied in the research are described; the theoretical and applied value, which confirms from an epistemological, methodological and praxeological point of view the practical significance, novelty and originality of the investigative approach.

Chapter 1, **Theoretical Foundations of Vocational Education and School Adjustment Difficulties**, contains the description of the scientific content of the concepts of vocational education and adjustment difficulties.

Exposing the essence of the basic concepts (vocation, vocational education, vocational identity, adaptation, prevention of adaptation difficulties), the concepts of vocational education and the concepts describing vocational interventions were specified and explained.

According to P. Popescu-Neveanu, vocation is "the call to a certain activity or to the fulfillment of some social missions, based on the awareness of one's abilities and the responsibility regarding their valorization", assuming a correlation between the aptitude and the attitudinal system. "Supporting young people in the sense of an authentic option for a vocational professional role consists in identifying an optimal correspondence between the occupational profile and the particular combination of a person's interests and skills" [26, p. 776].

Approaching the concept of vocation, C. Rădulescu-Motru assimilates it with a "calling planted in the soul of every man by the destiny of the nation of which, in every people, a personality, created by humanity to fulfill something in the world, is a part" [Apud 40, p. 103].

Vocation is defined by J. Dewey as "the journey, call or personal trajectory of the individual worker" [apud 46]. Referring to the essential personal phenomenon, authors E. Estola et al. argue that it "energizes and directs a person's individual intentions, activities, and interactions even as they continue to be shaped by external factors (for example, society's position on occupation, associations with gender). This view also refers to the learning process, which is a person-dependent process" [apud 46]. In the cultural aspect, C. Rădulescu-Motru elucidates the fact of the usefulness of the vocation in the social plan: "Nature uses people of vocation to ensure the crystallization of a culture, just as it uses germs to ensure the continuity of animal life forms" [apud 41, p. 261].

The meanings of the notion of *vocational education* do not emerge only from the joining of the two key terms, but transcend the meanings of actions aimed at discovering the latent vocations of adolescents in order to activate and empower them to achieve an optimum of personal development.

As S. Cristea mentions, *vocational education* constitutes a specific dimension of applied, technological education, involving, in particular, the process of training and development of the student's personality in the perspective of his school and professional integration, achievable through the full utilization of psychological resources, depending by social requirements. In a narrow sense, *vocational education* represents *the psychological premise of the student's professional training process*, a process initiated and intensified in certain stages of schooling (secondary and higher education, but also primary education, to identify the artistic and sports vocation). In a broad sense,

it involves a complex activity of individual orientation - with the function of "searching for a specificity that favors, if not trains, the deepest tendencies of the being" and collective, social - with the function of diagnosis and prognosis, at the level of "school orientation that must become an education orientation", avoiding early selection (with the exceptions that confirm the rule - artistic or sports vocation) [7, p. 64].

The definition of *adaptation difficulties* is made in terms of denial of adaptation, both adaptation and maladaptation depending on the particularities of the person who is to adapt and the particularities of the environment or system in which they are to integrate [21, p. 40].

The essence of *identifying adaptation difficulties* in the school context is overcome in practice by the concern for their prevention in order to develop the personality harmoniously, which thus allows the discovery of the vocation. "Preventive action consists in identifying complicated situations in time and risk groups, before they have a negative impact, triggering personal or group crises" [29, p. 24].

Simultaneously with highlighting the notions used in various research areas, it was also specified that vocation and career are related, interchangeable terms, developing and completing the ideas of researchers in the field of psychology.

A wide range of theoretical perspectives can reveal the achievement of *vocational education* goals. In this context, the analysis of researchers' ideas allows us to state, starting from the elucidation of the concepts of *vocation* and *career* that we can distinguish between *theories of vocation/career* and *theories of vocational education/career counseling*. The former relates to how individuals experience their vocation, how they make career decisions, and the environments in which decisions are made, while the latter theories focus on how best to intervene to help individuals develop their careers [45, p. 1]. Thus, in the opinion of L. Popa-Buda, these theories incorporate different perspectives of the career, presenting it as a life process, as a process of solving problems and making decisions, as creators of meanings and, not lastly, as an individual experience [25, p. 4].

The theoretical research includes the foray into the history of the evolution of theoretical approaches, principles and practical ways of integrating vocational education into the great currents of psychology and those of the general theory of education. In the logic of the research approach, explanatory models and theories regarding vocational education, respectively career development, are presented, subordinated to the two major perspectives: modern and postmodern.

For the observation of interventions regarding vocational education, two perspectives are relevant, which constitute true foundations for researchers and practitioners in the field:

□ modern, which contains six major orientations: trait-factor theories (F. Parsons, 1909; J. Holland, 1959; R. Dawis, L. Lofquist, 1969), personality theories (conception of A. Roe, 1956; composite theory Hoppock's on professional choices; J. Holland's person-environment fit concept), development theories (E. Ginzberg, 1951, D. Super, 1953, L. Gottfredson's concept, D.V. Tiederman's theory of professional development, R.P.O 'Hara), the psychodynamic/psychoanalytic career perspective (E. Bordin, 1963), cognitive-behavioral theories (the social learning theory of career development, J. Krumboltz, 1976) and emerging theories of vocational education (the socio-cognitive career theory, R.W. Lent, S.D. Brown, G. Hackett, 1996; cognitive information processing

theory, G. Peterson, J. Sampson Jr., R. Reardon, J. Lenz, 1996; value-based model of career choice, S.D. Brown, 1996; the integrative model of life planning, L.S. Hansen, 1997);

□ postmodern, which departs from the positivist tradition that has dominated career and vocation research. In this category, M. Kidd [128, p. 100] includes narrative approaches; action theory, R. Young, L. Valach, A. Collin (1996); the metatheory of M. Savickas (2005) regarding constructivism.

The examination of the policies and practices of the promotion of vocational education allowed us to establish that the concern for vocational education, but also for the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the educational context, has evolved, becoming today the frame of reference and premise of educational practices. Preparing for a professional future is generally considered one of the main developmental tasks in adolescence and, according to the OECD (2004), countries around the world have recognized the importance of adolescent education in successful career preparation.

Both A.G. Watts and R.G. Sultana, in a comparative study of European career guidance systems - *Career Guidance Policies in 37 Countries: Contrasts and Common Themes* [54], observes the contemporary tendency to give greater importance to guidance and vocational education in schools. Vocational education activities are included in the school curriculum in many countries, given different weights in the educational process. They can be made into independent school subjects or they can be subordinated to another subject or even integrated into subjects compatible with this field.

Appreciating the importance of all models regarding the adaptation process, we rally around the idea that strategies to prevent adaptation difficulties represent "the set of cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed at controlling, reducing or tolerating external and/or internal demands, demands that threaten or exceed an individual's resources" [39, p. 50].

The praxiological value of psycho-pedagogical theories and approaches in the field of vocational education is demonstrated by analyzing logical reasoning and/or the impact of vocational education addressed to students in the direction of preventing adaptation difficulties. Therefore, in the most general approach, theorists in the field of human development agree that one of the main tasks of adolescence is the prevention of adjustment difficulties, which, along with the discovery of vocation, allow adolescents to be prepared so that, finally, they - and can assume a viable role on the labor market.

The conceptual approach presented above needs to be balanced with certain applicative foundations, here *the Correlation Matrix targeting vocational education from the perspective of preventing difficulties in school adaptation* intervenes (Tab. 1.):

Table 1. Correlation matrix regarding vocational education from the perspective of preventing school adaptation difficulties [author's elaboration]

		VOCATIONAL EDUCATION				
		Criteria	Factors	Indicators	Risks	Verification means
PREVENTING SCHOOL ADAPTATION DIFFICULTIES	1. The ability to understand one's own person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding regarding the influence of positive conception on vocational behavior; The formation of complex interpersonal skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affirmation of personality; discovery of vocation; discovering skills optimal relationship with those around; emotional adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low self-esteem; Depression; Anxiety; Relationship difficulties; Emotional adaptation difficulties. 	Awareness of personality traits	
	2. Learning effective ways involved in occupational and educational exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the transition from academic achievements to professional opportunities; Understanding the relationship between work and education; training skills to process information about vocation; the formation of job search skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> associating academic effort with future plans; major congruence between studies and career; educational adaptation; active exploration of possibilities; the decision to get involved in different activities, to establish objectives and values to follow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic dissatisfaction; Career-related anxiety; Educational adaptation difficulties; Not exploring the possibilities; Non-involvement in activities 	Social comparison Feedback received from those around	
	3. Training effective decision-making skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the interrelationship of life roles; Deepening knowledge about different occupations; Understanding the career planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear perspectives regarding the role of pupil, student, worker; social adaptation; choosing an occupation; making a career decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ambiguity of roles; social adaptation difficulties; increased level of career indecision 	Self-efficacy regarding education and career decisions Vocational identity development	

Therefore, the study of specialized literature and the epistemological analysis of the approaches and understandings of established researchers ensured the determination of the theoretical foundations of vocational education and the prevention of adaptation difficulties.

Chapter 2, **Methodological configurations of vocational education from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment**, presents the essence of adaptation difficulties in the school environment perceived by adolescents, with a proactive role in preparing the transition from secondary to high school education.

Adolescence is an important period of vocational training for future career development [51]. An essential component of vocational education during adolescence is the achievement of thorough preparation for career choice, which can be defined as a person's willingness and ability to successfully engage in the career decision-making process and arrive at a well-informed decision regarding the career [48].

The introduction of elements of vocational counseling/education in school programs represents an important argument for the development of information, counseling and guidance services in schools. The analysis and evaluation of the pre-university curriculum in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in the context of vocational education, but also of some career counseling programs applied in various educational systems, allowed the identification of the variety of ways, which mediate the development of vocational identity. The new realities and social perspectives have determined the need to formulate the aims of *Counseling and personal development*, not only in concrete and pragmatic terms of objectives, but, above all, from the perspective of the development of the key competences established at the European level (in Barcelona, 2002) and, in particular, of the following aspects: interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic skills, learning to learn, entrepreneurial culture, information and communication technology (ICT).

Adaptation difficulties in the school environment can occur when moving to a higher schooling level. Changes in the school environment are especially harmful at the beginning of adolescence, considering the information regarding psychological development at this stage of life. Evidence from various sources [44, 45, 50] shows that development in early adolescence is characterized by an increase in the desire for autonomy, peer orientation, self-focus and self-awareness, increased identity issues, of concerns related to increasing the ability to carry out abstract cognitive activities.

In accordance with the mentioned parameters, in the 2018-2019 school year, at the end of the first semester, we undertook a pre-experimental research in which 56 students from two high school education units in Romania, 9th grades, urban environment participated.

By applying the *AISS Questionnaire* in the pre-experimental stage, we determined the level of adaptation of the students. The results obtained, depending on the general adaptation score, are presented in Figure 1.

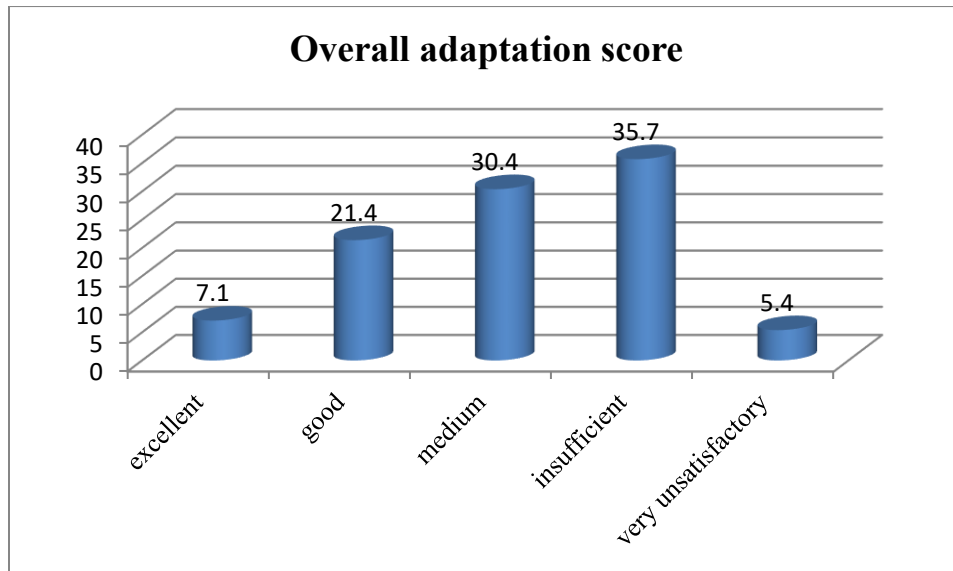


Fig. 1. Representation of the general level of adaptation (pre-experiment)

The data obtained from the pre-experiment indicate that, in the 9th grade, students adapt to the school environment in different ways, which are related to the construction of each person's personality, but also to numerous other factors, already subject to discussion. This aspect presupposes the existence of some capacities of the student to respond to the demands of the educational environment in relation to the requirements of the teaching staff. Starting from these considerations, a point of view is configured according to which the interrogative route of achieving vocational education so that students can adapt more easily in the new school environment should follow the following structure in Figure 2.

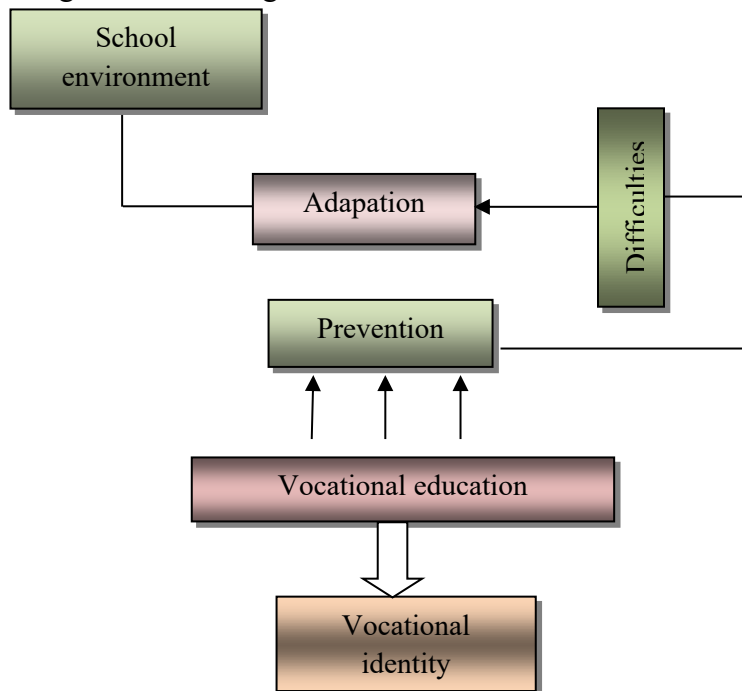


Fig. 2. The path to achieving vocational education [author's elaboration]

The praxeological configuration highlighted the schematization of vocational identity development in the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties at the level of a pedagogical model. *The pedagogical model of vocational identity development from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties* (Fig. 3.) represents a construction of the concept of vocational identity development, elaborated on the basis of the theoretical investigative study (explanatory models and theories regarding vocational education, respectively career development, the principles vocational education), supported by the conceptual dimension of research, according to which the development of vocational identity contributes to the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment. *The model* presents, at an increased level of complexity, the factors, indicators and conditions that contribute to the development of vocational identity (pedagogical, psychological, social dimensions), ensuring the prevention of difficulties in school adaptation through implementation practices (*vocational education* through: teaching of school subjects, educational counseling, psychological counseling, *Counseling and personal development*, student class management), building a path to make decisions about the future, to achieve goals that align with personal interests and attributes, and, ideally, even with *vocation*.

Chapter 3, **Experimental Validation of the Vocational Education Methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment**, includes the description of the design of the experimental research on the development of vocational identity and the prevention of adaptation difficulties in VIII-th grade students, in the context of preparing for the support the National Assessment exam (at the end of the 8th grade) and the transition to another level of schooling.

The purpose of the experimental research is to justify the need to implement *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties intended for 8th grade students, in order to create opportunities for the development of vocational identity from the perspective of preventing school adaptation difficulties.

Research objectives:

- the development and implementation of *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties of VIII-th grade students, starting from the analysis of needs identified in the ascertainment stage;
- analysis of the efficiency level of *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties;
- determining the impact that *the Methodology* has on the development of *the vocational identity* for the process of choosing an educational and professional path (decision regarding the future).

The pedagogical experiment was carried out in three stages:

- the stage of ascertaining the initial level of vocational identity and emotional, social and educational adaptation;
- the formative stage, applying *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties;
- the final stage, verifying the development of a favorable vocational identity in the direction of preventing school adaptation difficulties.

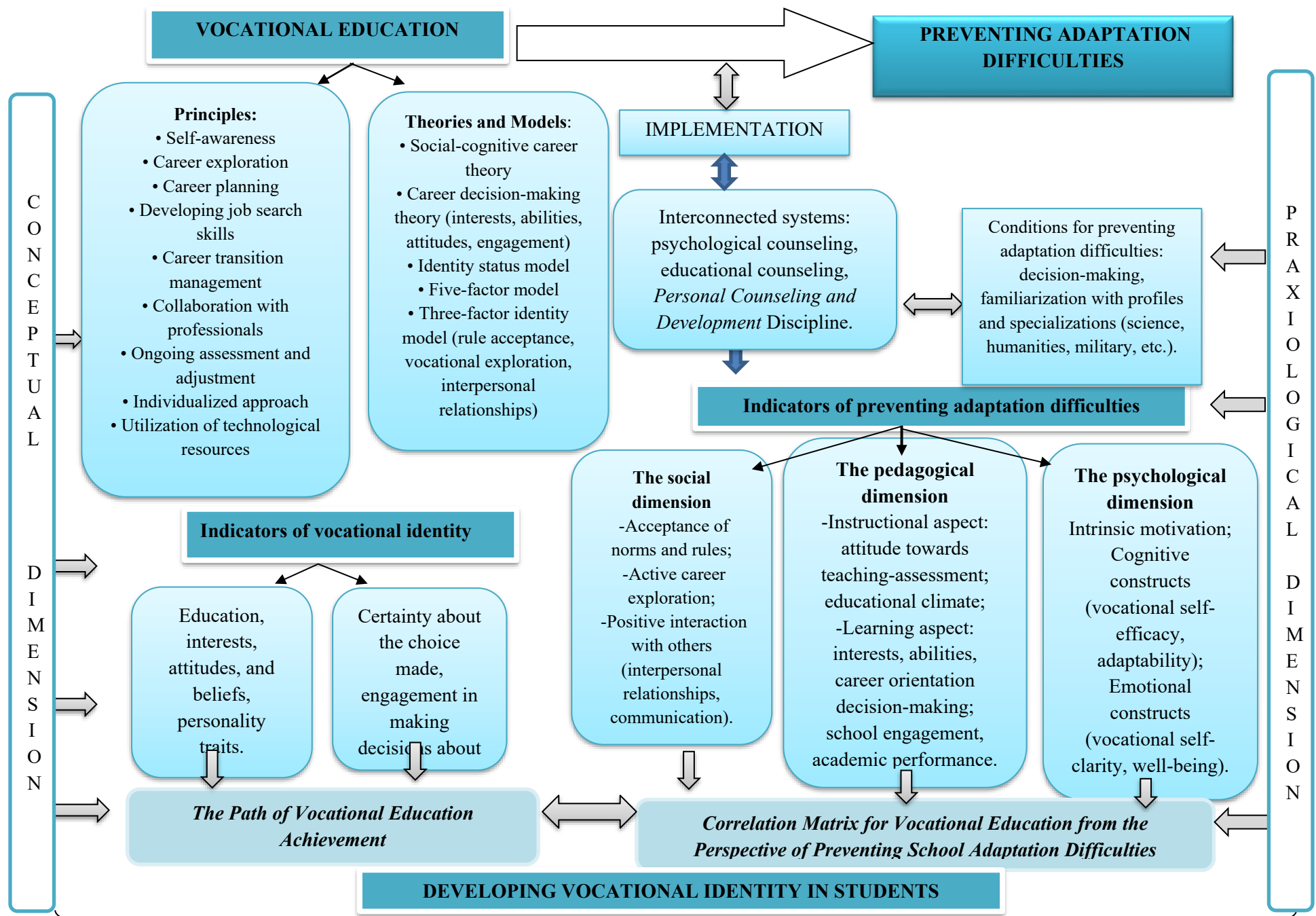


Fig. 3. The Vocational Identity Development Model from the Perspective of Preventing Adaptation Difficulties in the School Environment

In the present research we used a classic experimental plan, with an experimental group and a control group and which involved two measurements: before the experimental intervention and after the intervention. The inclusion of the control group "allows a significant comparison of the results, leading to an increase in the magnitude of the studied effect" [37]. Its structure is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Design of the pedagogical experiment

	Finding stage	Formation stage	Control stage
Experimental group	Pretest (school adaptation, vocational identity, career decision-making)	Intervention – <i>Vocational education methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment</i>	Posttest (school adaptation, vocational identity, career decision-making)
Control group	Pretest (school adaptation, vocational identity, career decision-making)	-	Posttest (school adaptation, vocational identity, career decision-making)

These stages were implemented based on the results of a preliminary research on an independent experimental group (described in Subchapter 2.1.) which aimed to validate *the Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS, A.K.P. Sinha, R.P. Sinha; 1971)*.

Research hypotheses

1. It is assumed that the students at the level of which *the Vocational Education Methodology* was used from the perspective of preventing adjustment difficulties register a developed *vocational identity* (higher scores regarding the decision about the future) compared to the students who did not benefit from these activities.
2. It is assumed that between the results of GE and GC students there will be statistically significant differences in all the investigated dimensions regarding adaptation in the school environment (emotional, social, educational), as a result of the impact of *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties.

Research variables

Independent variables: the condition of participation in vocational identity development activities

- control group: they did not benefit from vocational identity development activities
- experimental group: they benefited from vocational identity development activities

Dependent variables

- Decision on the future/development of vocational identity
- Emotional adaptation; social; educational.

Participants

A number of 126 students with an average age M= 14.5 participated in the research, of which 63 were assigned to the control condition and 63 to the experimental condition. They have an average of the learning results in the first semester M=8.93, which can confirm the fact that conscientious students, with concerns about their future, were involved in the study. The participants were designated 8th grade students from 4 school units in Botoşani County, Romania: three schools in Dorohoi municipality - Mihail Kogălniceanu Secondary School, Al. I.

Cuza", respectively High School No. 1 and a school unit from the city of Darabani - "Leon Dănăilă" Secondary School. The research took place in the 2020-2021 school year, with a total of 8 classes selected.

The research tools included the student's knowledge sheet, the *Vocational Identity Scale* (Holland, Gottfredson and Power), the *School Adjustment Questionnaire* (AISS - Adjustment for School Students, A.K.P. Sinha, R.P. Singh), as I have summarized in the Table 3. These research tools were applied, targeting the key concepts of the investigation already recognized in the literature in the field and which have already been validated (*Vocational Identity Scale* - Alpha-Cronbach coefficient=.86-.89; AISS - the reliability coefficient of of the questionnaire by Split half, Test retest and KR - 20 formula is .95, .93 and .94 respectively.). Another reason for choosing them was that they could be applied and completed in 15-20 minutes by the students because each item required a predetermined closed answer (yes or no).

Table 3. Research instruments

Nr	Research instrument	Experimental groups
1.	<i>Student Information Sheet</i>	126 students (63 EE ; 63 EC)
2.	<i>Vocational Identity Scale (Holland, Gottfredson și Power)</i>	126 elevi (63 EE ; 63 EC)
3.	<i>Adjustment for School Students (AISS, A.K.P. Sinha, R.P. Singh)</i>	126 students (63 EE ; 63 EC)

In the ascertainment experiment we applied the questionnaires to the established lots. Data reflecting the level of vocational identity in the observational experiment are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results regarding the level of vocational identity (ascertainment experiment)

Item	GC				GE			
	No		Yes		No		Yes	
		%		%		%		%
1. I need reassurance that I have made the right choice of occupation.	17	27%	46	73%	29	46%	34	54%
2. I am concerned that my present interests may change over the years.	24	38%	39	62%	28	44%	35	56%
3. I am uncertain about the occupations I could perform well.	32	51%	31	49%	23	37%	40	63%
4. I don't know what my major strengths and weaknesses are.	35	56%	28	44%	36	57%	27	43%
5. The jobs I can do may not pay enough to live the kind of life I want.	34	54%	29	46%	39	62%	24	38%
6. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice.	28	44%	35	56%	30	48%	33	52%

7. I need to find out what kind of career I should follow.	19	30%	44	70%	18	29%	45	71%
8. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me.	27	43%	36	57%	23	37%	40	63%
9. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career.	23	37%	40	63%	33	52%	30	48%
10. I am not sure that my present occupational choice or job is right for me.	31	49%	32	51%	33	52%	30	48%
11. I don't know enough about what workers do in various occupations.	34	54%	29	46%	30	48%	33	52%
12. No single occupation appeals strongly to me.	37	59%	26	41%	45	71%	18	29%
13. I am uncertain about which occupation I would enjoy.	33	52%	30	48%	35	56%	28	44%
14. I would like to increase the number of occupations I could consider.	23	37%	40	63%	24	38%	39	62%
15. My estimates of my abilities and talents vary a lot from year to year.	21	33%	42	67%	18	29%	45	71%
16. I am not sure of myself in many areas of life.	18	29%	45	71%	32	51%	31	49%
17. I have known what occupation I want to follow for less than one year.	42	67%	21	33%	32	51%	31	49%
18. I can't understand how some people can be so set about what they want to do.	24	38%	39	62%	36	57%	27	43%

Next, we administered the *AISS* questionnaire to the students included in the research, revealing the following results presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Student adaptation results (Assessment stage)

	Group	n	M	SD
Emotional adaptation	control	63	8.11	2.676
	experimental	63	7.03	3.822
Social adaptation	control	63	8.77	2.813
	experimental	63	7.80	3.779
Educational adaptation	control	63	8.50	3.373
	experimental	63	7.44	3.555

Analyzing the general results presented in the table, we conclude that the averages of both research groups, in all three spheres of adaptation, are high, which means an average level of adaptation. In order to obtain a maximum yield, it is necessary that the demands to which the student is subjected are in full agreement with his development possibilities. As can be seen, in the ascertainment stage, the students of both groups were at the beginning of the 8th grade, a period emotionally charged by the importance given to the preparation in order to take the National Assessment exam. The key to success in the process of adapting to the challenges of this school year and to a smooth transition to high school lies in the degree to which the student will be able to go home, after each day of school, with the content fully elucidated. The adaptation process requires

effort and perseverance both in the period of success and in the difficult moments generated by the need to make a decision regarding the educational and, subsequently, professional path.

The content of chapter 3 includes *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment, the investigative-experimental dimension of exploring *the Pedagogical Model of Vocational Identity Development from the perspective of preventing adolescent adaptation difficulties* and the experimental results.

The purpose of *the Methodology* is the development of vocational identity from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

Today's students, future adults, will have to adapt in an ever-changing society, so it is important that vocational education includes lifelong learning as a major objective, not just passing the class, graduating from a cycle of education to another or completing school.

Objectives of *the Methodology*:

- Self-knowledge and discovery by students of their own interests, aspirations and the potential they have to define their own identity;
- Developing a positive self-image, self-acceptance and feelings of personal worth;
- Development of social skills and interpersonal skills, collaboration, the ability to communicate;
- Training the ability to analyze the skills acquired through learning, in order to orientate towards a certain career;
- Formation of decision-making skills regarding the choice of school and profession.

The target group was represented by 8th grade students, aged between 13 and 16, from three educational units in Botoșani county.

The didactic strategies used are: exercise, art-creative methods, 6 thinking hats, debate/forum, brainstorming, shadowing, characterization, illustration, exemplification, consolidation exercises, SWOT analysis, role play, dramatization, case study, project, storytelling, the discussion circle, the portfolio.

Here is an example of the Vocational discovery through interviews activity:

Competencies:

3.1. Effective management of motivation, time and effort for learning in various contexts

4.1. Argument for making a personal decision related to education, career and lifestyle

Purpose: Students will interview people from different career fields to learn more about the demands, satisfactions, and challenges of these occupations.

Objective: To help students gain practical knowledge and first-hand insights into various careers.

Introduction: Students will be taught the importance of obtaining information directly from professionals in various fields in order to make informed career decisions.

Activities:

1. **Selecting occupations:** Students will choose at least two or three career fields that interest or intrigue them.
2. **Interviews:** Each student will search for and interview a professional from one of the chosen fields. They will cover topics such as: educational requirements, daily work experience, satisfactions and challenges of the occupation.
3. **Analyzing the interviews:** Students will reflect on the information obtained from the interviews and compare different occupations in terms of their fit with their own interests and values.

4. Presentation of results: Students will present the results of their interviews to their classmates, sharing what they have learned about different careers.

Discussions: Students will discuss how the information gained has influenced their understanding of different careers and how this information can contribute to making an informed career decision.

Conclusion: The importance of gaining real perspectives on various careers in order to make informed and well-informed decisions will be emphasized.

Assessment: Students will present a brief presentation of the results of their interviews and highlight key aspects of each occupation.

Conclusion: Students will be encouraged to continue to explore and obtain information from various sources to develop a deeper understanding of their career options.

Concluding on the activities carried out, their purpose was: self-knowledge and personal development; vocation exploration; development of vocational identity. The teaching staff carried out group activities in the classroom to give students the opportunity to share experiences and general knowledge related to vocation, vocational identity, adaptation in the school environment and to promote the indicators of the prevention of adaptation deficiencies, which refer to: well-being, value attitude, academic performance.

The global analysis of the responses obtained following the application of *the Vocational Identity Scale* and in the validation stage (ninth grade, December 2021), of the two groups involved in the research, leads to the following deduction: the percentage values of the experimental group, by items, are more lower than those of the control group in the vast majority of cases (except item 17). The percentage values reflect the registration of "yes" answers to the questionnaire items, which contributes to the achievement of the total score (the lower the score, the better the vocational identity is developed). Next, the comparative analysis of the data allowed us to demonstrate the significant changes aimed at all the investigated dimensions regarding the vocational identity and to establish a configuration of the premises for the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment. We reproduce below for example the distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 1, 2, 3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8), validation experiment.

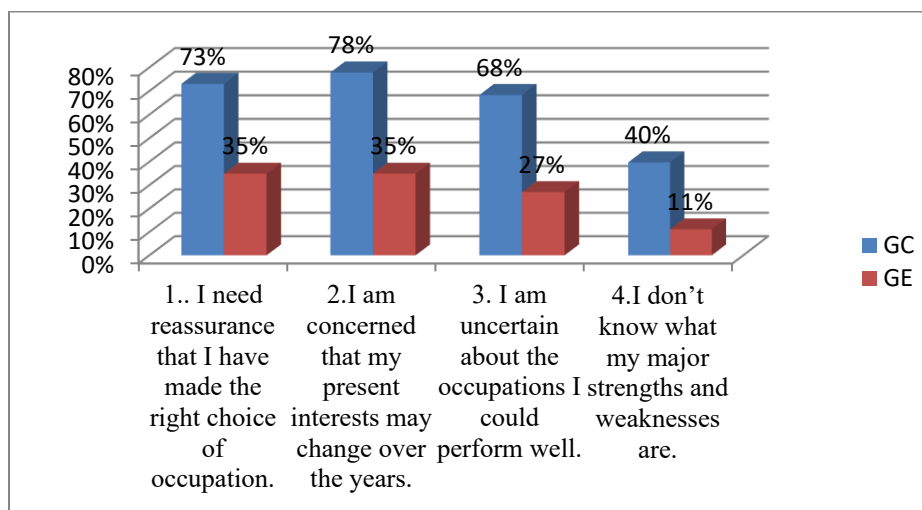


Fig. 4. Distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 1, 2, 3, and 4) - validation experiment

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the answers provided by the students regarding the need for encouragement, the concern regarding the stability of interests, the insecurity regarding the jobs practiced and the lack of knowledge of strengths/weaknesses (Figure 4.) allows us to state that the implementation of *the Vocational Education Methodology* has contributed to active involvement of GE students in self-discovery, in clarifying vocational options and self-knowledge.

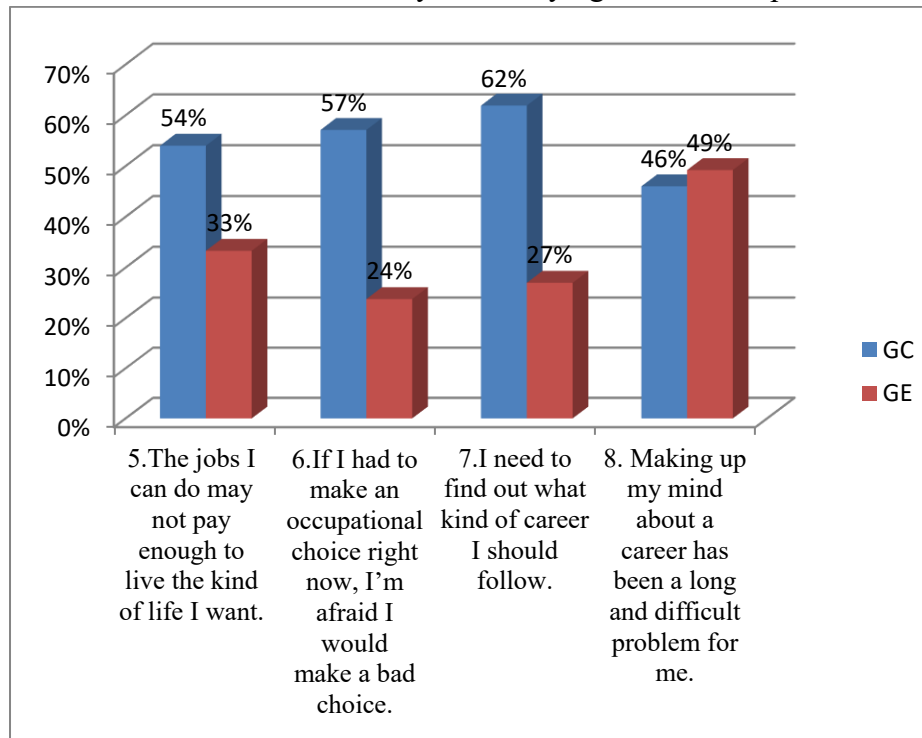


Fig. 5. Distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 5, 6, 7, and 8) - validation experiment

The analysis of the comparative results (GC, GE) presented in Figure 5. attests percentage value differences regarding the expectations regarding the remuneration corresponding to the jobs potentially to be fulfilled (item 5, GC-54%, GE-33%), the fear of not making a mistake in the immediate choice of the profession (item 6, GC-57%, GE-24%), the urgent need to find out the type of job to follow (item 7, GC-62%, GE-27%) and the existence of difficulty regarding the decision on the profession (item 8, GC-46%, GE-49%). The marked indecision of the GC students (62%) regarding the type of profession to be followed and perhaps a little surprising the number of GE students (49%) regarding the difficulty regarding the decision on the profession is noted, but this result is justified by the fact that the students have already experienced various stages of vocational identity.

Next, the comparative analysis of the data from the two stages of the testing (EC, EV) allowed us to demonstrate the significant changes aimed at the development of vocational identity, which can be seen in the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

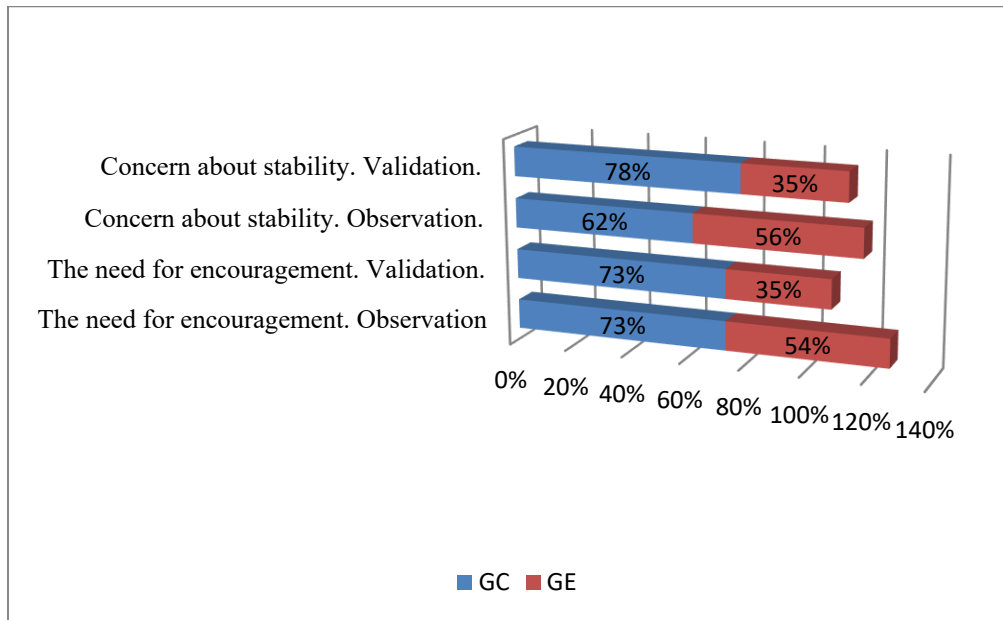


Fig. 6. Distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 1 și 2) –EC-EV

Following the realization of *the Vocational Education Methodology*, on the theoretical-practical dimension included in the training approach, we observe a significant change in the entire experimental group. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the answers given regarding the concern regarding stability and the need for encouragement (Figure 6.) allows us to state that the implementation of *the Vocational Education Methodology* has contributed to the active involvement of students and increased confidence in them.

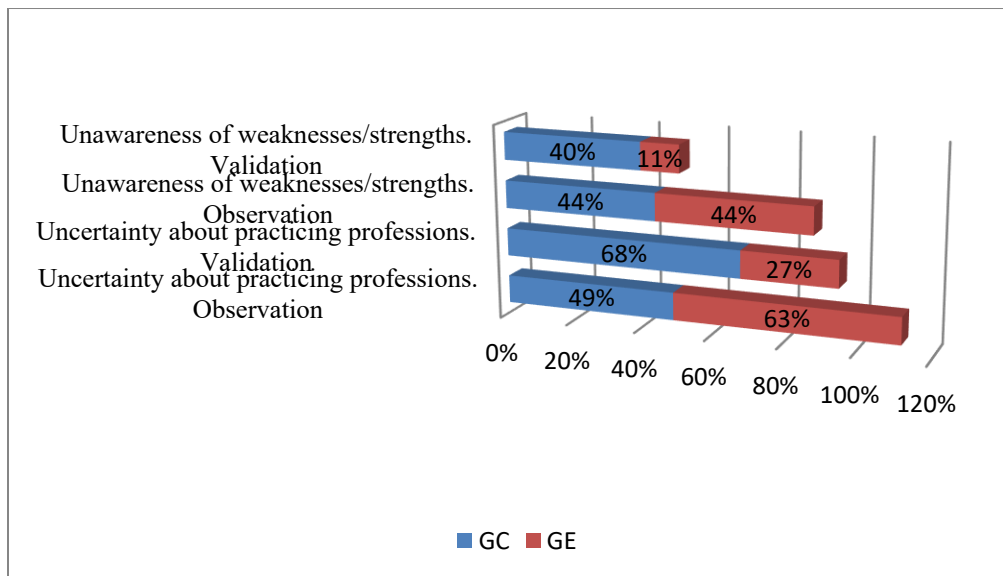


Fig. 7. Distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 3 and 4) – EC-EV

The analysis of the comparative results in Figure 7. attests to a qualitative change regarding the *safety of practicing the trades* and *the knowledge of weak/strong points* by the students of GE after the implementation of *the Vocational Education Methodology*, which allows us to establish the fact that the way the students understand their vocational identity it fluctuates, it varies according to the educational influences and, above all, according to the importance and the meaning they give to

them. Vocational development is an ongoing process that involves seeking, obtaining and processing information about oneself and one's environment.

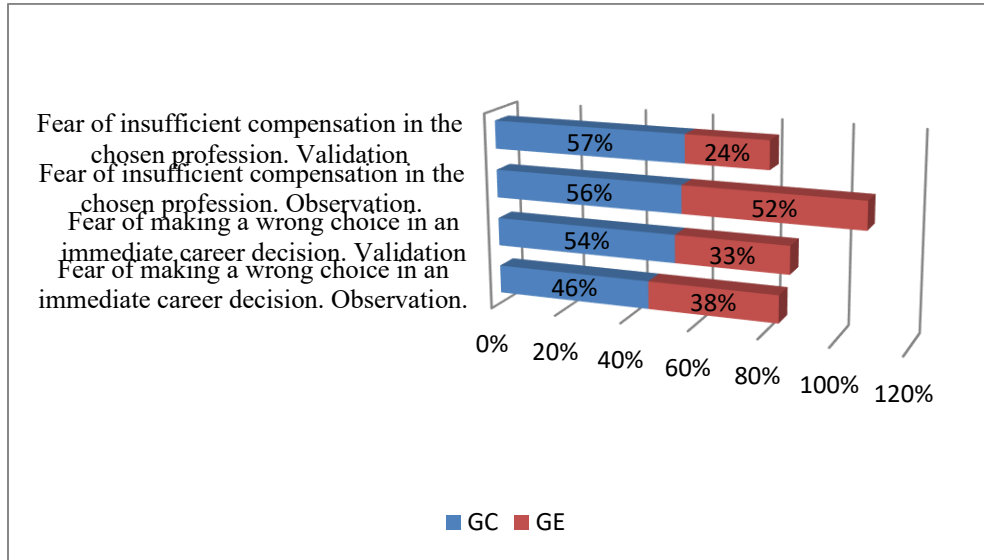


Fig. 8. Distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 5 and 6) – EC-EV

The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the experimental results represented in Figure 8. highlight the changes that occurred after the implementation of *the Vocational Education Methodology*: the fear of not making a mistake in the immediate choice of profession for GE students decreases from 38% in EC to 33% in EV, and for GC students it increases from 46% in EC to 54% in EV; fear of insufficient pay in their chosen occupation for GE students decreases from 52% in EC to 24% in EV, and for GC students it increases from 56% in EC to 57% in EV.

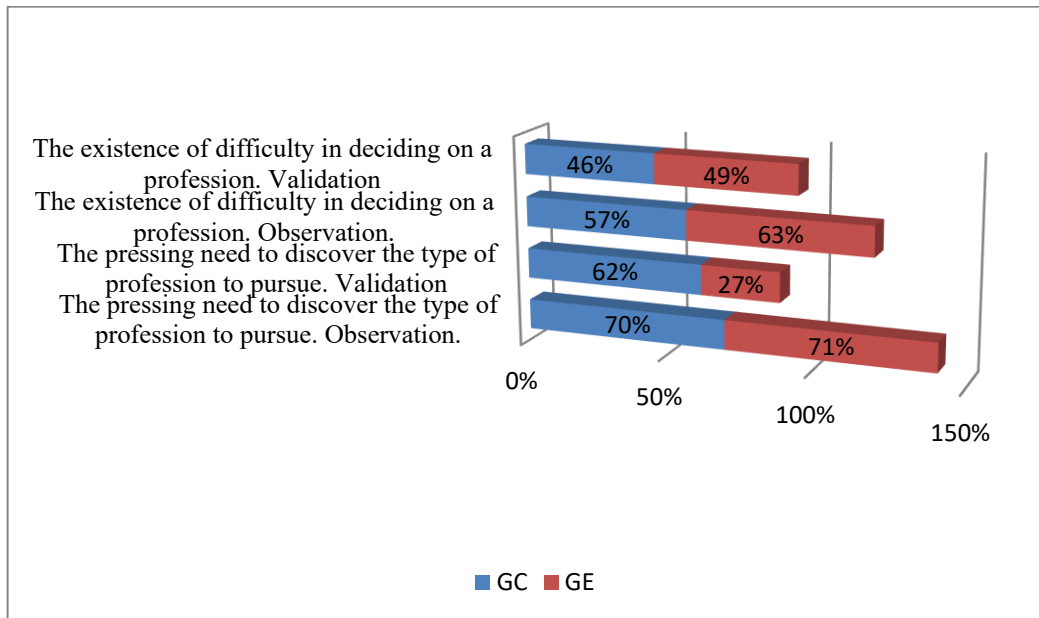


Fig. 9. Distribution of values regarding the level of vocational identity (items 7 and 8) – EC-EV

Choosing a career is one of the most complex and important decisions to be made in a person's life. The results in Figure 9 highlight the fact that encouraging students to explore and formulate a concrete vocational development plan is therefore important, especially to find out the type of job to follow and the decision on the profession. In the targeted context, the urgent need to

find out the type of profession to follow for GE students decreases from 71% in EC to 27% in EV, and the existence of difficulty regarding the decision on the profession decreases from 63% in EC to 49% in EV.

The **Kolmogorov Smirnov test** conveys the necessary information on the distributions of the tested variables. Thus, for all variables, at both times of testing, values of $p > .05$ were obtained, which means that all variables follow a normal distribution. In table 3.9., on the line *Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)* these values of p can be observed that are greater than .05.

Table 6. Results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Decizie_t otal_p	Adaptare_ emo_p	Adaptare_ soc_p	Adaptare_ sco_p
N		126	126	126	126
Normal Parameters	Mean	10.4286	6.40	7.54	7.17
	Std. Deviation	4.83724	3.585	2.827	3.956
Most Extreme Difference	Absolute	.098	.092	.101	.100
	Positive	.078	.091	.101	.100
	Negative	-.098	-.092	-.094	-.090
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.095	1.038	1.136	1.127
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.182	.231	.151	.158

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

In order to check whether the decision on the future (vocational identity) differs in the experimental groups, we applied the t-test for independent samples (**Independent Sample T-Test**). Analyzing the results, according to Table 7., there are significant differences according to the groups that participated in the study. Regarding the decision about the future, where $t(124) = -6.386$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, students from the control group have significantly lower averages ($M = 8.03$) compared to students from the experimental group ($M = 12.82$). Those who benefited from *the Vocational Education Methodology* (experimental group) recorded higher scores regarding the decision about the future compared to students who did not benefit from this intervention.

In order to check whether there are differences in emotional, social and school adjustment of students depending on the participation condition, the same statistical test, Independent Sample T Test, was performed.

In table 7., according to the results, it can be seen that there are significant differences related to emotional adaptation, where $t(124) = 3.110$, $p = 0.002 < 0.05$. Therefore, the students who were part of the control group have significantly higher averages ($M = 7.37$) compared to the students in the experimental group ($M = 5.44$).

For social adaptation, significant differences were recorded between the conditions of participation in the study, thus we have $t(124) = 2.713$ with a $p = 0.008 < 0.05$. Students who participated in the control group have significantly higher averages ($M = 8.21$) in social adaptation than those who participated in the experimental condition ($M = 6.87$).

The results of school adaptation also show significant differences between the conditions of participation so that we have $t(124) = 2.100$ with a $p = 0.038 < 0.05$. The students who were in the control group have significantly higher averages ($M = 7.90$) compared to the students who were in the experimental group ($M = 6.44$).

At a first analysis, regarding the results of the three types of adaptation: emotional, social and school, it can be stated that the intervention had no effect on the increase of the three types of adaptation. Interestingly, the authors presented the results analysis grid exactly the other way around. Students who score low on this inventory actually show good adjustment, and those who score high show lower levels of adjustment. Mirroring these aspects on the results of the present research, the students in the experimental group recorded significantly lower averages compared to those in the control group, which means that participating in the activities of the vocational education methodology helped them to become more adapted in the three areas.

Table 7. Results of the Independent Sample T-Test

Variabile	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Decizie_total				-6.386	124	.000
control	63	8.0317	3.86034			
experimental	63	12.8254	4.53851			
Adaptare_emoțională				3.110	124	.002
control	63	7.37	2.870			
experimental	63	5.44	3.975			
Adaptare_socială				2.713	124	.008
control	63	8.21	2.509			
experimental	63	6.87	2.986			
Adaptare_școlară				2.100	124	.038
control	63	7.90	3.788			
experimental	63	6.44	4.015			

The rendering of the results of the training experiment is correlated with the analysis of the formative impact of decision-making regarding the educational path for students of the 8th grades, which demonstrates the achievement of the purpose of the investigation and the solution of the scientific problem. The pedagogical experiment confirmed the research hypothesis: It is assumed that there are significant differences at the level of vocational identity development, if students benefit from activities based on *the Vocational Education Methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment*.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research carried out is aimed at one of the most complex and current problems – *vocational education from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment*. The analysis, specification, determination and interpretation of the theoretical, methodological and practical aspects, but also the synthesis of the results obtained within the pedagogical experiment and their quantitative and qualitative processing, allow the formulation of the following conclusions:

1. In the context of the epistemological research, the content of the basic concepts and phenomena was specified and delimited: vocation, vocational education, vocational identity, career education, vocational counseling, adaptation, adaptation difficulties, including, the essence of the scientific guidelines and theories related to the interventions was specified in vocational education. At the same time, the defining characteristics of the notions of vocational education, counseling and career guidance were presented in a comparative plan to highlight the congruence of goals. The review and evolution of the scientific guidelines regarding vocational education allowed the analysis of modern and postmodern perspectives, which contributed to the elucidation of theories regarding interventions in career planning.

2. The investigative actions elucidated the theoretical-practical perspectives of identifying the difficulties of adaptation in the school context and of the development of the vocational identity of adolescents, they allowed the elaboration of the Correlation Matrix aimed at vocational education from the perspective of preventing the difficulties of school adaptation, favoring the reflection on the roles of the adolescent in the context educational. The study carried out allowed the reproduction of the list of adaptive behaviors, corresponding to the developmental periods of growth, respectively exploration, which were correlated with the forms of vocational identity in adolescents.

3. By approaching the notion of vocational identity and researching all of its theoretical-applicative manifestations, especially its relationship with the process of adapting the behavior of the human being, the educational value of that notion was specified, as a continuous construction and reconstruction.

4. The development and scientific argumentation of the Pedagogical Model of the development of vocational identity in the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment, which provides the theoretical-applicative foundations of vocational education, ensured the realization of the experimental approach. Both the Pedagogical Model and its defining component at the praxeological level - the Vocational Education Methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties, have demonstrated their reliability and the possibility of being supplemented and developed, taking into account the alert pace of changes. The analysis of the curriculum within the Counseling and personal development discipline provided useful benchmarks in revitalizing the informational content and placing emphasis on career adaptability and vocational maturity. In accordance with this, the content units, methodological suggestions, evaluation strategies, elaborated with a proactive role, have proven their effectiveness, both at the level of vocational identity development and in the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

5. The results of the pedagogical experiment demonstrated the development of the vocational identity of adolescents through their participation in learning activities that lead to professional decisions made in the knowledge of the case. It has been observed that vocational education at the level of students is responsive to the emotional, physical and contextual transitions they face; helps them manage the age-specific responsibilities associated with identity formation in the context of developing the capacity to assume life roles; contributes to preventing and overcoming adaptation difficulties in the school environment. In this sense, the differences in the means between the ascertainment-validation stages are defining: vocational identity (decision on the future):

ascertainment – 8.28 GC, 9.01 GE; validation – 8.03 GC, 12.82 GE; general adaptation: finding – 8.46 GC, 7.42 GE; validation – 7.82 GC, 6.25 GE.

Thus, the research results confirmed the solution of the important scientific problem, which focused on the valorization of the foundations of vocational education, structured in *the Pedagogical Model of the development of vocational identity in the prevention of adaptation difficulties*, which led to the development of the vocational identity of adolescents (vocational maturity), to increased capacity to make educational and occupational decisions, to a good adaptation in the school environment, ensuring the premises of a harmonious development of the students' personality.

In accordance with the presented results, the following **recommendations** can be formulated:

At the **macrostructural** level:

1. Connecting national educational policies to international ones, aimed at the development of career development interventions and the development of national standards, such as **the National Vocational Development Framework**.
2. Facilitation of extracurricular activities that allow students to become familiar with the world of work and professions, possibly by developing a **National Model** for vocational education programs.

At the **microstructural** level:

1. The inclusion of "*Vocational education from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties*" in the list of optional subjects in secondary/high school education.
2. Application of *the Pedagogical Model* at the level of initial and continuing training to better understand how to support a pupil/student who is unclear about vocational development; can design lessons and reinforce academic rigor by infusing vocational education concepts.
3. School counselors, teachers and directors of school units can use the results of the research to design a *Vocational Education Program* for students, highlighting the skills formed and tools for assessing students' needs.
4. Elaboration of workshops for parents to familiarize them with the process of vocational education; investigating the impact of narrative techniques in vocational education interventions and preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment; studying the role of the multidisciplinary team (teaching staff, school counselor, itinerant/support teacher, other specialists) in the school unit, with the establishment of the role of cooperation and involvement in the vocational development of students constitute essential aspects that can be elucidated in a **Methodological Guide**.

Like any research, the present one also outlined some **limits**.

First, in the pre-experimental research, a limitation was the small sample size. Since this was carried out on a limited number of participants (N=63), an extensive validation of the questionnaire cannot be discussed.

Secondly, a limitation is related to the way of administering the questionnaires (self-assessment) which could be influenced by *the social desirability* distortion, but this option was generated by the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

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ADNOTARE

Adăscăliței Cristian

Educația vocațională din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare în mediul școlar

Teză de doctor în științe ale educației, Chișinău, 2023

Structura tezei: introducere, trei capitole, concluzii generale și recomandări, bibliografie, adnotare, concepte-cheie, glosar de termeni, lista abrevierilor, anexe. Publicații la tema tezei: 18 lucrări științifice (articole în reviste de profil și comunicări la conferințe naționale și internaționale din România și Republica Moldova)

Cuvinte-cheie: vocație, educație vocațională, identitate vocațională, educație pentru carieră, consiliere vocațională, adaptare, dificultăți de adaptare, adolescență, prevenire, maturitate vocațională.

Domeniul de studiu: teoria generală a educației

Scopul cercetării constă în elaborarea și validarea fundamentelor teoretico-metodologice ale educației vocaționale, structurate în *Modelul pedagogic al dezvoltării identității vocaționale din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare*, valorificat în baza *Metodologiei de educație vocațională*.

Obiectivele cercetării vizează: interpretarea epistemologică a esenței conceptelor de bază: *vocație, educație vocațională, identitate vocațională, adaptare, prevenirea dificultăților de adaptare*; precizarea evoluției abordărilor teoretice, principiilor și modalităților practice ale educației vocaționale, ca parte a curentelor psihologice și cele ale teoriei generale a educației; analiza politicilor naționale și internaționale privind prevenirea dificultăților de adaptare și educația vocațională în mediul școlar; argumentarea coordonatelor definitorii ale curriculumului preuniversitar din România și Republica Moldova în contextul realizării educației vocaționale; esențializarea dezvoltării identității vocaționale a adolescenților în contextul precizării specificului dificultăților de adaptare la debutul învățământului liceal, elaborarea și validarea *Modelului pedagogic al dezvoltării identității vocaționale din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare în mediul școlar*, care integrează fundamente praxiologice, structurate în *Metodologia de educație vocațională* din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare în mediul școlar.

Noutatea și originalitatea științifică a cercetării este obiectivată de: determinarea fundamentelor teoretice și praxiologice din perspectiva dezvoltării identității vocaționale și prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare a elevilor în mediul școlar; elaborarea *Matricii de corelație vizând educația vocațională din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare școlară* și a *Modelului pedagogic al dezvoltării identității vocaționale din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare*; proiectarea, implementarea și validarea experimentală a *Metodologiei de educație vocațională* din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare în mediul școlar.

Rezultatele științifice principale care au condus la rezolvarea problemei constau în fundamentarea, din punct de vedere teoretic și metodologic, a educației vocaționale, structurată în Modelul pedagogic al dezvoltării identității vocaționale, experimentat și validat în instituții educaționale, fapt care a confirmat oportunitatea valorificării acesteia, în vederea prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare în mediul școlar.

Semnificația teoretică a cercetării: stabilirea fundamentelor teoretice ale educației vocaționale și dificultăților de adaptare în mediul școlar, actualizarea conceptelor de *educație vocațională, educație pentru carieră, consiliere vocațională și dificultăți de adaptare școlară*; definirea noțiunii de *identitate vocațională*; sintetizarea cercetărilor referitoare la orientările științifice privind educația vocațională.

Valoarea aplicativă a cercetării constă în proiectarea/ implementarea /evaluarea *Metodologiei de educație vocațională* din perspectiva prevenirii dificultăților de adaptare, valorile căreia sunt extensibile și la alte trepte de învățământ.

Implementarea rezultatelor științifice s-a realizat în cadrul experimentului pedagogic desfășurat cu elevii claselor a VIII-a din patru unități școlare din județul Botoșani, România: trei școli din municipiul Dorohoi – Școala Gimnazială „Mihail Kogălniceanu”, Școala Gimnazială „Al. I. Cuza”, respectiv Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 și o unitate școlară din orașul Darabani – Școala Gimnazială „Leon Dănăilă”.

ANNOTATION

Adăscăliței Cristian

Vocational education from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment

Ph.D. thesis in education sciences, Chisinau, 2023

Structure of the thesis: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography, annotation, key concepts, glossary of terms, list of abbreviations, appendices. Publications on the topic of the thesis: 18 scientific works (articles in specialized magazines and communications at national and international conferences in Romania and the Republic of Moldova)

Key words: vocation, vocational education, vocational identity, career education, vocational counseling, adaptation, adaptation difficulties, adolescence, prevention, vocational maturity.

Field of study: general theory of education

The purpose of the research is to develop and validate the theoretical-methodological foundations of vocational education, structured in *the Pedagogical Model of vocational identity development from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties*, capitalized on the basis of *the Vocational Education Methodology*.

The objectives of the research aim at: the epistemological interpretation of the essence of the basic concepts: *vocation, vocational education, vocational identity, adaptation, prevention of adaptation difficulties; specifying* the evolution of theoretical approaches, principles and practical ways of vocational education, as part of the psychological currents and those of the general theory of education; analysis of national and international policies regarding the prevention of adaptation difficulties and vocational education in the school environment; arguing the defining coordinates of the pre-university curriculum in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in the context of vocational education; the essentialization of the development of the vocational identity of adolescents in the context of specifying the specifics of adaptation difficulties at the beginning of high school education, the elaboration and validation of *the Pedagogical Model of the development of vocational identity from the perspective of the prevention of adaptation difficulties in the school environment*, which integrates praxiological foundations, structured in *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

The novelty and scientific originality of the research is objectified by: determining the theoretical and praxeological foundations from the perspective of the development of vocational identity and the prevention of students' adaptation difficulties in the school environment; the development of *the Correlation Matrix aimed at vocational education from the perspective of preventing school adaptation difficulties* and the elaboration of *the Pedagogical Model of vocational identity development from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties*; the design, implementation and experimental validation of *the Vocational Education Methodology* from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

The main scientific results that led to the solution of the problem consist in the substantiation, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, of the vocational education, structured in *the Pedagogical Model of the development of the vocational identity*, experienced and validated in educational institutions, a fact that confirmed the opportunity of its exploitation, in in order to prevent adaptation difficulties in the school environment.

The theoretical significance of the research: establishing the theoretical foundations of vocational education and adaptation difficulties in the school environment, updating the concepts of *vocational education, career education, vocational counseling and school adaptation difficulties*; defining the notion of vocational identity; synthesizing research related to the scientific guidelines regarding vocational education.

The applied value of the research consists in the design/implementation/evaluation of the Vocational Education Methodology from the perspective of preventing adaptation difficulties, the values of which are extendable to other levels of education.

The implementation of the scientific results was carried out in the framework of the pedagogical experiment carried out with 8th grade students from four school units in Botoșani County, Romania: three schools in the municipality of Dorohoi - Mihail Kogălniceanu Secondary School, Al. I. Cuza", respectively High School No. 1 and a school unit from the city of Darabani - "Leon Dănăilă" Secondary School.

ADĂSCĂLIȚEI CRISTIAN

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PREVENTING ADAPTATION
DIFFICULTIES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

**531.01 – GENERAL THEORY OF EDUCATION
SUMMARY**

The Ph.D. thesis in Education Sciences

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