

## The socialization process and the functional significance of education from vocational education learners' perspective

B. Brisko

*Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia*

**Abstract.** Education is the most significant factor of socialization. Education is the largest sector of modern industry. The socialization functions in education can be defined as availability for work and an ability to make decisions independently so that the individual in his later life period could perform his social roles and integrate in social structures with specific role types. The aim of the publication is to find out what functional significance vocational education learners give to education. The quantitative research method was applied, surveying the respondent groups that comprised 503 vocational education learners from Riga, Liepaja, Daugavpils and Jelgava. According to the research results, most vocational education learners consider that it is necessary to study to get the desired job and be well prepared for the future job, to get a diploma and prestige in society, to ensure better financial situation and personal development, to have a better understanding of global events, to gain respect from friends and acquaintances, to be useful for society and to work abroad. The discussion section of the publication emphasizes that special attention should be paid to the factor that learners in their future vision prefer to work abroad. This can be explained by the current situation of the labour market and considerably high unemployment rate in Latvia.

**Key words:** *learner, vocational education, socialization*

The issue of socialization in various science sectors is getting broader and more significant. The concept of socialization is derived from the Latin word *socialis* (social) and is understood as the process and result of individual inheritance, learning and transfer of the mankind's accumulated experience (knowledge, skills, norms, values, behaviour patterns, etc.), which takes place under the particular conditions for the society to which the individual belongs to (Vikmane, 2009). Socialization can be viewed as a process that lasts throughout all life. Education is the most significant factor of socialization. It is the largest sector of modern industry. Moreover, the education system is to be viewed as the basis of national development (Picht, 1965). The social institute of education comprises a great deal of status, roles, social organization (schools, universities, study centres, etc.) that are based on personnel, control apparatus and special procedures (Fichter, 1959). Through education the individual learns the fundamental sense of the cultural and social world. Education is a factor that explains and justifies the institutional order in society (Berger, Luckmann, 1969). The school not just teaches to read, write and calculate but provides insight into social values as well. At school children are taught to respect diligent work, private property, family, democracy, laws and order. This is how the education of future citizens, who are ready and willing to maintain the social values, is performed. The school is like a miniature society where the child's personal development takes place (Smelzer, 1994). In a successful education process, the relationship between the child and the teacher cannot be like the relationship between the hypnotist and his subject, but it must develop on the basis of mutual respect (Durkheim, 1992). The socialization functions in education can be defined as availability for work and an ability to make decisions independently so that the individual in his later life period could perform his social roles and integrate in social structures with specific role types (Parson, 1968).

## **Aim**

The aim of the publication is to find out what functional significance vocational education learners give to education.

The following objectives are subjected to the aim of the publication:

- 1) to summarize empirically obtained information of opinions of vocational education learners regarding the significance of education;
- 2) to categorize the opinions of vocational education learners regarding the significance of education.

## **Materials and methods**

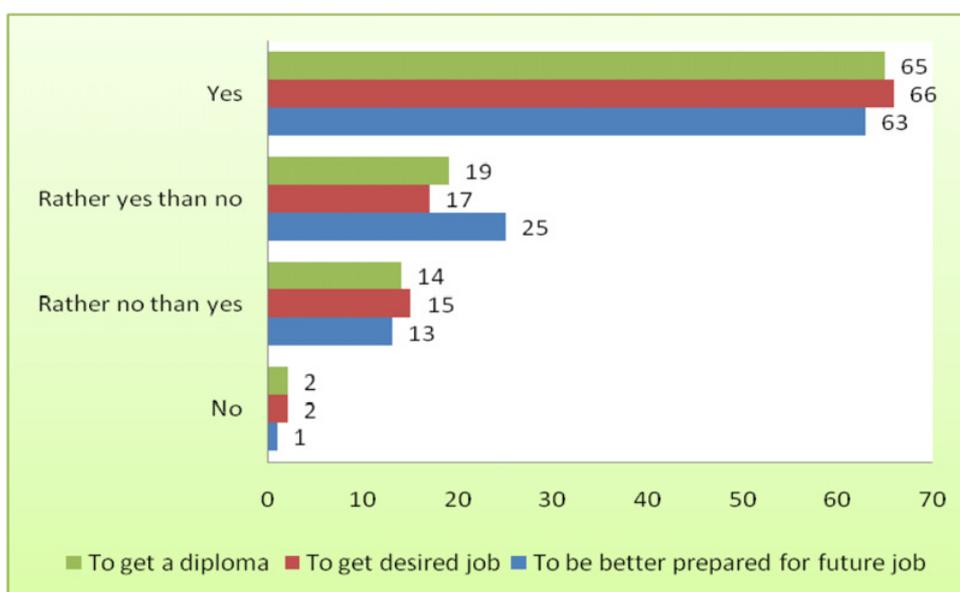
The empirical information was obtained through the research on socialization problems of vocational education learners. The quantitative research method was applied, surveying the respondent groups that comprised 503 vocational education learners from Riga, Liepaja, Daugavpils and Jelgava, which are the biggest cities in Latvia. The questionnaire included the question why it is necessary to study. The possible answers were: to gain preparedness for the future job; to work abroad; to ensure better financial condition; to get the desired job; to obtain a diploma; to ensure personal development; to gain prestige in society; to gain respect from friends and acquaintances; to have a better understanding of global events; to be useful for society. Each answer had to be assessed using the scale – yes, exactly; rather yes than no; rather no than yes; not exactly. The survey took place from January to May 2010.

## **Results**

Summarizing the opinions of the respondents in reference to the connection between education and the future profession, the research results are the following. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to get the desired job are the following: 66% of respondents answered – yes, exactly; 17% – rather yes than no; 15% – rather no than yes; 2% of respondents answered – not exactly. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to get a diploma are the following: 65% of respondents answered – yes, exactly; 19% – rather yes than no; 14% – rather no than yes; 2% of respondents answered – not exactly. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to be well prepared for job are the following: 63% of respondents answered – yes, exactly; 25% – rather yes than no; 13% – rather no than yes; 1% of respondents answered not exactly (see Figure 1).

According to the results, the conclusion can be made that more than half of the respondents admit that they master the certain profession as they want to get the desired job, a diploma and to be well prepared for their future job. Approximately 15% of the respondents claim that the above mentioned factors do not matter to them. Considering the majority, it is possible to conclude that the respondents are aware of the significance of mastering the particular profession. These learners have probably chosen their profession that meets their abilities and interests, as the professional proficiency is formed during apprenticeship, which promotes a positive attitude to the relevant profession. Certainly, it is necessary to take into consideration the variable conditions in the labour market that set probability that the chosen profession may not be well demanded by the labour market in the future. However, it must be outlined that the basic skills in any profession are of great importance because it is the basis to learn new skills required for learning a related profession much faster. Analyzing the opinions of the respondents who consider that the chosen profession and their diploma do not matter to them, the assumption arises that these learners have not chosen their profession and their characteristics unlikely meet the requirements of the particular profession.

Having analyzed the opinions of the respondents on the connection between education and future perspective, the research results are the following. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to

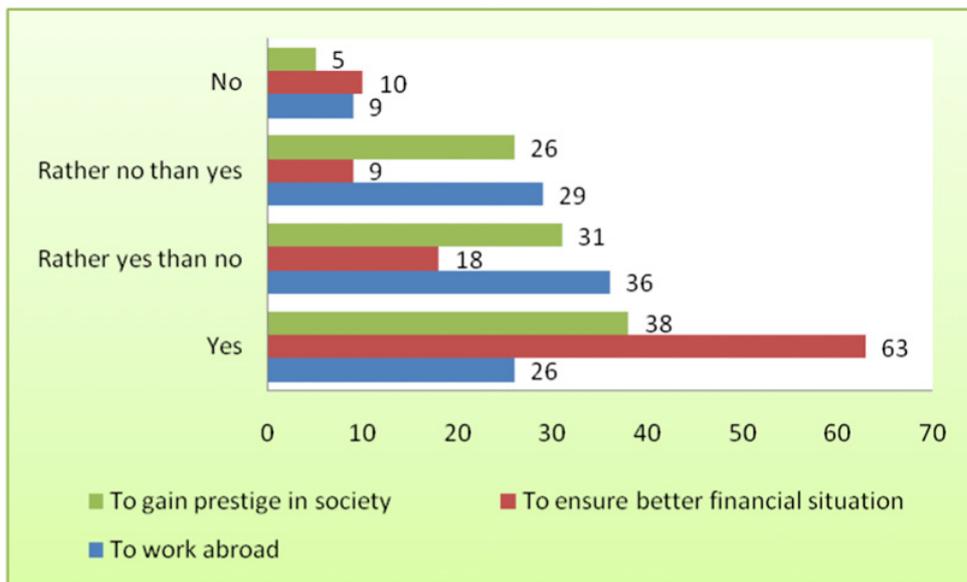


**Figure 1.** Connection between education and future job (%).

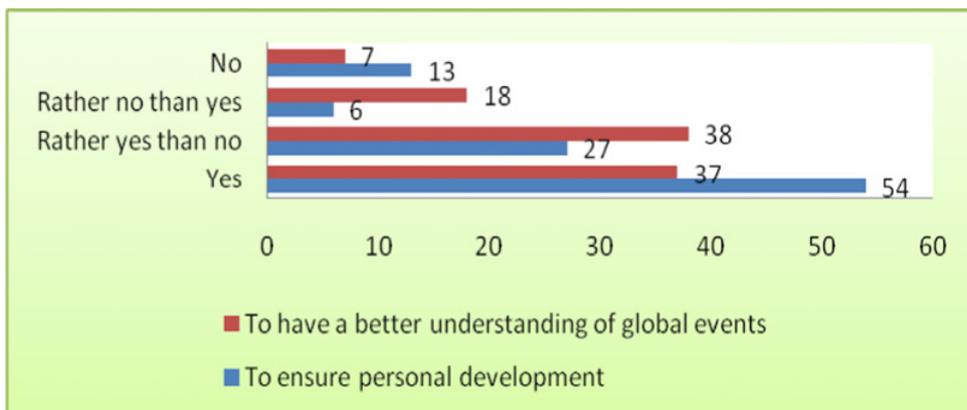
study to gain prestige in society are the following: 38% of respondents answered – yes, exactly; 31% – rather yes than no; 26% – rather no than yes; 5% of respondents answered – not exactly. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to ensure better financial situation are the following: 63% of respondents answered – yes, not exactly; 18% – rather yes than no; 9% – rather no than yes; there were no negative answers to this question. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to work abroad are the following: 26% of respondents answered – yes, exactly; 36% – rather yes than no; 29% – rather no than yes; 9% of respondents answered – not exactly (see Figure 2).

According to the research results, approximately two thirds of the respondents find it important what their performance evaluation in social level is like, i.e., to gain prestige in society. It could be assumed that it is important for these learners to have successful performance, positive contribution and appreciation by society. However, a third of the respondents do not find it important, which can be explained by the fact that not all professions are ‘prestigious’, or these learners might have a good sense of self-reliance, which is why they set their own track in society and cannot be bothered about other individuals’ thoughts. Most learners consider that the education will ensure better financial situation. The material side in the current situation is undoubtedly important. The financial situation can be viewed as an indicator of success or it can be defined as a root of all evil. However, considering the group of the respondents, it must be noted that the financial situation for most vocational education learners today is not favourable, which is probably why they define the material well-being as their future ideal. In reference to working abroad, approximately half of the respondents think that after finishing their education they will work abroad whereas the other half do not say so. The result can be explained by the current situation in the labour market and considerably high unemployment rate in the country.

The opinions of the respondents in reference to the education as a developer of their personality and a source of a better understanding of global events are the following. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to ensure their personal development are the following: 54% of the respondents answered – yes, exactly; 27% – rather yes than no; 6% – rather no than yes; 13% of respondents answered – not exactly. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to have a better understanding of global events are the following: 37% of respondents answered – yes,



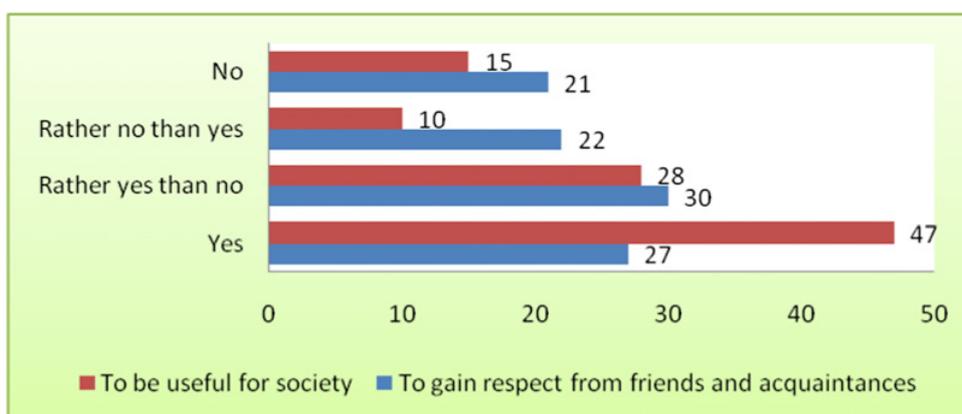
**Figure 2.** Connection between education and future perspective (%).



**Figure 3.** Significance of education (%).

exactly; 38% – rather yes than no; 18% – rather no than yes; 7% of respondents answered – not exactly (see Figure 3).

According to the research results, most learners consider that education contributes to their personal development and a better understanding of global events. Certainly, the main objective of education is personal development of a learner. Evaluation of personal development may be quite diverse, as it is impossible to have a single ‘reference system’. In development psychology, the debate of how the personal development is affected by heredity factors and environmental conditions, in its wider sense, including education, is still on. The objective of the education system is to provide an actual support for personal development of learners with respect to individual abilities and inclinations. Learning is the main process of personal development. However, a fifth of the respondents think that education neither promotes their personal development nor provides a better understanding of global events. The reason



**Figure 4.** The learners' opinion of why it is necessary to study (%).

of such an opinion is likely the fact that the learners are not interested in the content of education. Creating the interest is one of the main tasks for teachers to teach the particular subject. These learners are probably insufficiently involved into interaction with other learners and teachers, therefore they are reluctant at the certain stage, when attending the certain education establishment, to achieve something socially valuable.

According to the results in reference to the education as the basis of gaining respect from friends or acquaintances and evaluation of being useful for society, the results are the following. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to gain respect from friends and acquaintances are the following: 27% of respondents answered yes, exactly; 30% – rather yes than no; 22% – rather no than yes; 21% of respondents answered not exactly. The answers to the question whether it is necessary to study to be useful for society were the following: 47% of respondents answered yes, exactly; 28% – rather yes than no; 10% – rather no than yes; 15% of respondents answered not exactly (see Figure 4).

The proportion of positive and negative answers among learners is approximately the same, providing the information on education as the basis for gaining respect from friends and acquaintances. The result could be explained by the fact when learners of early adolescence, when the peers' opinion is utterly important, change into the late adolescence or early adulthood, when the autonomy of the individual's personality is formed and self-assertion of an individual becomes more and more dominating. More than half of respondents consider that with their education they significance in society grows. The individual within society is undoubtedly its central element and drive. The society's evolution depends on the individual's desire for excellence. It can be considered that the learners are on the right track of choice, as they expect their life fulfillment to be based on the enhancement of the common good of society.

## Discussion

The subject of discussion is connected with the issue that, if the education is considered as a significant factor of socialization and one of the cornerstones for national development, particular attention should be paid to the learners' wish to work abroad after finishing their vocational education. Besides, 72% of the respondents have this opinion. The choice undoubtedly depends on the current situation in the labour market. However, on the other hand, the state invests their funds in vocational education, but after finishing their vocational education (if the situation in the labour market remains) the feedback from most learners in the national development will not be ensured.

## Conclusions

Education is the most significant factor of socialization. Moreover, the education system is to be considered as the basis of national development. The socialization functions in education can be defined as availability for work and an ability to make decisions independently so that the individual in his later life period could perform his social roles and integrate in social structures with specific role types.

According to the research results, most vocational education learners consider that it is necessary to study to get the desired job and be well prepared for the future job, to get a diploma and prestige in society, to ensure better financial situation and personal development, to have better understanding of global events, to gain respect from friends and acquaintances, to be useful for society and to work abroad. The discussion section of the publication emphasizes that special attention should be paid to the factor that learners in their future perspective prefer to work abroad. This can be explained by the current situation of the labour market and considerably high unemployment rate in Latvia. It is possible that the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 could change the situation, according to which, in order to promote national employment the combination of several qualifications matched to the demand of the labour market will be supported (Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030).

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