STUDY PROGRAM SELECTION FACTORS: ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SENSITIVE PROFESSIONS

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Abstract. *Nowadays situation requires professionals, who are open-minded, flexible, sensitive to other people and the environment, tolerant, able to establish contacts, and to improve these competences. This can be expressed by socially sensitive and attentive, ethically and responsibly behaving professionals. Thus, the selection of study programs of police officers and social educators as representatives of social sensitive professions is becoming critical important. This leads to the aim of this research: to analyse the study program selection factors of social sensitive professions. The research was based on systematic and comparative scientific literature analysis and statistical data analysis. The study was conducted in 2015 in two Lithuanian universities, where future police officers and future social educators are educated. 109 recipients of the study program "Law and Police Activities" and 40 students of the study program "Social pedagogics" have participated in the survey. Performed analysis has indicated the following main reasons determining students joining to the study program "Law and Police Activities": the desire to serve and help people (71 %), good employment opportunities (52 %), the chance to reveal their best features (44 %), the desire to acquire the status of a police officer (39 %). The respondents of "Social pedagogics" study program revealed their desire to gain the status of a social educator (56 %), to serve and help people (51 %) and to reveal their best features (36 %) as the most important reasons for the selection of this study program.*
Keywords: Police Officers, Social Educators, Social Sensitive Professions.

Introduction

The relevance of the social sensitive professionals' education is determined by the country's current economic, cultural, demographic and criminological situation. Today's situation requires professionals, who are open-minded, flexible, sensitive to other people and the environment, tolerant, able to establish contacts, and to improve these competences. This can be expressed by social sensitive and attentive, ethically and responsibly behaving professionals (Nedzinskas & Nedzinskienė, 2017). There are a lot of discussions regarding the place of specific subjects in education of professionals. Scott (2014) and Girard (2015) state that today's society is called a knowledge society and it is based on the professionalism of any specialist, who needs to have newly-identified

competences. Thus, it is important to educate social sensitive professionals who are able to solve global issues of modern society and understand them in the context of other sciences, who have communication and collaboration skills, are able to think critically and creatively and may manage the risks, who are active and social and are able to change their professional identity (Nedzinskienė & Nedzinskas, 2018). The aim of this education is the development of a qualified professional who is able to deal with the different types of social problems.

However, choosing a profession is one of the most actual solutions which influences the quality and meaning of personal life (Jurevičiūtė, 2004; Pukelis, 2004). It is also the most important task at the end of adolescence and the development of youth, which determines the further life of a person. According to Owie (2003), the most important reason why a person chooses a particular profession is that a person feels an intrinsic interest in a particular area. There is a possibility that an interest may be driven by prior academic achievements. Therefore, it can be assumed that a student may have a reason to continue studying at the university because he had a favourite subject at school. However, Ogowewo (2010) notes, that the choice of studies is influenced by a wide range of factors.

Social sensitive professions and the education of social sensitive professionals were investigated by the researchers of Lithuania (Lileikis, 2007; Jovaiša, 2011) and other countries (Walker & Crawford, 2014; Chechak, 2015; Spencer, Charbonneau, & Glaser, 2016). However, there is a lack of scientific researches with a specific focus to the factors that influence the decision of study program selection of these professionals.

The goal of this article is to analyse the study program selection factors of social sensitive professions. The article aims to highlight the main activities of social sensitive professions, to justify empirical research methodology and to analyse empirically the study program selection factors.

The research was based on systematic and comparative scientific literature analysis and statistical data analysis.

Theoretical framework

Positive attitude to a professional, who has not only professional knowledge, but also possesses personal and social readiness is emphasized in today's society. Social sensitivity is the ability of people to recognize the vulnerability of other people, to properly understand discrimination and to feel the duty to restore equal rights. According to Walker and Crawford (2014), only the correct adjustment of social behaviour can help to achieve a positive result. Jovaiša (2011) argues that moral and social sensitivity helps to understand the other people and to correctly assess the situation.

Mohamed, Donkers, Wajid, & Van Merrienboer (2014), Kalantari et al. (2014), Chechak (2015), Spencer et al. (2016) argue that social sensitive

professionals must be sensitive to ethical and social responsibility. Thus police officers and social educators are a good example of social sensitive professions. It is therefore appropriate to define the roles and responsibilities of these professions.

A police officer is a person with special state authority, who must follow not only law but also his human qualities. According to Tidikis (2003), the police, as a state institution serving the public, perform the function of social control, law and public order. Police implement law enforcement, protecting people and property, transferring offenders to law enforcement agencies, detaining offenders and fighting with crime, providing specific services to the public. It is based on the law and the norms of behaviour in the society.

Rosenbaum & McCarty (2017) emphasize the need to retain highly qualified officers who can function fairly and effectively in a democratic society. Kohlström, Rantatalo, Karp, & Padyab (2017) note the importance of police training, while Cox & Kirby (2018) highlight the value of a university-based degree programme, tailored to a future police career.

Vila, James, & James (2018) highlight police officer behaviours during an encounter with the public. Smalskys (2008) argues that the police is a rather conservative static public sector organization, but is linked to the concept of service to citizens. Chatthong, Kovitaya, & Kongjaroen (2014) argue that the police must be focused on providing emergency assistance to people and providing services to the public. Thus, the principle of universality and community work is promoted in the area of police training.

A social educator is the other example of a social sensitive profession. The main purpose of the social educator's professional activity is the aspiration of a child's well-being, early prevention, the development of social skills, the provision of social services necessary for the child, creating preconditions for the successful socialization and civic maturity of a successful person. A social educator seeks to compensate the inadequate socialization and education of a person in different ways and most often uses the child's own empowerment to initiate his or her life (Korbeck, 2002).

The purpose of a social educator is to be a child's lawyer in all critical situations. However, helping children and parents is one element of the work, but assessing risk across large numbers of referrals and identifying those that require involvement is equally important. Furthermore, the social work role requires complex considerations around liberty and the rights of parents and children (Forrester, 2017).

Crowe, Mooney, & Hawley (2018) emphasize the importance of social educators study programs. As Leliūgienė (2002) points out, a social educator is a representative of a delicate, special and humane profession. It is argued that social work has a key role to play in co-located, multi-disciplinary child welfare practice,

and indeed can be a leading profession in this context (Frost, 2017). That is why the quality of the service provided is very important and based on education.

It is to notice that social educators and police officers provide different types of social services. The content of the professional activities of social educators and police officers is distinguished by comparing areas of their activity, roles, assessing the importance and relevance of competencies, and the personal qualities realized in professional activity. Thus it is expected these specialists have different reasons for choosing their study programs and professions.

Methodology

Data set. A written survey was conducted in 2015 in two Lithuanian universities, where future police officers and future social educators are educated. 109 recipients of the study program "Law and Police Activities" and 40 students of the study program "Social pedagogics" have participated in the survey. These two professions were chosen for the investigation, because both of them are social sensitive and represents social sciences.

The research instrument. In order perform empirical research and analyse the most important reasons for the selection of police and social pedagogics study programs, the written survey was used as the main research instrument. Respondents were asked why they have chosen to study in the relevant study program. Students had to score the factors for their study program selection according to their importance from 1 (a completely irrelevant factor) to 4 (a particularly important factor).

The following study program selection factors were determined by the scientific literature review and were used in the questionnaire:

I want to obtain a status of a professional in my field. According to Misiūnas (2010), many professionals are motivated to serve their chosen profession, because they like the specifics of their job.

I desire to serve and help people. According to Bitinas (2004), the education of a citizen includes the perception of the country, the formation of a civic duty, the love for his homeland, the desire to acquire a good education and the practical preparation to act for the benefit of his country.

I chose this program and future profession on ideal basis. The ideal basis can be understood as serving society, altruism, self-realization. Students choose other internal motives, knowing clearly that the financial side of the future profession is not motivating. According to Šlapkauskas (2008), three occupational ideas are distinguished: 1) the idea of a professional community, an association of people who are committed to the activity and who share common values and interests; 2) the idea of a professional occupation, service orientation rather than profit; 3) the idea of a special expertise and specialized knowledge.

This profession will help me to reveal my best personal qualities. While developing the idea of personality and profession compatibility, Holland (1973) noticed that a person is trying to choose a job that matches his personal qualities. The typology presented by this researcher describes the key personality orientations and their influence on the choice of a profession. It can help to understand the individual's career direction, the development of his work activity, satisfaction with it and his achievements.

I can't imagine myself working something different. Eliot & Turns (2011) argue that the need for a student to acquire professional knowledge comes with life career planning and the attraction of desired work.

The university provides me a dormitory and better conditions than other universities. Studies conducted by Misiūnas (2010) have shown that social guarantees, although they are quite numerous, do not motivate professionals in the same way, so it is important to investigate whether this is important when choosing a university.

I think it will be easy to get a job after graduation. According to research conducted by Garnienė (2006), a quarter of pupils expect to find a job in the chosen profession. This also should be tested by the questionnaire of study program selection factors.

This work is well paid. According to research conducted by Misiūnas (2010), the majority of professionals would not change their chosen profession for the same salary and would re-choose their profession again, but there are some professionals who are not motivated or weak motivated to choose the appropriate profession because of their salary. So this factor of study programs selection may reveal different trends.

Statistical data analysis techniques allowed quantitative processing of students written survey results. The equality of average values between the study program selection factors' assessments of future police officers and future social educators were tested and conclusions made. Data processing was carried out using IBM SPSS 23.0.

Results

The performed analysis has indicated the following main reasons (scored by 4 – particularly important factor) determining students joining the study programs "Law and Police Activities" and "Social pedagogics" (Figure 1).

The respondents of the study program "Law and Police Activities" highlighted the desire to serve and help people (71 %), good employment opportunities (52 %), the chance to reveal their best features (44 %), the desire to acquire the status of a police officer (39 %).

The respondents of "Social pedagogics" study program revealed their desire to gain the status of a social educator (56 %), to serve and help people (51 %) and

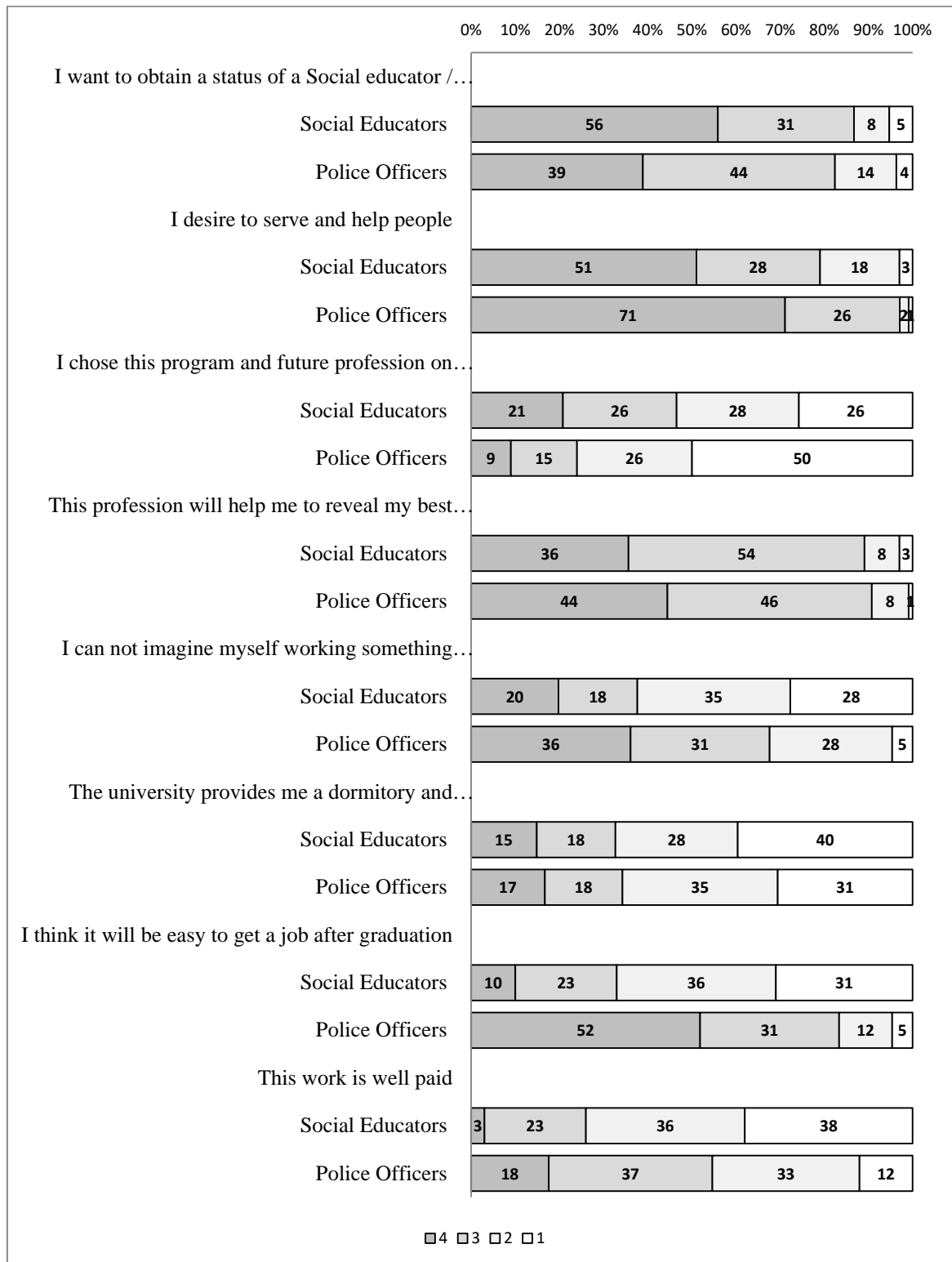to reveal their best features (36 %) as the most important reasons for the selection of this study program.

Figure 1 **Study programs selection factors**

The results of comparative analysis of the reasons why future police officers and social educators were joining the study programs are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1 **Comparative analysis of study programs selection factors***

Statement	Profession	Mean	t	df	p-value
I want to obtain a status of a Social Educator / Police Officer	Social Educators	3,38	1,336	65	0,186
	Police Officers	3,18			
I desire to serve and help people	Social Educators	3,28	-3,236	145	0,002
	Police Officers	3,68			
I chose this program and future profession on ideal basis	Social Educators	2,41	2,888	62	0,005
	Police Officers	1,83			
This profession will help me to reveal my best personal qualities	Social Educators	3,23	-0,859	65	0,394
	Police Officers	3,34			
I can't imagine myself working something different	Social Educators	2,30	-3,570	60	0,001
	Police Officers	2,99			
The university provides me a dormitory and better conditions than other universities	Social Educators	2,08	-0,641	68	0,524
	Police Officers	2,20			
I think it will be easy to get a job after graduation	Social Educators	2,13	-6,648	60	0,000
	Police Officers	3,31			
This work is well paid	Social Educators	1,90	-4,336	72	0,000
	Police Officers	2,60			

The comparative analysis has shown that future police officers prefer their studies according to their wish to serve and to help people; they can't imagine themselves working something different, but also hoping to get a job easy and to be well paid for it. Meanwhile, the future social educators more often choose their future profession on ideal basis. The other study program selection reasons (*I want to obtain a status of a Social Educator / Police Officer*; *This profession will help*

me to reveal my best personal qualities; *The university provides me a dormitory and better conditions than other universities*) indicated by future police officers and social educators were not significantly different with a significance level 0.05.

Conclusions

Social educators and police officers are both social sensitive professions. The work of a social educator and a police officer is extremely important for the proper functioning of society. It is to notice that these professionals provide different types of social services. The content of the professional activities of social educators and police officers is distinguished by comparing areas of their activity. Police officers implement law enforcement, protect people and property, fight against crime. Social educators take care of a child's well-being, early prevention, the development of social skills, the provision of social services necessary for the child.

According to the results of empirical research the comparative analysis was made and it has shown that future police officers more often prefer their studies according to their wish to serve and to help people; they can't imagine themselves working something different, but also hoping to get a job easy and to be well paid for it. It can be said that future police officers choose their profession having a strong attitude to responsibility and determined to realise themselves in this profession. A police officer has high professional requirements according to the interests of the individual, society and the country. Thus they are hoping for a guaranteed job and an appropriate salary for their work. Meanwhile, the future social educators more often choose their profession on ideal basis. Thus, it can be said that future social educators seek self-realization, choose a profession because of the noble goals and motives, such as altruism, serving the public, not emphasizing the salary for the work done.

It is to summarise that the main study program selection reasons for both future police officers as well as future social educators are the desire to serve and help people, a chance to reveal their best personal qualities, the desire to acquire a status of a social educator / police officer. Thus it can be concluded that future social educators and future police officers choose their profession because they see themselves as professionals, properly and responsibly performing their duties.

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