Transition Process of Students with Special Needs to Vocational Colleges in Georgia

Rusudan Lortkipanidze

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Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education
Department of Special Needs Education
Faculty of Educational Science

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Abstract

The goal of the study was to investigate transition process of students with special need from school to Vocational Education and Training system. The question of the study was: *What kind of experiences do the students with special educational needs have with the enrolment process to vocational education and training system*? It tries to figure out in what way does professional testing as well as registration service contribute in the process of choosing future educational programme.

Qualitative, particularly hermeneutic approach was used within this study in order to collect and analyse the data. Semi-structured interview was applied with six students with special educational needs in order to answer research question. Those students were pioneers that tried new enrolment process in vocational colleges.

Theoretical framework was based on the reports and literature review done by European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. Experiences of European countries connected to the transition process and Individual Transition Plan is discussed in multidirectional way.

Within this study participants highlighted four main topics connected to their experiences to the professional testing and registration process. The themes that outlined were: applying to college, professional testing, adapted environment and nowadays occupation.

Three main issues are discussed in this study: time, information vacuum, superficial and unitary professional orientation. Based on this issues some recommendations for effective transition process are presented.

Key words: Student with Special Educational Needs, Transition Process, Vocational Education and Training System, Inclusive Education.

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1 Introduction

Gain profession, start work, move to live independently and so forth is one of the dramatic changes in human's life and is called a transition process from childhood to adulthood. *"Progression from childhood to adulthood is a major transition in every society, and includes shift from dependence on parents to living independently" (Allen, M.C., & 2010, p, 332).* Transition from primary to vocational education is one of the challenged part of whole transition concept, and is the most important step for people with disabilities. The trend in many European countries to develop inclusive education and promote access in Vocational Educational and Training system (VET system) started many years ago. As a result different kinds of transition services are available for people with special educational needs and different VET centres implement inclusive education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2012).

It is known that within different education system young people with special educational needs should be supported to make an effective transition from school to adult working life (Salamanca Framework for Action, 1994, p. 34). Typically making future career decision is based on personal interests, experiences and skills as a background, However Carter et al. (2010) states that many students with special educational needs graduate schools without experiences, knowledge and attitudes that help them effectively plan and move toward their career path (p, 14). The consequence of it is that in Europe many people still do not use their fundamental right to work or learn (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2012).

From that perspective European agency conclude that *"in order to guarantee a smoother transition from school to the workplace, young people with disabilities need to develop goals and identify the role they want to play in society" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2002, p, 9).* This might be possible by providing an appropriate and effective transition service for students with special education needs. According to Williams-Diehm and Lynch (2007) Transition service should be designed in a way that it will be: result oriented, based on individual person's needs and his preferences strengths and interest. Lindstrom (2007) shares the idea that in an effective transition process students' active involvement is a central component.

Since 1994 Georgian government had done many official steps toward inclusion of disabled people into society; signed and ratified different conventions and declarations such as: Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) (1994); Salamanca Declaration (1994); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2013). Though in reality within the period of ten years (1994-2004) there were not much done in this direction.

Providing an appropriate education for people with special education needs became a priority for Georgian government since 2004, when Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) started reforms in the education system (MoES, 2013). Within this period with the help of governmental and nongovernmental, local or foreign organizations many positive changes were observed in education system:

Was developed manual for kindergartens teacher and established professional team in order to support inclusive education in kindergartens (Nursery Management Agency, 2011).

Was provided effective accessibility in a mainstream education for every pupil with the help of MoES and Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research from 2006. During six years there were completed two extensive and effective projects where all governmental schools were involved. (MoES, 2012)

Multidisciplinary team was established by MoES that supports inclusive education in schools within whole country. (MoES, 2012)

The definition of inclusive education was placed in national curriculum from 2011 and is described as involvement process of pupils with all types of special educational needs together with their peers in a mainstream education process (MoES, 2011).

MoES (2011) believes that implementation of inclusive education would be thoroughpaced if it will not be established in all educational levels: not only in kindergarten and schools but in vocational and higher education as well. It states that every person has to have right to gain a profession; that vocational education for students with special education needs have an important role from valuable development and social integration perspective. (MoES, 2012)

Before starting to implement inclusive education into VET system MoES tried to figure out existed condition in state vocational education colleges in Georgia. For this reason MoES hired international institute for education policy, planning and management (EPPM) to

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conduct the research in this direction. Outcome of the research showed similar picture to Europe where, though successful implementation of inclusive education in mainstream education exists, still many obstacles are remained and as a result students with special educational needs did not use their right to continue to lifelong learning and gain profession. (MoES, 2012; EPPM, 2012).Within this research seventeen state vocational education colleges were involved and it appeared that only 22 students with special education needs out of 5708 were registered in different vocational colleges in the period of 2011-2012 academic years (EPPM, 2012).

According to Vocational Education and Training (VET) administrations' the reasons of such low percentage of students with special educational needs in vocational education were: 1) maladapted environment outside of colleges (e.g. transportation problems); 2) students and their caregivers' low awareness about possible future education facilities in VET; 3) negative experiences of students with special education needs in other educational institutions (e.g. difficulties at school with other classmates and teacher from social relationship perspective) (EPPM, 2012).

From that perspective project *"Introduction of Inclusive Education in Vocational Education and Training (VET) System in Georgia"* is being carried out since 2013 within the framework of the grant agreement signed between the MoES and the Ministry of Education and Research of Norway. The project lasts for three years and main aim of it is to implement system changes in vocational educational and training system, through implementation of inclusive education and maintenance equal opportunity and accessibility for student with special educational needs. Considering local as well as other countries experiences and analysing facts, their process of development an alternative transition process (from school to vocational colleges) was developed in order to popularize equal rights of employment and make a connection between secondary and vocational education and training systems. (MoES, 2012)

Several sub-aspects of the project were: to develop and implement professional education in mainstream education system (professional orientation); to change an enrolment process in VET system and to develop separate and new enrolment process for students with special educational needs (which is proceed through an professional testing process). The whole transition process based on student's individual needs and possibilities was planned in a way that student and the caregiver have an active role and is (MoES, 2013).

It is discussed in 2013 annual report that still implementation of professional education programme in a mainstream education system remains as one of the challenges; that transition service and career preparation programme for students with special educational needs is not developed yet and is obvious that to choose an appropriate profession by the student with special educational needs without assistance and appropriate preparation might be risky. As a fact 5 students out of 51 registered in different vocational colleges in 2013-14 academic year *"were detected to experience inconsistency with the profession, because of incomplete information awareness about the profession" (Annual report of introduction of inclusive education in vocational education and training system in Georgia, 2013, p 8).* Moreover it is not known how this new system worked in reality for the rest forty six students with special educational needs.

1.1 Research Aim and Research Questions

We are aware that making a reflection about effectiveness of the developed system without considering the opinions of people to whom it was developed is not appropriate. The slogan *"Nothing About Us Without Us"* is widely used in the history of disability right movements and express the philosophy that nothing should be done for disabled people without considering their expertise, ideas and feedback (Carlton, 1998; Werner, 1998). From this perspective this qualitative study through conducting semi-structured interview tries to explore what benefits do students with special education needs get from the new enrolment system into vocational colleges; what challenges they met and what was the profit that they gain while trying out newly developed enrolment process. Therefore the research question of this study was

What kind of experiences do the students with special educational needs have with the enrolment process to vocational education and training system?

It was explored with sub-questions such as

What kind of experiences do the students with special educational needs have with the registration and testing process?

How does this (enrolment) system work in order to help students with special educational needs to choose profession?

1.2   Significance of The Study

Policy makers, education managers and specialists involved in the process of development of inclusive education in vocational education and training in Georgia may benefit from this study by considering in future students opinions and experiences with reference to their enrolment process.

In order to make transition process more effective for persons with special education needs and prevent future dropouts, considering recommendations might be useful after the research will be conducted.

There is lack of research done in this field and the results of present study may contribute to further educational research in Georgia.

1.3   Outline of The Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters outlined below:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

There is a short introduction about the topic- transition process of the students with special educational needs and the current situation in Georgia connected to this topic; it shows the purpose of the study and what research question and sub-questions are within this research; also discusses how written paper is designed.

Chapter 2 –Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the latest history of the reforms that were done in the direction of implementing inclusive education in Europe; what is the general information about the transition process, its strengths and limitations and how it is implemented in different countries; particularly discusses transition process practice in Estonia and Norway as a basic example considered while developing transition process in Georgian; It contains information about current education system in Georgia; describes positive changes done in VET system and explains how new enrolment process in VET system is set for students with special educational needs.

Chapter 3 –Methodology

In this chapter the process of choosing the methodology in order to answer research question is discussed; preparation process of interview, data collection and analyses is described. There is a discussion about ethical issues, validity and reliability of the research as well.

Chapter 4 – Findings

This chapter elaborates gained information from the participants through interview process; what themes and sub themes emerged during data analyses. Specifically, it holds a findings about four main themes connected to the experiences of students with special educational needs; The themes that are presented are: the experience of applying to college through registration process, professional testing, where this process was performed (adapted environment) and nowadays occupations or future plans of the participants.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion

Within this chapter the discussion part is presented that was developed while combining the literature review and findings. Discussion is followed this the some recommendations that is suggested to be considered in future. Conclusions and limitations of the study also arise within this chapter. Final part of this chapter suggests some options for future investigation.

Used reference list and appendixes are provided at the end of this paper.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter starts to describe theories connected to the transition process in general and later specifies discussion about transition process from primary to vocational education. It reviews different articles about transition process; how it is implemented in different countries and describes challenges connected to this process. This chapter highlights main idea of career orientation and the role of family in it. Last section of this chapter gives an overview about current education situation in Georgia. It explains in details enrolment process of students with special educational needs into vocational college.

2.1 Introduction

Special needs education during history has been influenced by several federal education reforms. Such as Salamanca Framework for Action, Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind Act. It helped to provide free appropriate education in less restricted environment; established Individual Education Plans and ensure that every child meets state standard and so forth. These reforms *"call for broad-based partnerships between schools, employers, postsecondary institutions, and families; support full participation and equal access to the general education curriculum; and emphasize teaching methods that have been proven to work" (Sholl, L., and Mooney, M, 2003, p, 4).* During this period many positive steps were done in different countries in order to support integration of persons with special educational needs in mainstream education and labour market.

We know that international and European institutions such as UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Commission recognize that basic education should be for all and should lead to employment for all; that vocational knowledge and skills should be part of basic education (primary and secondary) curricula in order to develop human with values and standards of responsible citizenship (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2008; UNESCO, 2004).

Vocational education is described as: *"instruction intended to equip persons for industrial or commercial occupations. It may be obtained either formally in trade schools, technical secondary schools, or in on-the-job training programs or, more informally, by picking up the*

necessary skills on the job" (Dictionary, 2014). These type of systems includes wide range of education and training structures; represent a variety of approaches and is strongly connected with government and social institutions (Inman, McGurk, and Chadwick 2007; Rinaldi et al. 2008). Another term, which is connected to training programme that provide person's professional competences through education process is called apprenticeship. Gibson and Gary (2011) stated that apprenticeship has long roots in history and is a training programme (formal or informal) for person who desire to learn a trade. During apprenticeship skilled employer teaches person required profession and after education, based on their agreement, this person is responsible and bound to work on this organization or person (skilled employer).

2.2   Types of Vocational Education and Training in Different Countries

In Europe the practice of establishing inclusive education and promoting access in Vocational Education and Training (VET) system started long time ago. Nowadays different kinds of transition services are available for people with disabilities and different VET centres that implement inclusive education differ in transition process, education and strategies. "In some countries vocational and secondary education are two distinct paths, whereas elsewhere the systems integrate both academic and vocational learning into one path" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p, 23).

Norway, United Kingdom and Finland implement mainstream education where vocational and secondary education are integrated as one. This system was developed in order to response inclusive education vision and researches have shown that it is very effective way to prolong education and be aware about future goals and tasks (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). In Norway there is an opportunity to gain some trade on lower and upper secondary levels, through apprenticeship and on other training programmes. Usually student with special educational need are together with their peers and extra time, additional equipment, aids or teaching recourses are provided in case of necessity (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

The Danish educational VET system is an example of a flexible strategy that gives learners opportunity to try out different occupational experiences and jobs on labour market. Like

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United Kingdom Danish educational VET system (transferred system from USA and) offers different programmes, place and train models. According to Krupa (2004) Place and train model offers supported employment with pre-vocational training and assessment in protected workshops or in job-placements. This model requires minimal pre-vocational training, but during adapting to the work and the environment on-going assistance is provided.

There are six types of VET in Estonia starting from prevocational and ending with apprenticeship programmes: in some cases it requires basic education as a prerequisite knowledge and in other services person can apply without any educational background. In addition to that, work-related adult education takes place in VET institutions and besides school-based form of study, workplace-based form of study (apprenticeship) is provided. (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012)

The rapport of European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) it is mentioned that the Netherlands, Singapore and Czech Republic offer similar model to the student in vocational education. The secondary education system is free to organize the curriculum based on dual courses. The flexibility gives an opportunity to assess plan and implement study and work adapted to particular student's needs and possibilities (P, 24).

According to International Labour Organization ILO (2008 as cited in *European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012*) in different parts of Europe there still exist special VET centres, which *"generally include sheltered workshops, use a production-based approach for training, and continue to operate in both developed and developing countries" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p, 20).* The amount of this centres in some countries were reduced, while in some counties increased. Countries, such as Germany and Slovakia place people with special educational needs and the majority of people with learning disabilities into segregated settings, such as special VET centres (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

There also exist compensatory vocational education practice that was firstly developed for students with special needs who had bad experience in mainstream education. Unfortunately this programmes in some cases were used as a segregated programmes (for students with special needs) run by organizations who provide (sometimes) not validate certifies. *"However, in certain circumstances, these programmes can be effective in allowing a high number of learners to gain a secondary education certificate and work skills" (European*

Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p, 22). Based on this rapport Spain and United Kingdom government developed 'Initial Vocational Qualification Programmes' as a compensatory vocational education for students who were excluded from vocational education programme or have not entered at all and wanted to gain some profession. As a result in both cases the amount of successful cases increased. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) refers to Attwood et al. (2005) *"It has been suggested that this success could be due to the course flexibility, counselling and guidance and elements of work-related learning in the curricula" (p. 22).*

2.3   Transition Process

According to the rapport of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2002), the concept of transition (based on several international researches) from school to employment or working life were described in a different way but all of them include three main ideas: Process; Transfer and Change. *"The International Labour Office defines transition as a process of social orientation that implies status change and role (e.g. from student to trainee, from trainee to worker and from dependence to independence), and is central to integration into society… Transition requires a change in relationships, routines and self-image" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2002, p, 9).* Changing the living lifestyle and occupations is the natural process while becoming an adult, but growing up does not mean only to change occupations and start to do things (going to the grocery or use public transport to get to the work or vocational college) more independently. For People with special educational needs to do age appropriate occupations (such as study or work) is their desire as well as for others. It is known that being involved in the same occupations as their peers raises their competence, motivation and self-image. "Work participation positively influences people's health, self-identity, competency, control, balance, meaning of everyday life, as well as enables social inclusion" (Kin et al. 2011). That means that after finishing compulsory education and become an adult people with special educational needs should be supported to be naturally involved in the vocational education and work. *"[…] that transition to working life is just one of the transitions that young people must make on the way to adulthood. In a lifelong learning context, the transition from initial education, whether upper secondary education or tertiary education, is seen as simply the first of many transitions between work and learning that young people will experience*

throughout their lives" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2002, p, 10). These transition services should fulfil the gap which exists between school and community adjustment and include coordinated, result oriented set of activities for person, in order to improve academic and functional achievements. Generally transition service should be based on individual student's needs, strengths, preferences and interests; it must include instruction, community experiences, development of employment, and other post school adult-living objectives (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Cobb (2008 as cited European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012) suggest that, before student with special educational needs enters an adult life, there should be done several things in order to help their transition process. First of all person should become aware of self (know own disability and needs); weight the options he has, plan future goals and use available services for that and self-advocate. *"Self knowledge and self awareness are often the first steps in the process of teaching students to identify interests and preferences" (Lindstrom et al., 2007, p, 4).* Knowing your limitations (How it affects your learning and other activities), and strengths (coping strategies and also other skills that helps you to adapt to a particular activity), will help to plan and weight options in more an effective way. Because *"[…] adults who expressed higher self-determination achieved higher post-secondary outcomes than individuals with lower skills in self-determination" (Williams-Diehm, and Lynch, 2007, p, 14).*

2.3.1 Individual Transition Plan (ITP) as a Necessary Part of Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

In special needs education Individual Education Plan (IEP) is actively used in order to make meaningful and appropriate education plan to a particular student with special needs. IEP *"is a program written for every student receiving special education; it describes the child's current performance and goals for the school year, the particular special education services to be delivered, and the procedures by which outcomes are to be evaluated" (Kirk, 2012).* During preparation of IEP several areas should be considered and clarified: what are pupil's resources, character and learning conditions; what kind of methical and organizational approach will be used; what are the teacher's skills and needs in order to support pupil to achieve goals; and what are practical experience and general conditions in the school system (Buli-Holmberg, 2014).

According to IDEA (2004) in all IEPs an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) should be added as an additional part. Individual Transition Plan should provide smooth and appropriate transfer process of the student started at age sixteen and even younger.

ITP as well as IEP includes information about the person from different perspective, such as: from school, caregivers and the community in which this person lives. That is why while making ITP active collaboration and effective communication between coordinator, teachers, special teachers, person with special educational needs and caregivers should be established. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2006) highlighted that the focus during ITP development must remain on student goals and interests. That students' active involved in all decision-making process makes transition more meaningful and effective (Williams-Diehm and Lynch, 2007; Lindstrom et al., 2007). As a result Individual Transition Plan will increase chances to get a sustainable job. It will match the interests, wishes, motivations, competences, skills, attitudes and abilities with the requirements of the profession and job. This will increases autonomy, motivation, self-perception and self-confidence. And finally will create a win-win situation for the young persons and employers.

2.3.2 Career Exploration

Comprehensive career exploration results in appropriate career maturity (self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, career exploration intentions and vocational identity) and assists student with special educational needs to take part in their own career decision and knowledgeable choices of course study (Harvey, 2001; Ochs and Roessler,2001). These work experiences help students to understand and gather information about diverse carrier opportunity. It also supports to understand what means to work; what skills they need in order to implement a task, is it easy or hard to a particular person. Moreover practical experiences will also build valuable skills and habits, which might be important in future. Student with special educational needs increased vocational knowledge and interest is based on school programmes that includes intensive career exploration and development activities (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012; Carter et al. 2010; Harvey, 2001). *"Career preparatory experiences, such as career awareness, career exploration, and career assessments can help youth explore options, while at the same time identifying their interests, abilities, and potential need for accommodations. Students who participate in*

career exploration activities are also more likely to recognize and identify a variety of career options" (Lindstrom et al 2007, p. 5).

2.3.3 Role of The Family Into Transition Process

It is recommended to build relationships between parents and team working on transition process. As *"the family can provide moral support and practical assistance and act as a role model in terms of a good work ethic" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p. 27).* Family members is good source of information for team providing transition process as they know a lot about their children (strength, limitations and interests as well). Moreover Trainor, (2005) discusses that parents' emotional support and good communication with their children, empowers students and develops their skills to choose their future. But we should also be aware that on the other hand parents' values, their social status and vision about future, sometimes have huge influence on their children's vocational choices (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

That is why it is important to start collaboration with family members as soon as possible. Because according to Tamol (2007): *"[…] knowledge of vocational education and training systems and processes, understanding future possibilities and sharing realistic expectations within the family could all be significant in maximising a learner's future independence (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p. 27).*

2.4   Challenges in The Transition Process

Though available information about different services for students during transition processes and accessibility in VET systems exists, young people with special educational needs or with disability *"[…] still face multiple barriers preparing for the transition from high school to postsecondary education, employment, and other aspects of community living" (Lindstrom L, et al 2007, p. 4).* The reason why they strive with different issues during transition process varies: personal or family factors, weak policies and regulations, poor services and other social (attitudes) or environmental (architectural barriers) factors. (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011)

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) emphasized four key challenges connected to the transition process: Drop out from VET and possible solutions;

limited implementation of measures and co-ordination of services; limited career assessment tools; relationship of VET to job practices and accessibility to the job market.

Different causes of drop outs from VET such as: poor experiences in school, personal difficulties, life circumstances and structural barriers were mentioned by participants. (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011) The main reason of drop out from VET was not suitable adapted programmes. Student with special educational needs should have same education choices (to choose education, college, programme or profession) as other learners, but in reality we see different picture. Unfortunately it is a fact that in many countries there are no possibilities in schools to give students explore different work and study programmes. That most youth are unaware of available diverse jobs and careers within community they live. As a result combination of all this issues makes for student with special educational needs less access to the choices of desire profession/s.

"Access is not the only challenge; the range of options open to learners with special educational needs is also limited…… […] they are generally offered programmes oriented towards social welfare, leading to low skills, low productivity employment or low-paid work" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p.18). Because of a low choice in programmes there are a cases, which do not fit student's field of interest. That might cause loss of motivation to study or drop outs (as in many cases) from the education system. Sometimes there is a case that counsellors and specialists suggest the profession based on the limitations of the person, or only the recourses of the vocational education and training system and are not considering the students interests or concerns much. *"Staff support and capacity, therefore, must be sufficient to assess skills, readiness, and interests, and then customize a unique employment opportunity"(Woolsey, and Katz-Leavy, 2008, p. 14).* On the other hand some students need to be aware about career or vocational education and training opportunities that are available in his/her community. But information and news about different professions in most cases are not adapted to the needs of persons with educational needs. Woosley and Katz-Leavy (2008) state for example that job descriptions are traditionally explained in many settings; are using different professional terminologies, which might not be easy to understand. In some countries the only available source of information about the professional courses are standard printed versions. That is why career explore and work based learning is one of the most important part in special needs education system (Woolsey, Katz-Leavy, 2008, Lindstrom, et al 2007). For this reason secondary education

"Curricula should therefore include workplace behaviours, occupational skills and careers awareness, as well as provide work exploration opportunities to help learners with special educational needs identify career interests and be proactive in developing the skills critical to a successful transition" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p. 25).

Tomblin and Haring (1999 as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012) state is that in different European countries there are identified gaps between basic education, social/life skills instruction and the labour force skills, which are important for person in order to be, hired. Lack of coordination of the services increase the number of students who are not entering the vocational education or are dropped out. As a recommendation is that there should be strong collaboration between systems, and every service provider should have as much as possible information in order to make right match between them. For that students with special educational needs and their caregivers gave a recommendation to the service providers to become more aware about available different varieties of services and supports. (Lindstrom, 2007)

"Access to VET should be available to all. Indeed, Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) states that everyone has the right to have access to vocational and continuing training and free compulsory education" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2002 p.18). However low access in some vocational educations adds more complication to all issues mentioned above. According to ILO (2008 as cited in European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2002) access is restricted from physical, social environment and from VET system perspective; it does not matter if there is new practice of inclusive education in VET or not still percentage of acceptance European students with different special needs is low. As in some cases students are not accepted because of teacher's lack of knowledge about new teaching-learning strategies; in other cases students get refuse due to other environmental barriers.

Good vocational training does not automatically guarantee getting a job. Especially now, when the economic crisis emerged in Europe became harder. As a result according to ILO (2008) and OEDC (2009) when students with special needs complete their study course, they still achieve less in post school activities than their peers; they became passive and spent their time mostly at home and the only income is disability benefit or pension. There is big percentage of unemployed people with special educational needs, which "[…] increases their

risk of social exclusion, poverty and a general lack of opportunities" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p, 9). One of the solutions is to raise the qualification of these new trained students.

"In conclusion, vocational education has often not been effective in encouraging employability skills due to poor links with industry and delays and shortcomings in adapting programmes to the rapidly changing needs of enterprises" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012, p. 44).

2.5 Current Education System And Reforms Done In Georgia

2.5.1 General Overview of Education System

The Law of general education states that everyone has equal right to get full education, to develop his/her personality and gain knowledge and skills that is necessary to achieve success equal opportunities in private and social live (Georgian law of general education, article 9, 2013). Here is a short overview of the education system in Georgia (see also appendix N1).

Preschool education is under municipality's management and is not compulsory in Georgia. Officially education starts when pupil enters school. Primary education is between 1-9 grades, provided in schools and is compulsory in Georgia. Person graduating primary education gets certificate that gives him possibility to continue either vocational or secondary education; Secondary education starts from 10th grade and lasts for three more years. Finishing secondary education person again has two options to prolong education and so gain profession: higher or vocational education (law of general education, Chapter 8, article 51).

To enter higher education it is needed to complete Unified National Examination process. The right to participate in it has everyone, who can represent state documentation of graduation secondary education (MoES, 2009). Higher education in Georgia consists of three stages: Bachelor's programme (generally education lasts for four years); Master programme (two years), which is possible after getting bachelor degree; and Doctoral programme, which lasts for three years. There is no Bachelor or Master degree on Medical Faculty (the education lasts for 12 years) however after graduation medical faculty person can apply for Doctoral degree.

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There are three types of higher education: University, Teaching University and College (MoES, 2009).

According to the project "Introduction of Inclusive Education in Vocational Education and Training (VET) System in Georgia" there is formal and informal vocational education in Georgia. Person who has a certificate proving his graduation of basic or secondary education and passes examination can enter vocational College (Law about vocational education, chapter 1, article 7, 2010). In some cases when there is high request to particular profession the vocational college itself might have some additional exams to assess person's competences that are required for particular profession. However 10% of places on every educational programmes were quotes for the students with special education needs (Annual report of introduction of inclusive education in vocational education and training system in Georgia, 2013,).

Currently there are 18 public and 78 private VET institutions, 26 higher educational institutions and 10 schools that are authorised to provide vocational education programmes. In total 80-100 different vocational education programmes are taught at these institutions. (MOES strategy, 2013, p. 22).

There are five levels of vocational education and moderate length of learning process is one and half year (see also appendix N2).The acceptance requirement for each level is accomplishment of previous level or proper knowledge, skills and values recognition (MoES, 2013). To enter first three levels to have only basic education is enough. To enter higher levels person should have secondary education or accomplished first three vocational education levels.

By law informal vocational education is recognized by government on the basis of person's skills, knowledge and values assessment. It is inadmissible to recognize informal vocational education within the fourth and fifth level (Law of vocational Education, Article 10. Informal VET education, 2010)

2.5.2 Implemented Reforms Focusing On Inclusive Education

Providing appropriate education for people with special education needs became a priority for Georgian government from 2004, when Ministry of Education started reforms in the education system (MoES, Annual report of the project, 2013). Within this period with the help of governmental and nongovernmental, local or foreign organizations many positive changes were observed on different educational levels.

Preschool education: In the period of 2010-2012 City Hall of Tbilisi with the help of USAID develop the manual "educational programme for kindergarten" for teachers. It is based on international standards of new educational methodology and service provision. City Hall of Tbilisi together with NGOs developed strategy document for kindergarten in 2011. It is based on Hague Convention and since 2012 all governmental kindergarten in Tbilisi are following it (Nursery Management Agency, 2011).

Primary and secondary education: To provide effective accessible education for every pupil MoES with the help of Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research started to implement project from 2006. During six years there were completed two extensive and effective projects. The aim of those projects were to implement inclusive education in all public schools of Georgia. Nowadays inclusive education at schools is actively and successfully executed with the help of MoES and its multidisciplinary team. (MoES, final project report, 2012)

Multidisciplinary team (unified with different specialties such as psychologist, occupational therapist, or special teacher), established by MoES, has a core role in providing effective inclusive education to any pupils who are at school system (Georgian law of general education, chapter 1, article 2, definition of terms, 2013). Individual Education Plan (IEP) for person with special education needs is developed by the pupils' teacher with the help of multidisciplinary team. The individual education plan is developed based on national educational plan (Georgian law of general education, article 5, national education plan, 2013).

Higher education: Considering the decree of National Examination Centre about General education: any Student (with disability or special education needs) has right to enter University if he/she has graduates secondary education and passes the unified national examinations (MoES, 2013). New regulations were made in law to support disabled students during examination process in 2013. By law person during online registration on site of

National Examination Programme should fulfil a special column in case he/she has some kind of disability (motor, auditory, visual or other). In this case person, if needed, will be provided by special environment during examination process (Georgian law of general education, article 5, national education plan, 2013).

Higher education gives privilege to disabled students to provide appropriate educational conditions, but still you can rarely meet student with disability or student with special education needs on this level of education.

In Georgia the law of Vocational Education and Training foresees of equal treatment to all student, because *"[…] right of participation in unified national examination has everyone, who can represent state documentation of graduation secondary education" (MoES, 2009, Chapter VIII, article 51, point 4,).* The Vocational Education and Training strategy reform (2013) highlight the right of personal development through education and foresees additional activities to increase the involvement in vocational education the persons such as: Refugees, disabled people, prisoners, ethnical minorities, different kind of risk groups (street children) and so forth (p. 2). MoES, (2012) states that students with special educational needs have enough potential and skills to live meaningful life, be effective and useful members of the society; That students with special education needs have enough skills to give financial supports to their family and to do his/her bit into their country economics development.

Since 2012 educational programme Vocational College is 100% funded by MoES for particular population such as: a) students coming from vulnerable family. b) Student who graduated basic education and did not continue study on secondary education. c) Student with special educational needs d) student who pass examination and overcomes minimal competences. With this funding student can apply in vocational college and study on one educational programme. This voucher is not reusable. In case student decides to enter new educational programme or continue study on the same programme but on a higher level, expenses should be covered by student. (MoES, 2012)

2.5.3 Enrolment Process Into Vocational Education

The enrolment process for students with special education needs in vocational education differs in Georgia since 2013. The alternative enrolment process was developed within the project "Introduction of Inclusive Education in Vocational Education and Training System in

Georgia" and is divided in four main steps: 1. student's assessment, 2. registration process, 3. professional testing and 4. Acceptance to vocational college. (MoES, Order about professional testing approve, Chapter 7, 2013)

Step 1: Assessment by the multidisciplinary team.

In order to prove that student has special education needs and requires extra support during entering and studying in Vocation College, multidisciplinary team (not less than 3 specialists) should provide an assessment process. The assessment of students' functional and academic skills happens in case when students with special education needs graduates school without having any official document proving their status. As a result of the assessment multidisciplinary team draws a decision if the particular student has or has not special education needs and provides conclusion as an additional (and in some cases the only) paper. (Moes, Georgian law of general education, 2013)

Step 2: Registration process.

During registration process applicant should present required documentations (included document provided by multidisciplinary team) and name maximum three preferred educational programmes that he desires to learn. Registration process lasts maximum thirty minutes. All information in a database is fulfilled by the consultant. In case applicant does not know on what educational programme he wants to register, consultant discusses with him. After identifying his interests, experiences and needs consultant suggests several (relative) professions to the applicant. Introducing those professions consultant explains what those professions are about; how long it is studied, how is learning process held on and what are the future perspectives while graduating this education programme. At the end of consultation applicant decides what programme or programmes he wants to register. When registration process is done, consultant explains to the applicant that he should enter professional testing process. It is a united entry examination's alternative process for person with special education needs and is carried out in the same period of time.

Step 3: Professional Testing.

This is the process where applicant has the possibility to try out practical tasks of already registered educational programme(s). After completing professional testing and exploring some features of profession activities, applicant makes a decision which educational

programme he would like to enter and study in the future. Professional testing itself lasts two hours (plus/minus 10-15 minutes) and includes nine stages.

Planning professional testing process: On this stage examination committee reviews applicants' registration form (what education programme(s) did he chose) together with assessment document done by multidisciplinary team. Based on the data committee step by step makes plan of future professional testing process for particular applicant in order to give him possibility to try out practically the activities of chosen educational programme.

Meeting: On the first meeting vocational teacher (subject teacher) greets the applicant and makes first contact with him in order get to know each other and melt the tension which is at the beginning. Later teacher leads student to meet other members of the committee who will attend professional testing process.

Introduction: Specialist of Inclusive Education leads the introduction stage where she introduces the goal, length and outcome of the particular meeting and figures outs the applicant's expectations about professional testing process.

Orientation: teacher helps applicant get to know the physical environment where professional testing process will be. Shows the tools and materials that will be used during testing process. Teacher demonstrates to the applicant final product (as a model) that is expected from the applicant to do during professional testing process.

Try out practical activity: At the beginning of professional testing teacher demonstrates and verbally explains the activity that applicant should make - how it should be done, what tools should be used and what is the final result of the activity. Finishing demonstration teacher suggests to the student a reiteration; choosing convenient tools for implementing given activity applicant stats to implement the task. During implementation process committee members are observing applicant and filling provided assessment forms. Each member of the committee assesses applicant from their perspective: specialist of inclusive education observes what kind of physical or verbal assistance, adaptation or other assistive devices the student might needs during education process. Teacher from his perspective assesses how well applicant handle with given tasks, what challenges he might meet during study process and what are students' strengths. As soon as applicant finishes given task together with the teacher they start to make a reflection of the process.

Reflection: Teacher asks questions to the applicant about the process, gained experiences, and how he liked to work with particular material or tools. Applicant discusses his/her opinion about the process and later together with official representative makes a decision to continue try out next profession (the rest education programme that he named during registration process) or not. In case applicant decides to try out other education programme stages 2 - 6 are repeated on same or next day.

Analysing the results: At this point, when all educational programmes were tested, each member of committee individually sum up the observation results and prepares the documentation for the last consultation meeting.

Last meeting for consultation: On this meeting committee and applicant with the official representative gather together. Each member of the committee presents the observation results done during professional testing process. Teacher sums up to the applicants' the pros and cons of each education programmes. All interested questions were answered while discussion about educational programmes and assessment results. Finally applicant or representative (in case if it is needed) makes final decision about future education programme. Later everyone sign special meeting form.

Feedback: everyone presented on professional testing process fills and signs professional testing feedback form.

Step 4: Acceptance to the Vocational College.

On this level student with special educational needs does not participate. On this step student is officially registered into the particular vocational college. Going through all the professional testing steps mentioned above and fulfilling required documentations vocational college's administration sends all required documents to MoES. Those documents are reviewed by MoES and gives an order about applicants' official registration into the appropriate educational programme. As a result vocational colleges provides contract to the student in order to sign and register in an educational database.

How enrolment process is implemented in reality is not known. Unfortunately none of the reforms done by MoES touch this topic. In annual reports it is just mentioned about establishment of new enrolment system and statistical data of the students with special needs. How many students entered, graduated or dropped out from vocational colleges within the

period of implementation of this project. However how this enrolment process is held and if there is some issues is not explored. That is why it became our field of interests and main topic of this study.

2.6 Final Comments

In the rapport done by European Agency about transition process of students with special educational needs (2012) we can see many positive steps as well as challenges toward inclusion process in VET system. In general in Europe the percentage of successful cases of transition process increased. The reason for this as it was discussed above is stipulated by different factors. Those factors are: a) students with special educational needs become more self-aware and self-educated through vocational exploration. B) Active collaboration between student, family members and team working on individual transition plan is implemented in different countries. C) There is more available adapted and open environment (social and physical) for students with different special needs.

Similar picture was outlined in Georgia as well. Changes and reforms done in education system in Georgia connected to inclusive education showed positive outcomes. However there still exist several challenges on which MoES is working on. Moreover Inclusive education in VET system and so transition process from school to vocational education is making it first steps. That is why exploring practice in Europe and making researches in this direction in Georgia is very important. Based on this data an effective transition process will be developed in Georgia in future.

Exploring those theories also helped to predefine some key themes of the study. Theories connected to challenges and success that exists in Europe in the direction of transition process from school to working life gives us support to analyse and later discuss gathered data as well.

3 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter refers the methods that were used for this research in order to select sampling, prepare interview, collect data, analyse and interpret findings. There will be discussed why qualitative approach was preferred among other approaches in order to understand the phenomena of the study. Following methodological aspects such as ethical issues, validity and reliability of the study are also discussed within this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

It is known that qualitative approach emphasis more on words rather than numbers and includes a set of activities done by the researcher in a natural settings in order to understand the phenomena from the participants' perspective (Maxwell, 2005; Bryman, 2004; Denzil and Lyncoln 2007). Usually qualitative approach has different kind of goals, such as: understand the meaning of the participants about the event, experiences or the situation; to understand the context within which the participants act and the process by which events and actions take place; to develop casual explanation and generate the results and theories (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22). A phenomenological study describes individuals meaning about their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Selvy, 2008). In this case phenomenological approach was chosen as the goal of this research was to explore and describe the core of experiences of the students with special educational needs about the enrolment processes to vocational colleges.

There are two phenomenological approaches such as: hermeneutic (interpretative) and descriptive (transcendental or psychological) one (Creswell, 2007; Finlay, 2011, Moustakas, 1994; Bluff, 2012). Finlay (2011) discusses that those two approaches *"[…] might be best seen as a continuum with different researchers valuing more highly one or other side of the spectrum." (p. 110)* on the other hand beside the similar philosophical assumptions there still exist different views between those approaches. Descriptive phenomenology is oriented to gather and describe the information from the participants without interpretation and phenomena should be seen without any interpretation from the researcher's perspective. "Mouskatas focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, *epoche* (or bracketing), in which

investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2007, p. 59).

However describe and discuss other person's experiences without any interpretation is difficult to implement because investigator plays a mediator role in the research and has experiences, feelings which are strongly connected to the environment where he lives (Bluff et al, 2012; Finlay, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). That is why Hermeneutic approach is the combination of description and interpretation (as necessary part) processes because sometimes phenomenology contains the meanings which itself is strongly connected to the participants, researcher and generally research's context as well (Finlay, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

Though Hermeneutic phenomenology has no *actual method or rules about* how to do the research, yet there are traditions, insights and history that establish the source and methodology of this approach. (Van Manen, 1990). That is why it should be highlighted that this study does not represent pure hermeneutic approach though it shares main principle that *"[…] aims to elucidate lived meanings" (Van Manen, 1990).* This study tries to investigate and get main ideas of lived experiences of students with special educational needs; describe the findings of lived experiences from the participant's perspective and elucidate those experiences. The difference between the phenomenological approach and this study is that from the beginning this research had predetermined set of themes and techniques that were used in the process of data gathering and analysing, which according to Van Manen (1990) contradicts with the methods of phenomenological approach. But it is crucial to mention that this study determines the main principles of hermeneutic approach as the whole study is concentrated on the meaning of experiences of students with special educational needs and *"attempts to describe and interpret these meaning to a certain degree and richness" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 11).*

As it is discussed by the different authors, phenomenological approach has four main stages: preparation, collecting data, organizing data, and analysing data (Moustakas, 1994; Finlay, 2011; Creswell, 2007). Van Manen (1990) states six methodological themes (practical approaches) that can be dynamically interplay in hermeneutic phenomenological research (p. 30). Those themes: are discussed in this research under the different chapters: 1) Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world – in our case it is presented as an Introduction (Chapter 1); 2) investigating experience as we live it rather that

as we conceptualize it – Literature Review (in chapter 2); 3) Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon – Data Collection (Chapter 3); 4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting- Findings (Chapter 4); 5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon - data analyses – Discussion (Chapter5); 6) balancing the research context by considering part and whole – Conclusion (Chapter 5).

3.2   Data Collection

Data collection was performed by using qualitative interview method. This method typically is used in the phenomenological research in order to explore and gather experiential narrative material and develop conversational relation about the meaning of experience between participant and investigator (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Asking different kind of questions to one or more participants and record their answers for further analyses is *"[...] very convenient way of overcoming distances both in space and time; past events or faraway experiences" (Denzil & Lincoln, 2011, p. 529)*

3.2.1 Qualitative interview

Between unstructured, semi-structured or structured interviews that are used in qualitative research it was decided to use semi-structured interview. Bryman (2008) states that semi-structured interview gives an opportunity to be flexible while using prepared questions, helps researcher to keep right direction of interesting topic and at the same time gives space to participants to add more information and themes from their perspective. (p. 438) Based on personal experience and other researchers such as Xie and Bradshaw (2008) this kind of interview is more effective with persons who sometimes need prompts and probes in order to collaborate and discussion on suggested topic. *"Prompts enable the interviewer to clarify topics or questions, while probes enable the interviewer to ask respondents to extend, elaborate, add to, provide detail for, [….] depth of response, comprehensiveness and honesty that are some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing"(Cohen, 2007, p. 361).* This kind of interview will give investigator possibility and flexibility to explore topic deeper; switch the questions based on dialog progression and use additional questions in case new interesting topic emerges. Additionally semi-structured interview is less time consuming and subjective

as unstructured interview and gives possibility to gather relevant in depth data that cannot be gained from a structured interview (Gall, Gall, Borg, 2007).

3.2.2 Interview Guide

Interview guide was designed to identify students with special needs practical experiences connected to the enrolment process into vocational colleges. The interview guide includes the structured list of questions in order to cover all topics that are interested by the investigator and at the same time gives flexibility in conducting the interview (Cohen, 2007; Gall, 2007).

Different preparatory steps were done while developing interview guide: first of all were gathered and studied the laws, guidebooks and documents connected to this topic in order to get full picture how this process is held officially; figured out how the term "experience" is described in order to identify the types and directions of questions and Oxford's dictionary explanation, which says that experience is: "the thing that have happened to you that influence the way you think and behave"(Oxford, 2006, p.534) was chosen for that purpose; later meeting was carried out with the person developing this enrolment process and discussed what the goal and outcome this new enrolment process has and figure out on which countries' practices and experiences this processes were based on; several questions were developed and sub-questions which were modified and then verified with the supervisor. Out of nine different types of questions that Kvale (1996) suggested to use in interview guide (as cited in Bryman, 2006), there were mainly used three of them. Introducing questions was used to begin the interview and open the topics to discuss; follow-up questions to clarify and elaborate the answers and structuring questions in order to move on other topic. In some cases there were used probing questions in order to elicit more information. Other questions were not sufficient in this case. Because some of them would be difficult for participants to follow or lead to particular answers (e.g. direct or indirect questions).

After the interview guide was developed pilot study was implemented in order to check the appropriateness of the questions. Within piloting interview some questions were modified, simplified or probes were added. Those simplified questions and probes were added in interview guide. Here are some examples of the questions that where changed after pilot study.

Before – how do you assess the time provided during registration process?

After - How did you judge the time given to make a decision on which programme you would like to learn?

Before - How did this testing process give you an idea about this programme?

After - How did the testing help you to understand what this programme is all about?

Sub-question - In your opinion what where the factor/s, that influenced your programme choice?

Interview guide ended up with thirty questions (see also appendix N3). It was divided into three main parts. First part of interview guide includes questions connected to participant's decisions and reasons to enter vocational college; about the education programme that they studied or were still studying. In second part questions are connected to the registration process in vocational college and last part includes the questions in order to collect information about professional testing process and recommendations to future students, teachers and other specialists connected to this enrolment process.

3.3   Sampling Procedure

In order to gather sample for this research, purposeful sampling, which itself includes criterion sampling procedure was used (Gall, 2007). This type of selection helps researcher to choose appropriate settings, participants or events in a strategic way, which will play an important role to understand social phenomenon (Maxwell, 1996; Bryman, 2008). The target in this case were the students with different special needs having different background of education and professional orientation. Creswell (2007) emphasizes to choose right criteria's: *"the participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding" (p. 62).* From this perspective the criterions for sampling were: 1) students with different kind of special needs who were accepted at vocational colleges in 2013-2014 academic years. This means that those students had experience in registration process to the college and new form of professional testing (developed by the MoES), that supposed to give possibility to try out and help to choose study programme. 2) They graduated or are on the last semester of their learning programme - this means that they had enough time to get to know the profession that they have chosen; understand if they had chosen the right profession and analysed what role did registration and professional testing

have in it. In case it appeared that selected student has difficulty to follow the conversation: understand the questions and answer them it was the criterion to discard him from the sample after the interview.

Total number of the population were 51 students with different special educational needs who applied and entered 6 different pilot Vocational Colleges in 2013-2014 academic year. Two of those colleges are in a capital city and four in regions. 29 students from total population were with intellectual disability, 12 with hearing impairment, 6 with physical disability, 2 with visual impairments, and 1 with language and communication difficulties. Based on my criterion ten out of fifty students with special educational needs were chosen. From this ten only six participants were left at the end. One participant dropped out because of some health problems. Another participant has changed contact number and there was no additional contact information in database. Third Participant just refused to participate in the research without naming a reason. Fourth one did not reply on my messages, calls and mails.

3.3.1 Introduction of the Participants

Those six students were studying in three different vocational colleges in Georgia. Two of the participants were females and four males. Average age was twenty-three. The names, ages of the participants are changed and chosen professions are not named in order to keep their anonymity.

The interview data was collected from six students with different special educational needs: Those six students were studying in three different vocational colleges in Georgia.

Some short information about the participants:

The sample included: two females and four males. Average age was twenty-three. The six students were pioneers who first tried out this new enrolment process. Five out of six participants had graduated the vocational educational programmes and got certified; in the period when the interview were performed one participant was still studying; none of them were employed. Two out of six students with special educational needs decided to continue study: one applied on same educational programme on higher level, another applied on different educational programme. Other three participants had wish to enter vocational college and gain other profession or continue on same programme, but due to economical conditions this request was impossible to meet.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

First contact with the participants was implemented through phone call where investigator introduced herself and set meeting for further explanation about the research and to figure out their willingness to participate. The meeting was held in participant's houses. Only with one participant meeting was in the college (according to his wish). The meetings were proceed with participants and in some cases with their caregivers as well. The goal of the research, the process and researcher's and participant's role in this study was explained in details during the meeting. In case participant agreed to participate in the research the information letter was introduced (see also appendix N4) and was asked to sign it. If participant did not have reading skills, before signing the paper the content was explained verbally.

Next step was to find out quiet and empty place and conduct an interview. When participant did not have time to be interviewed on first meeting, another date and time for future interview was set.

3.4.1 Pilot Study

It is recommended that investigator makes a pilot test in order to figure out how the questions work and what changes should be done in interview guide (Yin, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; Creswell, 2007). Pilot interview was done in order to check the appropriateness, effectiveness of the questions; to get feedback about necessity to add, modify or take out some questions and check how gathered information responded to research question.

After pilot interview there was discussion with the interviewee in order to figure out how clear the questions and terms were and if they are needed to be simplified or changed in a particular way (changes in questions is mentioned in page 5). The reason why terms were clarified is to have a possibility increase feeling of comfort in participants, through making the language between investigator and them more understandable during interview time. (Cohen, 2007) Later the data was immediately transcribed and analysed in order to check how gathered information refers to research question and how effective this interview guide was.

Maxwell (2005) also recommends to do pilot test with people similar to those who will be involved in the research process in the future. That is why the participant for the pilot study was chosen from the sample (one of the student out of six was the participant of the piloting)

and as there were slight changes done (some questions were simplified or specified and were used during pilot study) in the interview guide, the data was also used to analyse.

3.4.2 Main Study

First goal was to find out the room that was comfortable for both to the participant and investigator. In most cases the rooms were quiet and private. Before the interview started some time was spent for preparation and check of all needed materials and equipment, such as notebook, voice recorder; in some cases there were needed some space arrangement (place the table and chairs in a way) to provide good eye contact between interviewer and interviewee.

Audio recorder was used in order to record interview process. The reason why it was chosen was: audio record provides full verbal record, rather than note taking; it speeds up the interview process; audio data can be studied more precisely; it avoids to lose some meaningful phases as it might happened during note taking (Bryman, 2004; Gall, Gall, Borg, 2007).

Additionally notebook was used during and right after the interview for making notes about interviewer (how it went, personal (researchers) feelings) and interview process itself (description of the environment where the interview was held); to write down the information that audio recorder cannot record, like: personal observation on the interviewee - facial expression, mimics or reactions to the question, their movements and etc. (Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2008; Ismail, & Koay, 2014).

Interview generally lasted from 45 minutes to one hour. In order to melt the ice at the beginning there was a discussion about some general topics, such as weather, interests and hobbies, or participants' nowadays occupations. In most cases interview proceeded without stress and confusions. There were cases where it seemed that at the beginning participants were tensed and closed a bit, but after discussing again about the confidentiality and few minutes later after starting an interview usually they were more open and relaxed. When participant was a bit tensed at the beginning of interview questions (connected to the research) asked at the beginning were rechecked again at the end of interview process in order to get additional and more detailed information. All participants gave permission to contact them if I would like to have an additional information in future or wanted to clarify or recheck the answers. At the end of meeting it was explained again to the participants that in content form

they were provided with my personal phone number and mail; that they could contact me if other questions, issues occur or if they decide to withdrawal from the research.

3.5   Analysis of the Data

Maxwell (2013) states that there is no "cookbook" or single correct way of doing qualitative data analyses. (p. 105) Hermeneutic approach does not have an analytic requirements or step by step method to do a data analyses, but has a goal to achieve a sense of understanding the meaning of a phenomenon. (Van Manen, 1990) According to the Creswell (2014) qualitative inquirers despite the analytic differences that is used within different strategies, often use a general procedures and steps in data analysis. Starting from transcribing and organizing the interview and finishing with developing themes.

Transcription process started as soon as first interview was taken. During transcription process several notes (the ideas, thoughts and feelings that came during this process) were made that helped me later to come up with some themes which were used in the data categorize process (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). All transcribed data were re-checked in order to be sure that there were no mistakes done during transcription process.

As I know *"The main categorizing strategy in qualitative data is coding" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 107).* But before braking collected data into a parts all transcribed data was printed and red in order to get a general sense of it (Agar, 1980 as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 150). Almost all qualitative researches involve some kind of coding process, though the method might be different in different approaches (Richards, 2015, p. 103). Generally, coding process is divided in three main categories, such as organizational/descriptive, substantive/topic and theoretical/analytical coding. Sometimes not all coding categories are used by investigators while analysing the data (Maxwell, 2013; Richards, 2015), additional to this investigator should decide *"whether the researcher should develop codes only on the basis of the emerging information collected from participants, use predetermined codes and then fit the data to them, or use some combination of emerging and predetermined codes" (Creswell (2014p. 198).* Predetermined codes according to Richards (2015) usually involves little interpretation and gave an opportunity to summarize data into the organized categories/topics (p. 110). Braun, and Clarke (2006) state that using a predetermined themes are a useful method when you are investigating the participant's views on the topic that are not known (p.

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11) as it was in this research case. Open coding on the other hand is important to capture ideas (including participant's ideas) that do not fit into organizational categories and can develop a more general theory of the phenomenon. (Maxwell, 2013, p. 108) According to Robson (2011) *"Open coding is essentially interpreting rather than summarizing. It is about teasing out the theoretical possibilities in the data" (p. 490).*

That is why to gain new view, get deeper understanding of the data and combine materials into the themes there were used combination of predetermined and emerged codes during analysing process. On the first stage after getting general impression about the interviews I started to develop the topics in order to sort the data under the headings of those topics. Based on the interview guides and notes done during transcription and reading process several topics were developed. For example: Applying to college, exam as; Recommendations for student and so forth. Additional codes and topics emerged while using an open coding. Here are some of them: integration and participation into society; the role of relatives; and so on. As a final result after combining the themes, four main themes were developed. Those themes are later represented in findings and discussion.

When the final result was achieved (and the themes were saturated during coding processes) and final themes were mature second investigator was asked to check the transcribed material in order to ensure that the coding process was finished and that other important themes did not derive from it.

Analyse of the notes (that were done during and after the interview process) was not performed in depth, this data was used mainly to recall the interview process, personal thoughts and feelings; to grasp the meanings of some sentences as well. *"[…] memos can perform other functions not related to data analysis, such as reflection on your goals, methods, theory, or your prior experiences and your relationships with participants" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105).*

3.6 Challenges

One of the challenge was to get trust of the participants because the word "interview" is mostly associated to the media and investigator was associated as a representative of some television channel or some newsletter. That is why the first ideas/feelings to participate into the research was unsecure, doubtful or in some case negative as well (mostly from the

caregiver's perspective). It took few hours and sometimes additional meeting with some participants in order to explain what the research means and how the data will be treated. As soon as the ice was broken between the researcher and the participants the interview proceeded smoothly and participants were relaxed, open and gave full and rich data about the topic.

Sometimes it was difficult to find a private quiet room for taking an interview due to several reasons: small place - the house had max two rooms and it was difficult to arrange to be left alone for a while.

There was a case when participant asked to make an interview in the vocational college where he was studying. The reason why he refused to take an interview at home was unknown. The room for the interview in the college was quiet and isolated.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity according to Creswell (2014) helps the researcher to check for the accuracy of the findings by using certain procedures and validity in qualitative research does not carry the same connotation as in quantitative one. (p. 201). Authors such as Lincoln, Guba and Denzil suggested to use trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility concept instead of validity and reliability (Maxwell, 2013, Bryman, 2004). Reliability as a necessary precondition of validity is assumed as a possibility of replication of a study and includes components such as: authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents (Cohen, 2007, p. 149). However reliability and validity issue in this study is discussed following Maxwell's concept descriptions (1993).

One of the broad type of treats to the validity which is often raised in qualitative study is researcher bias (Maxwell, 2013). It is obvious that researchers background, believes and values shapes the interpretations of the findings. For that it is recommended to use following validity strategies: reactivity, intensive involvement into the field; rich data; discrepant case, in order to increase the researcher's ability to conduct and translate the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013)

Another treat of qualitative research is how precisely were seen, heard and later described the facts that were observed or listened during study process (descriptive validity); that the information was not distorted or selected and based on researcher's ability how was the

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meaning of those facts caught or interpreted and seen from the participant's perspective (Interpretive validity) (Maxwell, 1992; Cohen, 2007).

When new students with special needs were entering vocational colleges in 2015 academic year I had a possibility to participate in the professional testing planning and implementation process. *"Becker and Geer (1957) claimed that long-term participant observation provides more complete data about specific situations and events than any other methods" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126).* This experience gave me possibility to observe full enrolment process and how it is held in practice. Intensive involvement into the process helped me later to develop interview guide. During conducting interview with participants (students who entered vocational colleges in 2013-2014 academic year) this experience helped me to recall the picture of the enrolment process of participants and better understand their experiences.

Rich description that represents the meanings and perspectives of the participants and gives full picture of the situation together with direct quotes of participants (Maxwell, 2013, p. 138) were also given during the data presentation and analysis in order to eliminate the biases.

Another important threat that is often raised in qualitative studies according to Maxwell (2013) is reactivity. It means that what the informant says is dependent on the interview situation and the influence of the researcher as well (p.124). That is why while conducting interview it was decided: to make a good rapport with the interviewee; to make sure that the environment for the participant is comfortable and they are relaxed. during interview process I was careful to avoid leading and close questions; though it was difficult because it was not easy for students with special needs to answer open questions; I used many probing questions with them; in some cases I asked same questions twice with other questions in between, that gave me possibility to understand if they understand the question in a proper way; the questions were also clarified in case the informant seemed not to understand it. In order not to misinterpret the participants' answers I was paraphrasing their answers as well.

In order to analyse and discuss the studied phenomena different papers were used as a theoretical framework in the area of vocational education and transition process from school to vocational education system (theoretical validity).

Though generalization refers to extend the findings that were based on a study of a persons, settings or institutions to others than those was studied, in qualitative research it is somehow used in a limited way and plays a different role (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell 1992).

Generalizability in qualitative study according to Maxwell (2013) is based on the development on the theory of the processes operating in the study that can be well operated in other studies as well (p. 138). Within this study the aim was not to develop a theory but to show an interesting cases and links that would be good to be considered in further studies on similar topics and to develop recommendations that might be helpful for further enrolment process of students with special needs into vocational colleges in Georgia.

Descriptive validity is one of the major and crucial parts in this study as is based on participant's experiences and analyses of the situation from their perspective. Maxwell states (1992) that descriptive validity depends on the report that the researcher makes based on the information what he saw or heard. That is why all interviews were recorded on voice recorder during interview process in order to gather all information from the interview process and not to miss any sentence. All recorded data and notes were transcribed and nothing was removed, distorted or selected from the interview process. In the Chapter 4 data is presented in quotes, which according to Maxwell (1980) refer mainly to primary descriptive validity.

"Interpretive validity is inherently a matter of inference from the word and actions of participants in the situations studied" (Maxwell, 1992, p. 290). Voice recorded gives possibility to hear how the voice of the participant is changing according to questions and their answers. Voice changes were mentioned during transcription process in order to imprint personal meaning and emotions to the words and sentences that they said. Additionally taking notes during and after interview process gave possibility to recall the situation, gestures and mimics of the interviewee.

In chapter four, where there are data presented, discussion part is segregated from the findings one. This kind of separation gives possibility to see what was said by the participants and at the same time observe how researcher saw the facts and caught the meaning of the words said by participants.

Reliability generally means that if other researchers will carry out the same study by following the same procedures, he or she will achieve similar results. However in qualitative study reliability can be viewed as a fit between the data (that was recorded by the investigator) and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched (Cohen, 2007, p.149). In the methodology chapter there is a full explanation about the process of this particular research – how it was planned and implemented; how the sample was selected and

how were data collected; how the data were analysed and etc. This detail description will give possibility to follow the procedure of the study and reconstruct it as much as possible. Additional to this several reliability procedures, such as transcript check and cross-check that Gibbs (2007 as cited in Creswell) recommended were done in order to make this approach more reliable: all audio records and notes were transcribed and later rechecked in order to be sure that there were no mistakes done in it; Plus was done cross-check of codes: one person was asked to make a coding process separately. Later the codes done by the researcher were compared to codes done by additional person and checked if same or similar codes were developed.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Creswell (2012) discusses that some ethical issues should be estimated while conducting qualitative research as investigator seeks in-depth information of a phenomenon and participant might share private details of their life experiences. (p.230)Several issues such as: informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and harmfulness are outlined as more significant ones in some guidelines for ethical practices (Creswell, 2012; Bryman, 2006; Orb, Eisenhauer, Wynaden, 2001).

3.8.1 Permission From NSD and Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

The research proposal was designed and sent to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) in order to get approval and so the permission to implement the research. As soon as the permission from the NSD and confirmation letter from the University of Oslo was received (see also appendixes N6 and N7), I had an appointment with the coordinator of the Project "Introduction of Inclusive Education in Vocational Education and Training (VET) System in Georgia". After explaining the goal and process of the research and providing information letter for MoES (see appendix N8) I got a permission to access to the database of the students with special needs' who entered the vocational colleges within the period of the project implementation. They select the students following introduced sampling criteria and created the list of students with the contact information. That gave me possibility to contact them, introduce myself and the research and ask for future collaboration.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

Before involving participants into the research students with special needs and caregivers were provided with the information about the investigator and their role in this study; the purpose of the study was explained (Creswell, 2007, p. 142) Later in a verbal and written form participants were informed about the research itself and the purpose of the study; that the participation is voluntary from their side and that the participant can withdrawal from the research any time they want without any explanation; how long the interviewing process will last; that the audio recorder and notebook will be used during the interview.

After answering questions and getting verbal agreement on the participation in the study the information letter was signed by the participant and the researcher as well. In case participant refused to participate in the research investigator respected their decision and did not ask the reason of the refuse.

3.8.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

According to Creswell (2014) *"In qualitative research, inquirers use aliases or pseudonyms for individuals and places, to protect the identities or participants" (p. 99).* With this purpose the participant's anonymity was ensured by changing their names and ages, removing the educational programmes that they have learned and names of the places where those participants studied.

All data (audio records, transcripts, and notes done during interview) were kept in personal computer that has code to enter and after conducting the research all data will be deleted from the computer and all paper versions were annihilated as well.

3.8.4 Harmfulness

In order to get rid of stress and psychological harm of the participants several steps were performed: the participants were informed and should agree that some part of data will be seen by the supervisor. All private information mentioned during interview process would not be shown in the findings. They were explained that the participation in this research was voluntary and any their decision was accepted.

4   Findings

Introduction

In this chapter the findings gotten from the interviews will be presented and discussed. The goal is to figure out how students with special educational needs perceive new enrolment processes to the vocational colleges that was newly developed. The data is presented in four main topics, with its sub-themes. The particular themes are: applying to college (4.2), professional testing (4.3), adapted environment (4.4), nowadays Occupation (4.5).

First theme discusses students' decision to continue study in Vocational College; what their motives were. Second theme deals with students' practice in professional testing process. Sub-chapters of this part imply experiences connected to the professional testing process and recommendations that they gave to specialists and future student. Fourth theme demonstrated expressions about the social and physical environment while experiencing registration and transition process into the college. The last theme illustrates their nowadays occupation and a bit what their future plans are. This chapter is finished with the summary of the findings.

Data is presented in two ways. There are a quotations of the participants and rephrased sentences as well. Each line of quotation is marked with number and first letter of the respondent. This kind of data presentation gives reader the possibility to follow conversation more easily.

Brief information about research participants

Kate – finished secondary education five years ago, lives with brother, nieces and father. She has neurological disease. Functionally it causes difficulties to walk and needs other person's assistance. She implements the tasks that needs fine motor movement in a slow motion.

Tom – has finished compulsory education six years ago, lives with parents and brother. He has mild intellectual disability and hearing impairment; Uses hearing aid and with the help of it can understand direct and slow speech.

Ann – finished secondary education nine years ago, lives with parents. She has spinal cord injury and uses wheelchair. Has difficulty to manipulate with the objects, lift heavy things; in activities of daily living she needs assistance.

John - has finished compulsory education, lives with sister, aunt and cousins. Has a slight visual problem.

Sam – finished secondary education three years ago, lives with mother and sister; has epilepsy (which is regulated by medication treatment for now) and blood vessels insufficiency.

Mark – finished compulsory education two years ago, lives with parents, grandmother and two siblings; He has neurological disease, visual impairment and moderate intellectual disability, has difficulty to hold and manipulate heavy objects and deal with heavy tasks.

4.1 Applying to college

Participants showed interest and wish to apply to vocational college or gain some professional competences. Some of them during interview process mentioned that they had wish to apply to college for a long period of time, but could not afford it due to different reasons. The motives to apply were different for each participant as well.

4.1.1 Appeared Possibility to Apply to Vocational College

Willingness to do age appropriate occupation such as gain some profession or work was seen in all participants. But access to the vocational college for them was equal to a surreal world. It appeared during interview process that half of the participants had no information that there was possibility and resources to study in vocational colleges. Ann mentioned that she had no information. That is why study in vocational college seemed to be for her unreal because of no possibilities (1.A). Her thoughts were based on her physical condition and under the possibilities she meant adapted environment. That is why she assumed that in vocational colleges access for wheelchair users was restricted.

0.A.   *"At the beginning I did not know that there was a possibility to apply to college. Of*
1.A.   *course I wanted to study, but it was impossible from my point of view and there were*
2.A.   *no such possibilities earlier.*

Similar picture was outlined in Kate's case. She mentioned that she had wish to apply to college earlier. (3.K.) But due to functional mobility and transportation issues could not afford it (3.K.-4.K.). Again we see absence of information about availability of the resources (transportation).

3.K.   "I had wish to apply to college earlier but as I had no car. As you see; there is no
4.K.   need to explain; it is clear my physical condition and situation connected to my
5.K   mobility."

Based on participant's data average time between finishing compulsory education and applying to vocational college for participants was four years. It is quite long period. However four out of six participants did not even mention their trials to apply to college themselves. In Sam's case he went to college to register himself. But did not know about professional testing for students with special needs (6.S). Again it is seen that information connected to the enrolment process is missing. He planned to apply to college anyway, but just in case he asked if there are some advantages for disabled people (7.S) and the answer was yes. Only with the help of Sam's activity and curiosity became possible for him to gain information and be involved in professional testing process.

6.S.   "When I came I did not know that there existed such testing process. I figure it out
7.S.   when I asked if there are some advantages for "invalid" people. They explained me
8.S.   while registering that there is a different kind of testing process, I did not know this
9.S.   and then they called me and told me that I will have this alternative testing separately
10.S.   and together with some other students I went there one by one."

John also applied to college himself. He could not manage to enter college earlier because of missing school graduation certificate. It took time for John to finish school externally and then apply to college.

Four participants were involved into vocational college with the initiation of staff members from vocational colleges. In Kate's case it was one woman who came to her house and bring a leaflet about the college. Later this lady informed Kate that she will manage transportation issues and the only thing that Kate should do is to gather all required documentations. Ann got this information from the head of vocational college (11.A.-12.A.). Getting additional information that the physical environment in VET is adapted made her also very happy (14.A.)

11.A.   "Once the head of college got in touch with me through social network and I looked
12.A.   through the site of the college, just to look in it. [...} Later he again get in touch with
13.A.   me and explained about the project and promised to help and that the environment
14.A.   will be adapted. I became so happy, so, so happy, and I got the hope, and then he told
15.A.   me to apply to the college and of course I agreed, it was unbelievable and huge
16.A.   happiness."

Mark mentioned that after finishing school his mother found out information about possibilities to continue education in colleges (17.M.).

17.M.   "My mom went there and she figured it out, from where she figured it out I do not
17.M.   remember."

Initiation and activity to apply to college and continue study in this case from my perspective is more from mother side than from Mark's side.

Comments: Information vacuum seemed too existed in the process of transition. Students highlighted several times that they had no information about existed alternative enrolment process for student with special educational needs. As it was the first starting point of the project it seemed obvious that generally the information about new enrolment process into vocational colleges was not spread properly in that period of time. That is why people involved in this process were actively seeking future students and promoting this projects with its new possibilities. However to gain additional and detailed information about student's rights and possibilities during and before study process should be part of registration as well as project introduction process. There were cases where student's role in exploring possibility to continue study seemed quite passive. But it appeared that as soon as they got the information that there is a possibility and resources to apply college, they become very happy and agreed to be involved in study process eagerly.

4.1.2 The Motives During Choosing Profession

The motives of the participants to prolong education in vocational colleges and reasons why they have chosen this or that profession differs. Kate mentioned that one day she might be left alone (1.K.) Gaining skills to make food for herself (1.K.) is a way to become more independent. At the beginning she was thinking to learn a computer but then she realized that she could learn it outside the college.

0.K   "I graduated art, but just in case who knows what life will bring, it might happen that
1.K.   I will stay alone in my life and should not I manage to make one plate of dish for
2.K.   myself? That is why I decided."

Later she mentioned that she had her own flat. She thought that she will move there and live alone when, she will learn to prepare food. As for John it was the way to do the preferable

occupation in a more professional way. John mentioned that he always liked to do this thing and considering his friends advice he entered vocational college.

3.J.   "I did not think to apply for another profession. May be it would be more practical for
4.J.   me but I have chosen to become a XXX."

Ann mentioned that she was aware about possible education programmes from vocational college's website. At the beginning she had chosen two programmes for professional testing. The final decision toward chosen programme was based on her interests (7.A.). She also was interested with the subjects that she would had to learn within this educational programme.

5.A.   "I somehow inwardly wanted to learn the XXX profession, as I thought that I will
6.A.   learn YYY profession the future as well. I thought that I do not need eight months
7.A.   to learn YYY and preferred the XXX profession; somehow I liked it more."

Here we can see that beside interests and inner drive to learn chosen profession Ann analyses situation in a practical way. She realized that profession that she declined could be learned outside of the college and in a shorter period of time. Sam's motive to choose this particular profession was based on a practical considerations (8.S.). He wanted such a profession that will give possibility to find job easily. Because he mentioned that he will use this profession in future (8.S.) Second motive was to become a professional in that field (9.S.).

8.S.   "Yes I had a feeling that I will use the profession in future and will learn it and it
9.S.   would be my profession. I had that feeling and wanted to learn in such way that I
10.S.   would become a professional."

Mark had chosen three professions at the beginning. All of them were based on his interests (12.M.). All three chosen professions were connected to the male gender. As he mentioned that he chose profession from boy's perspective (11.M.).

11.M.   "Well, from the boy's perspective I thought that XXX is more appropriate… do not
12.M   know, I love cars and such things very much and I decided to learn on XXX
programme."

It appeared that one of the motives named to apply college was social inclusion as well. It was mentioned that applying to the vocational college helps them to get out from the house, where they are locked most of the time; it supports their social integration. For Ann it was the way that gave her possibility to communicate with other people (14.A.). Integration into the society for Ann started as soon as she left home and entered the college.

13.A. "I am satisfied with the testing, learning process which gave me a possibility
14.A. communicate with society. This process helped me a lot to integrate into society,
15.A. to get rid of being locked at home."

Sitting at home as a form of isolation was mentioned in John's and Kate's words as well. Solution of the integration suggested by them was applying to college. For Kate through entering college she will change social environment and gain new friends (16.K). Kate also mentioned that going to college gives students opportunity to come out from their house (19.K.).

16.K. "This gave me possibility to change social environment…. I did it mostly for me;
17.K. because of new environment I did not limit myself and did not refuse to enter college.
18.K. If you are not entering the environment, nobody will come to yours, that is why you
19.K. should give other people possibility to come to college or they will be locked most of
20.K. the time…."

Comments: Within this study the determinant drive for students to choose educational programme was their field of interests. It was combined with other factors as well. Those factors were: *Independence* - motive to become independent or be independent during learning process; *hope* - to be employed in future, *passion*- to become a professional and *social inclusion*- for some students it was the chance to be part of particular community.

4.1.3 Wishes Considered in The Prism of Own Abilities

Interviewee also highlighted that while choosing profession you should analyse all pros and cons of the situation. Kate mentioned that person should first look at own disabilities and then fit to the profession that one wants or needs. She highlighted that by choosing other profession she should need assistance (father) during mobility (1.K.). As I understood she did not want to choose profession where she should be dependent on others. That is why she made concessions. And decision she made congruence with her condition (difficulties of walking) (3.K.).

0.K. "In other cases if I would register on other profession, because of my difficulties to
1.K. walk, I would need some assistance from home. To ask my father to take me there or
2.K. here, means that I should disturb him, that is why I adjusted to this profession that I
3.K. wanted to make; it is acceptable for me."

Sam also concluded that as during testing process he did not require any assistance, it made him think that he will manage to learn this profession. Tom mentioned that he had chosen this

profession as it was easy for him to handle it. He also thought that this profession might have some benefits. Ann mentioned that she considered her physical abilities while choosing her profession (4.A.). Though there were some difficult parts in education process but still it is an educational programme where her knowledge would not be confined only with theory.

4.A. *"I decided to choose that profession because I considered based on my abilities how I*
5.A. *will handle it. I did not want to choose a profession in which I could be able to acquire*
6.A. *only theory part. There still are some activities that are difficult for me, but I am*
7.A. *content with this."*

Sam mentioned that he was sure from the beginning that he will handle chosen profession. (8.S.) As I understood under the sentence "at last I did not retreat" (9.S) is that though he was sure that he will handle chosen educational programme, still there were some difficulties, but he did not give up and complete study process. He also mentioned that he did not apply on profession that he wanted due to his condition. But what he mentioned under condition is not known

8.S. *"I admitted from the beginning that I could do it and make it, I came here with this*
9.S. *goal. At least I did not retreat."*

Mark had chosen educational programmes at the beginning based on his interests (10.M). It appeared later that people in the college advised him to choose absolutely different programme as it would be easier for him. I think this advice was based only on his physical condition. They did not consider his interests at all.

10.M. *I wanted OO profession as I was interested in it. But everyone advised to go on SS*
11.M. *programme as it is the easiest one and so I apply on it."*

Comments: it appeared that considering personal skills and abilities might change the direction in choosing profession. Most of the participants considered their possibilities and skills in the process of decision making. Ann, Kate and Mark mentioned that they had to (or were asked to) choose programmes appropriate for their physical conditions. In Kate's case during registration process she even did not consider those programmes where she needed assistance. It is curious that assistance from the specialists or members of the family is seen as impede in education process. Sam mentioned that one of the indicators that this profession is appropriate for him was that he did not need assistance during professional testing.

4.1.4 Experience of Registration

All interviewee except one applied to college in order to register themselves. Kate was registered without her attendance. She explained that at the beginning she planned to apply where the registration was performed. But the lady who was helping her said that there was no need of Kate's attendance during registration process. The only thing that she should do was to choose a programme that she wanted to register and prepare necessary documents. Most of the students knew beforehand what education programme they are willing to study. John, Ann and Sam knew already what programme they wanted to register. All of them were suggested to try out and register other similar programmes. John did not even discussed about other optional programmes during registration process (0.J.). As he had already distinct decision.

0.J.　　"We did not have much talk about other things, because I had chosen one education
1.J.　　programme, I was not thinking to apply on other ones."

In Sam's case during registration process he had some discussion with the consultant about adjacent programmes (3.S.).

2.S.　　"I knew about this programme from my friend, I knew that they are teaching this
3.S.　　profession here. […] they suggested to choose and try out also other related
4.S.　　programmes but I stayed on my first choice."

Ann mentioned that she already knew which two programmes she wanted to register (5.A.). But conversation with consultant during registration process gave her additionally information about those programmes (6.A.). I think additional information was useful for Ann to make choice between those programmes. Though she still tried them both during professional testing process.

5.A.　　"I already knew which professions I wanted and of course the lady during registration
6.A.　　process helped me more. I knew about this programmes, but still needed to think about
7.A.　　them; needed more information that this lady gave me."

In all cases they stayed on their decisions. Nobody even registered other programmes just to try them during professional testing. I think big role in it played predispose mood to register their chosen professions. Two students out of six had chosen education programme during registration process. Tom mentioned that when they went to college they have seen different practical rooms and later he was asked to choose an educational programme (9.T).

8.T.   "We went to the vocational college; have seen different educational programmes and
9.T.   then they asked me to choose a programme and I decided to stay on YY programme."

Mark mentioned that they (he and his mother) got list of the programmes in order to get acquainted with it (8.M.). He recall that there were girls who were asking about his field of interests and what programmes is he more interested in. I think consultant tried to help Mark and mother to choose educational programme. But Mark did not mention that this consultant was explaining what particular programme was about. At the end the decision was done by him and his mother (9.M.).

10.M.   "There was a list on the paper. I and my mother decided to choose the professions
11.M.   according to the interests."

Technical part of registration process was described shortly by the Interviewee. All of them mentioned that registration itself consisted of: providing ID and naming the programmes that they wanted to register. In case some documents were missed students were asked to bring them on professional testing day. Sam mentioned that registration process was different; that he was registered separately (13.S.). I think he mentioned that he was registered on separate database. Though I am not sure in it.

12.S.   "When I came there was a girl sitting at the computer and registration was different
13.S   from other students. I was registered separately on other programme. The documents I
14.S.   had was my ID and she asked me to bring my birth certificate and school diploma
15.S.   when I will come on alternative testing process."

Some students mentioned that after registration process they were taken to see practical rooms. John mentioned that as soon as he finished registration process, staff of the college took him in order to show practical rooms (17.J). Positive emotions that John mentioned while having possibility to see where they would have their classes later made me think that orientation in the college before study process gives more clear picture how and where the study process will be.

16.J.   "When I told them that I want to learn on AA programme they took me immediately to
17.J.   the practical room; show the stock and told me that I will study here. That made me
18.J.   happy."

Ann also had possibility to observe physical environment and other resources of the college.

19.A.   "I observed the conditions there, it was very easy, the library was adapted as well,
20.A.   there were no difficulties there."

Comments: Superficial and unitary professional orientation was seen during registration process. Officially registration lasts half an hour and within this time professional orientation should be carried out. Choosing profession happens on the same day when information about possible educational programmes were provided. Fortunately or not most of the participant were aware about educational programmes that they wanted to register. Only two of them came on the registration process in order to choose future educational programme. Person registering technically in the database and person providing professional orientation seemed to be one. According to the interviewee the registration process did not need many effort or time. Information about existed programmes were provided either verbally or in written form. Suggested educational programmes were based only on the student's interests. After registration some students had an excursion in college. They observed the environment where they would learn in future.

4.2 professional testing

How professional testing as such was perceived by the participants and what role did it play differs from student to student. For some students it helped to assess their skills and abilities and for others it was an easier way to enter vocational college. There is mentioned recommendations that they gave to specialists and future students as well. Recommendations are mainly connected to the professional testing process.

4.2.1 Exam - A Process To Assess Or Being Assessed

Professional testing process was perceived as an exam by most of the participants. Most of them mentioned that they were nervous before (because of lack of information) and during professional testing process (because of people who were observing and assessing them). For Sam it was the process where people were assessing him. (0.S.)

0.S.   *"A bit nervous, it was still an exam for me and many people were looking at me,*
1.S.   *observing and that is why I was nervous a bit."*

Sam did not know also why those people were observing him. John, Sam and Kate mentioned that they were not aware what they should do on professional testing process beforehand. John mentioned that when he figured out what kind of task he should do, he became happy (2.J.).

2.J.   "when they asked me to do an XXX activity I was happy, because I thought that I
3.J.   should write some tests."

And it only appeared when he entered professional testing process. Sam mentioned that he did not get explanation about professional testing process during registration (5.S). They told him that he will figure it out later there (6.S.). It gives me feeling that consultants also had not full information what this professional testing means and that is why they could not explain it to Sam properly.

5.S.   "I did not know generally what I should do on exam. Generally they did not explained
6.S.   what kind of exam there would be. They told me I'll see when I will come."

Kate mentioned that entering exam was her first experience (8.K.). That is why she was preparing herself psychologically as she did not know what to expect there (9.K.). Again we see that information vacuum.

7.K.   "I for example prepared myself: accept what you will meet there, I was saying to
8.K   myself, do not confuse. I was talking to myself, because I was entering exam for the
9.K.   first time and did not know what was the environment there."

Though professional testing was perceived as an exam by participants, still it was seen in a process showing their possibilities and profession itself. For some interviewee this process was seen as an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience and for other it was easy way to access to the college. John mentioned that professional testing is a good opportunity to enter the college in an easier way (11.J.). Additionally John assessed this process positively (10.J). He stated that going through professional testing makes you understand what this profession is about.

10.J.   "That professional testing is good ...it is easy, the ordinary testing is not difficult as
11.J.   well, but this testing is much easier. It gave big knowledge about my profession."

For most of the participants professional testing was possibility to understand if they will manage or not to learn profession that they registered (12.K.).

12.K.   "It gave me possibility to understand that I can do profession that I have registered."

Tom mentioned that first he thought that it would be difficult for him and he will not manage to learn (13.T.). But as soon as he tried profession practically he decided to stay (14.T.).

13.T.   "First I thought that it would be difficult for me and then as I stayed, I watched and
14.T.   learned. I thought that I should try. It show me that this is what I want to learn."

This professional testing process gave Ann possibility to analyse what she will manage to do during study process (16.A.).

15.A.   "For me professional testing was: process of comprehend, getting used to understand
16.A.   how I will manage the tasks with my condition, and to be aware that I will manage to
17.A.   do then."

Additionally testing process for John and Kate was a way to make new steps forward (18.J 20.K) and start to live more usefully (21.K.)

18.J.   "May be it played a big role. I do not know how to explain. May be it was one step
19.J.   forward."

20.K.   "it was one step forward in my life. It makes me look that from now I am starting to
21.K.   live a valuable life."

Comment: Professional testing was understood as an exam where student is assessed. Participants did not know beforehand what professional testing means; what is the goal of it; how long it lasts; what procedures it includes and so forth. Unclear information and so expectation about this process resulted in their anxiety, tension and worry. In findings information vacuum connected to the specialists that were attending professional testing process was highlighted. It was not clear for students why specialists were attending, what their role and responsibilities were. The only opinion that students made that those people were just observers. But on the other hand professional testing also was perceived as an opportunity to assess and analyse the profession and person's skills or abilities. Practically it gives a chance to try out how this professional requirements and personal skills are merging together. It was also seen a step toward future and valuable life.

4.2.2 Experience in Professional Testing

All participants had an experience in professional testing. Some of them had chosen three professions and so tried three different activities and for some it was only one. The activities that they tried in some cases were accomplished during the same day. For Mark it was one activity per day. Ann mentioned that she tried all professions in one day. However she was resting between those trials. Students mentioned that all of them had to perform an activity that the specialists prepared for them. At the beginning teacher explained the task, tools and demonstrated how it should be done and then asked student to repeat. Sam mentioned that he

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had to make a product that lights up. First teacher explained how to do it and then he had to try it out (0.S).

0.S.   *"It was the room where XXXX is taught. This testing was done by my teacher, we*
1.S.   *should do some activities, he explained what I should I do, then I repeat it and when I*
2.S.   *succeed he congratulated me, and told me that I am a good boy."*

There was a case when teacher and student were doing activity together. Tom mentioned that teacher started to do the activity and later asked him to finish it. Some tasks they did together as well. Mark and John mentioned that during testing process there was teacher explaining how to do the task and there was an example of the final product as well (3.M. 4.J.).

3.M.   *"There was a teacher and example as well."*

John mentioned that there was model (that he should do) during professional testing process. Additionally teacher's explanation gave him impression how to implement given task (5.J.).

4.J.   *"When I entered the room there was prepared thing on the table, which was done by*
5.J.   *the teacher. He explained how to work with [...] and I worked absolutely*
6.J.   *independently, I did it without assistance."*

In John's as well in Kates' example they were asked to make think that they already knew how to do (7.K. 6.J). It was not problem for John because he used to prepare same kind of things. Though in Kate's case she knew how to make but did not know how to decorate it (8.K.).

7.K.   *"We went down in the practical hall. They asked me to do XXX; I knew how to make*
8.K.   *it, but I did not know how to make it in such a beautiful way."*

Ann described professional testing process with implementation of some practical activities with lots of discussions within it (9.A.). Ann mentioned that after professional testing process she had a discussion with teacher connected to future education process (10.A)

9.A.   *"The exam was like this: the teacher of my profession came and we had a discussion.*
10.A.   *Then we did YYY activity. At the end he told me what subjects I will learn and so*
11.A.   *forth."*

The complexity and level of difficulty of given activity was described differently. John mentioned that the activity that he tried out was easy and manageable. For Sam it was within the frame of his possibilities. He mentioned that it was not easy (12.S.). But he managed to do it.

12.S.   "It was not easy, it was usually appropriate. I think that everyone will not manage to
13.S.   do it; you will not manage it if you will not perceive it differently. It was not easy."

For Mark activities were manageable but he was not satisfied with the results. Mark mentioned that he did not succeed in the activities that he tried. The criteria for his failure was that he could not perform similar product (15.M). In some cases it was not fully finished and in other cases he did not do it properly (17.M).

14.M.   "First I came to XXX programme and observed how the teacher was doing it, then I
15.M.   tried to do the same but did not manage in a similar way. Then we went to observe
16.M.   other VVV, programme boys were doing some stuff and we were observing and then I
17.M.   tried. I managed it but the result was not as it should be done."

Participants mentioned that the instructions given by the specialists were clear (18.T.). Tom mentioned that in case he did not understand instructions the demonstration helped him to understand the tasks that he should perform (19.T.).

18.T.   "The teacher was talking in a usual way, I understood sometimes his instructions and
19.T.   sometimes not. When he was showing practically what to do then I understood it
20.T.   better."

Students state that after trials they had a discussion with the teachers, specialists and head of the Vocational College (21.S.). Sam and Kate mentioned that they were getting feedbacks from the specialists. They themselves also gave feedback about professional testing process trough filling some forms. Sam mentioned that there was a meeting, where everyone mentioned their opinions about him. They assessed him satisfactory (23.S). After discussion he filled in some feedback forms and signed them.

21.S.   "Then we went to the conference room, there were head and deputy of the college. We
22.S.   had a discussion about the assessment results, everyone told their opinion about
23.S.   me…it was interesting for me and then they decided that I did the activity in a good
24.S.   way and got satisfactory assessment."

Kate mentioned that head of the college was interested with the product that she did, as was curious how she handled the task (26.K.).

25.K.   "My sister checked the product I made, and I think the principal of the college also
26.K.   looked at it, because the head also was interested how I managed to do this. I filled the
27.K.   form, as everyone does. My sister filled the form as my hands were busy. I was
28.K.   answering and my sister was filling it."

John mentioned that beside the feedbacks how he managed the task there were some questions about his motivation and willingness to learn this particular profession (29.J).

29.J.   "For example: how motivated I was performing the activity that I tried and how big
30.J.   my wish was to learn on my profession. This kind of questions they were asking."

There was one case where the student had not possibility to try all professions that he registered as the teacher told him that he will not manage to make the activity (32.M.). So he had no possibility to try out last activity (34.M.).

31.M.   "And then we went to observe last programme, there were boys as well doing
activities 32.M.   and we were observing. We went there to try it out, and the teacher told
that I will not 33.M.   manage, it will not work out and we went home. As the teacher told me
that I will not
34.M.   manage to overcome the task I did not try out."

Comments: Professional testing seemed to be very practical one. It was planned so that student had an active role in it. It was the model of apprenticeship, where teacher demonstrated the activity and student repeated them. Teacher used different methods during professional testing process. There were used models, practical demonstrations and verbal instructions as well. Activities that were selected in a way that it give an impression about the profession and their possibilities. The fact that professional testing shows only practical and small part of whole educational process gives uncertain picture to the student. They might expected that study process consists of only practical part that in reality is not so. Only one case was where after professional testing process she had a discussion with teacher connected to future education process. An example that was presented in findings show teachers active involvement in the process of decision making. His participation should be confined with recommendations and information provision after professional testing process. However teacher did not even give student possibility to try out planned practical activity. Additionally, from student's perspective, professional testing still was perceived as an exam process where he or she was assessed. Which is partly true, but missing part is that the primary goal of this process is that student assesses the educational programme that he would learn in future. And it is not the process where teacher decides after assessment if this particular student will enter chosen educational programme or not.

4.2.3 Recommendations for Specialists and future students

The participants gave few recommendations for specialists. Ann mentioned that she has nothing special to recommend as everything was good and convenient for her (0.A.). The only recommendation that she had was connected to teacher's confidence and openness toward students (58.A.).

0.A.   "I do not know… I think it is good what they are doing and I think they do not need
1.A.   any advice. I think they should be more open and they themselves should be
2.A.   confident."

Kate's recommendation toward specialists was more about awareness of different methods in order to meet students' needs and become more skilful in the way of treating them. (4.K.-7.K.)

4.K.   "For example when the teachers are aware that student with special needs Is entering

5.K.   an examination room, they will have some information about them, but they should be

6.K.   aware how they should greet/meet them and work out special methods, that will be

7.K.   needed for   meeting that student's needs."

On the other hand several recommendations were named by the interviewee for the future students. Mainly it was related to preparation of themselves before entering the college. Mark recommended to treat this process seriously if students really want to have better results (9.M).

8.M.   "They should seriously think and prepare themselves beforehand, it was not so as I
9.M.   thought. I did not think seriously. If I did so, it would be better, as I wanted."

Kate gives a suggestion to prepare themselves psychologically in order to prevent immediate decision making and be sure that this is the thing that they really want or need (12.K.).

10.K.   "First of all you should be prepared psychologically and then decide your field that

11.K.   you need to learn. Because if you will not be prepared psychologically that you need

12.K. it, you might be bored if you will making immediate decision… You should have your

13.K.   image where you are applying for."

John gives similar recommendation (14.J.) and additionally suggests to figure out where he is going and what subject's he will learn (15.J.)

14.J.   *"First they should understand what they want, be sure and then make a step. He*
15.J.   *should know, where he is going, what subject he wants to learn and prepare the*
16.J.   *documents that are needed in order to bring them."*

Kate also recommends that before applying student should get information about the environment, the subjects that they will learn and the tools that they should use during study process. Ann mentioned that they should be more open and confident and like Kate, suggests to analyze the environment where he is going (17.A.). To figure out how they are going manage to master this profession (19.A.).

17.A.   *"first of all they should be aware how adaptive the environment is in order to have*
18.A.   *possibility to access it. To decide properly what profession they want and analyze is*
19.A.   *this profession theirs and how they will handle it."*

Beside those practical recommendation for future student participants gave general advices. Mark and John recommended to apply and learn in vocational college instead of sitting at home (21.J. 25.M). Sam together with Mark and John explained that student should try out to enter vocational college because it is not difficult (20.M, 20.J.). And that they should not be afraid or nervous about it (20.J. 26.S.).

20.J.   *"First of all I will recommend do not be afraid, because it is not something*
21.J.   *frightening, it is very easy. They should be motivated to learn this profession, because*
22.J.   *this gives you drive to learn. I do not know, I think they should make a step and come*
23.J.   *here, at least try out, instead of being at home it is better to come and learn. It will be*
24.J.   *useful in their lives. I would advise one thing: that it is very good to learn."*

25.M.   *"I would recommend to apply to college…it is not difficult."*
26.S.   *"I will recommend not to worry, to be as usual; everything will happened without any*
27.S.   *problem."*

Comments: Only two participants had some recommendations for specialists. Rest of the participants had nothing to comment. Recommendations were mainly connected to increase confidence through gaining some skill and knowledge in order to work and treat student in a proper way. On the other hand recommendations for future students were more specific and practical as well. First think they suggested was to come out from their houses and start to study. They assure that it is not as difficult as they think. But at the same time the warned future students that easy access does not mean that they should not threat this process

seriously. On the contrary main accent was on self-preparation and self-awareness. Student should seriously think and become aware: whether the programme that they had chosen is appropriate for him, what is the environment where he is going to learn and what subjects will he learn in future.

4.3 Adapted Environment

The main sub-topics that appeared while students were talking about environment is divided in three parts: physical, social environment and time.

4.3.1 Physical environment

All participants mentioned that physical environment was appropriate during registration and professional testing process. Equipment that they used during professional testing was good, though some of them were new for the participants. Students mentioned that the testing process went in the room where they were later had practical classes (e.g. Kitchen, room for painting, computer room and so forth) (0.S.). Sam mentioned that the practical room gives an idea what this educational programme would be about (2.S.-3.S). Observing decorations, tools and visual explanations and instructions give student possibility to groups' pieces of picture into the final one.

0.S.   "The exam was in room where XXX profession was taught, because there were a lot
1.S.   of pictures how it is in reality, and how it is working. There was everything and the
2.S.   teacher let me to look and observe it.... The environment was so organized that you get
3.S.   the impression what you should learn. All the parts were placed apart in the room and
4.S.   everything had its titles."

Ann mentioned that with the help of the director she had possibility to assess college environment by herself. She became relaxed when she figured out that environment where she should learn and study as well is fully accessible for her (5.A.-56A.).

5.A.   "I looked in to the, ramp, foyer and then the room where I should live and the
6.A.   restroom there. I liked it and got calmer of course because it was disturbing me."

All materials and ingredients that they used for implementing activities were enough. Tools were easy to use for most of the interviewee. Mark mentioned that while trying out activity he was dressed in a uniform. He had a protective gloves and helmet as well. Sam mentioned that

most tools that were demonstrated and used during professional testing process was familiar for him.

Only in Kate's case there was a tool that was difficult for her to manipulate (8.K.). Generally she used to do this activity differently (7.K). According to her physical condition she needs more time to get used to new tools and activities as well.

7.K.   *"I did not get skilled with that tool, my hand was not used to it. At home we do it in an*
8.K.   *easy way and to use this tool was a bit, bit difficult because my hand was not used to*
9.K.   *it."*

Comments: Physical environment was adaptive in most cases. All needed materials and tools were provided during registration and professional testing process. Rooms were so organized that gave an impression about the activities implemented there.

4.3.2 Time during registration and professional testing process

Time given during registration as well as during professional testing process was enough for the participants (0.J.). Ann and John mentioned that time during registration process was far more enough and nobody rushed them. John said that he did not needed much time because he already knew what he wanted to learn (1.J.).

0.J.   *"Yes time was enough during registration process, but as I already knew what I*
1.J.   *profession wanted, that I did not think much."*

Participants knew that there was a limited time during professional testing. But nobody knew what the limit was during process of professional testing. Most of them mentioned that time was set during professional testing process and they managed to perform given activities in time. John also mentioned that he was not aware how much time was given while performing activity. But as soon as he finished the task teacher mentioned that he did it quite quickly. Kate and Sam also highlighted that given time was enough for them too (3.K. 5.S.).

3.K.   *"Time for me was appropriate; because what they asked me to do was not much;*
4.K.   *because what I did I did in time."*

5.S.   *"Though I did it slowly, but I did it and manage it in time… "*

Somehow their discussion makes me think that they were thinking about time as one of the assessing criteria during process of professional testing. However nobody mentioned that they were informed before testing that there were any time limits.

Comments: All of the participants mentioned that time during registration and professional testing process was enough. However they were discussing time connected to given activities and procedures that were implemented. They were not talking about given time in order to make a decision. During interviews it figured out that in most cases receiving information about different professions, making decision and registering chosen programme was held within one meeting. In case when student had already chosen the educational programme he wanted to register given time is quite enough. However when student does not know which programme he wants to study half an hour would be insufficient. Same situation was seen during professional testing process. Students were asked in some cases to make decision on the same day when professional testing process was implemented. More than one day is needed to digest the facts that happened within professional testing process. Otherwise there is a risk that person will choose educational programme based on current peak of emotions and rational thinking would take a back seat.

4.3.3 Social Environment

Social environment according to interviewees was really supportive, welcoming and warm toward them. All specialists and caregivers during registration and professional testing process were motivated. Ann mentioned that people were cheerful and they supported her. Because she mentioned that they were standing next to her (0.A.). I think when she was saying that this helped her more (1.A.) it was meant that teachers support was a factor that pushed also her to decide to enter the college.

0.A.   *"Teachers are good. […] people were standing beside and were positive toward me*
1.A.   *and that helped me more."*

Ann also mentioned that specialists and teachers were curios and were talking with her (2.A.). They wanted to know how she will manage to do some activities because of her physical condition (3.A.). And what kind of assistance she might need in future (2.A).

2.A.   "The teachers were talking with me. They were interested what kind of assistance I
3.A.   would need in future and that I have some problem with my hands and so we were
4.A.   talking."

This information is very important because here we see first step of collaboration between student and specialists. Kate mentioned that teachers were motivated and they were doing their job honestly and diligently. She saw this because teacher was not in a rush (6.K) and teacher was leading process fairly (6.K.) Meeting between Kate and teachers was normally warm (5.K).

5.K.   "At that day the meeting was an ordinary one, it was warm. It was one day exam, but
6.K.   it was not in a rush, I noticed that this person was doing what she was doing for me
7.K.   honestly and with heart…."

John mentioned that first impression was good when he met staff of the college. He saw their motivation and willingness to support him to apply in college (8.J.-9.J).

8.J.   "when I came here everyone were kind toward students and they were active and
9.J.   motivated that I will apply there."

In room where professional testing was held beside teacher other specialists were attending as well. According to Sam and Tom those people were just attending the process and observing them (10.S. 12.T). Their conclusion is a result of their observation on these specialists. But we can see that no information was provided about those specialists during professional testing process. Though those people were just observers this fact made Sam a bit nervous (11.S.).

10.S.   "There were people who were observing me. And … when lots of people are looking
11.S.   at you it is a bit nervous."

12.T.   "There were three or four teacher and they were looking at me what I was doing."

Generally in the process of choosing vocational college or educational programme for most participants' friends and in some cases relatives play a different role. In John's case friends gave an advice to apply to colleges (13.J.) and study particular educational programme (14.J.). He decided to develop his hobby into more serious occupation.

13.J.   "I liked to do XXX and my friends always told me that I am good in it and that I
14.J.   should apply to college to learn it. I considered their advice and came here to learn."

Sam mentioned that he knew from his friend about this particular education programme and where it was studied. Kate discussed that alongside a lot of members in the family there is

only one person whose advices she always considers. That is why she went to her to discuss this topic (15.K.)

15.K.   "I came to her before registration process. […] When I told her about this and that,
16.K.   she told me not to give up and why I should gave up as I am valuable person as well."

Relative's role in registration process was a bit different from friend's one. In some cases they played more passive role- as an informer and in other cases there were more dominant. Tom mentioned that mother informed him about possibility to learn into vocational college. In this case mother played a mediator role (17.T). Later he operated independently.

17.T.   "My mom told me if I want to learn. I thought to try out. Then decided, went and
18.T.   learned."

Mark mentioned about his Mothers' active role in the process of choosing profession. He mentioned that she went to vocational college in order to figure out what possibilities are there. Then Mark together with his mother went to college in order to register professions. They had discussion which profession suits him more (19.M.). Mark was the youngest participant into this study. It is cultural that at this age mother took such an active role. Even in the process of choosing profession for their children.

19.M.   "We (he and his mother) discussed a lot, which was appropriate for me and which
20.M.   programme will I overcome."

Half or the participants came to professional testing process with members of their family. In most cases during professional testing they assisted the participants in their functioning. After professional testing process was finished relatives' had a discussion about the process and were in role of active listeners. They were interested with future education process and sharing happiness with the participant. John, Kate as well as Sam mentioned that they discussed with their relatives about the activities that they did during professional testing process. In John's case relatives were interested how difficult was process for him (21.J.) It appeared that relatives were not informed what the professional testing was in advance.

21.J.   "They were asking about what I did and if it was difficult or not. I told them what
22.J.   should be difficult for me, do not know me?"

Sam said that relatives questions were more connected to the future education process (23.S.). They also were interested if Sam was sure that he will manage or not (24.S). All those information's raise as they did not participate during registration and professional testing

process. Plus discussion in this direction means that relatives wanted to figure out how serious John was in his decision.

23.S.   "They have asked questions connected to the process, what should I learn and with
24.S.   whom; if I think that I will manage to learn and if I will start to learn or not."

Kate said that at home she had conversation with father about professional testing process.

25.K.   "When I came home, my father asked me what kind of exam I had and then I told him
26.K.   that during my exam I did XXX. Then he asked me when I am going to do the same at
27.K.   home and I replied: whenever you want"

Kate's Father was also interested when to expect the results of study process (25.K.). Ann's father played more active role in decision making. They (Ann and her father) had discussion after professional testing process in order to decide which programme to choose and which is more appropriate for her.

28.A.   "Of course I was thinking together with my father. Which profession would be better."

Comment: General impression about physical and social environment got positive response. All participants agreed that physical environment was accessible for them. During professional testing all required equipment and materials were provided. In general physical environment gave participants impression where they will learn and with what materials and tools they will work in future. Describing social environment participants used mostly positive examples and words. They discussed positive experiences while meeting teachers and other colleagues of the college. However roles and responsibilities of most people that they met were not known. The only opinion about people attending professional testing was that they were observers. Friends in most cases played a facilitators or advisors role. They were people who assured participants to apply to college and not to give up. However relative's participation in choosing profession or registration process was seen differently. They were either more passive – as an informer or more active one - as a decision maker. Participants were shearing their experiences and emotions with their relatives after professional testing process. In some cases interviewee together with members of the family were analyzing their experiences and making decisions what educational programme to choose.

4.4 Nowadays Occupation

The question: what is your current occupation? was used as a question to close interview. It was not directly addressing research questions but answers highlighted interesting facts. It appeared that none of the participant were employed. Half of the participants were still studying. Kate still was studying on the educational programme where she applied. Sam and John were students as well. Sam applied of other educational programme and John mentioned that he applied on the same programme but on a higher level (0.J.). As John is still busy with study process I think he does not have particular plans about future job. But hopes to find a job as soon as he will finish his study process existed as a matter of fact (1.J.)

0.J.   *"Nowadays I am studying on the same programme. I am not employed. After finishing*
1.J.   *study I hope I will manage to be employed. "*

Ann as well as John thinks that she will find job in near future. That college will support her to find some kind of job (3.A.).

2.A.   *"I am not working for now. As I know it was with perspective to provide work.*
3.A.   *College will support me and will find a job."*

Though Tom was the only participant with working experience. Nowadays he is unemployed as well because according to his words there are not jobs where he lives (64.T). It appeared that his profession is not in the list of desired professions on labour market.

4.T.   *"There is no job here. I was working in XXX. No I do not have job."*

Tom also highlighted that he wants to learn other trade as that profession is more requested in the area he lives.

Comments: Graduating vocational college put students to the starting point where they again had two options: either stay at home or proceed with further education. None of the students were employed at the time the study was conducted. Only one of the participants had some job experience after graduation for a few months. Participant's reflection on this situation is as follow: some of the participants believe that vocational college will find job for them. So they are in a process of waiting. One of the participant figured out that his profession is not required on a labour market where he lives. He is a bit confused and has a wish to learn another trade with is more marketable in the area where he lives. Three students had not

finished study process. They did not have any particular plans in future yet. Two participants' just decided to continue study instead of stay at home and applied again to vocational college.

4.5 Summary of The Findings

General impression connected to the enrolment process into vocational college seemed very positive from participants' perspective. The environment was adapted, supported and open toward interviewees. Specialists into vocational college seemed motivated, active and supportive as well. Registration as well as professional testing process gave to participants' enough time and possibility to figure out the professions that is educated in vocational colleges. It also showed where this education programme will be studied and with what materials and tools student will work with.

Professional testing showed how participant's interests and possibilities are matched with the educational programme they had chosen. Professional testing according to interviewee is a process of self-awareness. As it figured out from the interviews participants while choosing their future educational programme were ruled with different factors such as: their interests, their abilities and benefits that this education programme will bring.

Family member in most cases did not participate actively in choosing educational programme, in this case friend were more actively involved. However relatives played an active role after professional testing sharing their happiness and joy caused by gained chance of further education.

There were few recommendation to specialists. They mentioned that specialists should become more confident through gaining some additional knowledge connected to students with special needs. Recommendations given to future students were more practical. First of all they should come out from houses and try out to enter VET. Second that it is not difficult. Third before entering VET student should think a lot, analyze situation and wisely choose their future profession.

Besides this positive respond toward registration and professional testing process there were seen some issues that should be highlighted here as well. During registration process students were not informed what professional testing is about and what student should expect from it. Professional testing was seen as the process where student is assessing the programme. But it

was perceived that during this process students were assessed by the teacher and other specialists. The role of specialists who attended professional testing process was not clear for participants. Their only occupation according to interviewee were observation on the process and student's assessment.

There was a case where student did not get a chance to try out profession that he had registered. Moreover, totally different profession was suggested for him. The suggested profession was not close to his field of interests but seemed more "appropriate" for him from teachers and other student's perspective. None of the participants were employed in the period when the interview were done. Only one participant had some working experience after he had finished his study process. Most of them made plans or are hoping to be employed in the future. Three students were still in the vocational colleges studying on same or on different educational programme.

5 Discussion And Conclusion

This chapter shows connection between theories and findings of the study. Mostly findings will be discussed within the frame of literature review done by European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. Additionally findings will be related to Individual Transition Plan (ITP) as a core foundation of effective transition process. Conclusions, limitations of the study and suggestions for future study will be also presented within this chapter.

5.1 Transition Process

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education created report connected to Individual Transition Plan (ITP) in 2006. There were shown the results of a Hearing in the European parliament in 2003, where students with different special needs as well as their caregivers had possibility to express their concerns. Most of the students showed their willingness to find job, live independently and be integrated into society. This study outlined the similar picture. Willingness to do age appropriate occupation such as gain some profession or getting the job was seen in all participants. Transition process was named as being long and complex process for preparing and facilitating young people to enter adult life (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2006) p. 12). In this study transition of the participants from primary education to vocational college also took long period of time (average time was four years). However such a long time was not due to adequate preparation and effective transition process. On the contrary, it was due to lack or no transition services available in Georgia. Applying to college for most participants became feasible after Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia started to implement inclusive education into Vocational Education and Training system (VET) (MoES, 2013).

The Salamanca Framework for Action (1994) states that: *"[…] young people with special educational needs should be helped to make an effective transition from school to adult working life (p.34).* Findings also showed that additional support as well as guidance and advocacy was needed for most student in order to facilitate involvement in age appropriate occupation. Transition service should be started before compulsory education finishes and with applying Individual Transition Plan (ITP) (IDEA, 2004 European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2006). ITP is an essential part of Individual

Education Plan where all relevant information connected to the student and his transition process is gathered. Transition service as well as practice to use ITP is not developed yet in Georgia. Within this study we can see some parts of transition process that were experienced by students. Examples presented in findings illustrate how transition of students with special need was implemented without having appropriate individual transition plan. Individual Transition Plan is divided in three main phases such as: 1) Information, observation and orientation; 2) Training and qualifications and 3) Empowerment, employment and follow-up. Discussion will emphasize the first phase of Individual Transition Plan as a main goal of this study.

5.1.1 Phase One - Information, Observation and Orientation

Generally first phase in ITP is described as a preparatory one for students where person receives *information, identifies personal skills and interests and gains some work experience* in order to finally choose profession that he wants to learn.

Information

Within this study limited information seemed to exist in the whole process of transition. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) states that: "Information has to be provided in a clear and coordinated way in order for the students, as well as their families, to make choice concerning their future life and any other issue they are concerned about" (p, 24). However students highlighted several times that they had lack or no information about new possibilities during registration as well as professional testing process. They missed information about future educational programme; their rights and possibilities during and before study process. Based on own experiences toward enrolment and study process to the vocational college participants' recommendations for future students was as follows: first of all to apply to vocational college, as it is not difficult. Secondly to have enough information and serious intention to learn. Information that they had to obtain is: place, time and structure of study processes that they want to learn. Last recommendation referred to analyse of their possibilities, weak point and recourses.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) refers to Casey's et al. (2000) explanation of the role of professionals as a mentors, model, teacher and friend, as a valuable tool to use in order to meet the needs of learners in vocational training and job

settings. Openness and willingness of teacher's and other members of vocational colleges seemed important aspect in the whole enrolment process. Their positive attitude toward students played big role in raising motivation to apply to college. However it was outlined in study that specialists had lack of information about existing legislation and policy measures. They were not aware the philosophy of inclusive education. Their roles, responsibilities and duties were not clear in these particular cases, though it is mentioned in their professional standard (MoES, 2011, order 97/N). Suggested recommendation for teachers was to gain more information about students with special educational needs; to learn some methods in order to treat students in correct way.

Insufficient information raises risk to provide ineffective service from specialist's side and consequence of it would be inappropriate or unclear expectations, loss of interests and motivation to continue study, which might raise risk of drop outs. (Woosley and Katz-Leavy, 2008; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012).

Identification of Personal Skills and Interests

UNESCO (2002) states that career counsellor has an important role in transition process. This specialist should help students to choose programme that best suits to their needs, gives them a clear and realistic information about available opportunities; tries to match learners with possible educational programmes and finally facilitate steps for a transition into employment. It was outlined that person registering technically in the database and person providing professional orientation for participants seemed to be one. Nonetheless most important in this situation is what kind of skills and experiences this person had in process of professional orientation (Woolsey, and Katz-Leavy, 2008). Participants outlined career counsellors' positive attitude toward them during registration and orientation process. However activities as well as discussions between career counsellors and students give us impression that professional orientation was not on a qualified level. It was superficial and unitary during registration process. Weak professional orientation before starting VET as well as during study process is outlined by MoES as well (MoES, 2013)

Officially registration and professional orientation has to be carried out in one meeting (MoES, 2013). But in general to make a proper professional orientation and later appropriate decision needs more time. Moreover it is recommended to spent necessary time with young person and their family for better understanding their needs. (European Agency for

Development in Special Needs Education (2006). For no reason individual transition process is planned at least two years earlier in order to make decision (IDEA, 2004). Fortunately or not most of the participants (except two) were aware about educational programmes that they wanted to register. That is why all of them mentioned that time during registration process was enough, but were not mentioning if it was enough for making informed decision.

Suggested education programmes was based on student's field of interests. This information is very important but not enough. Other factors such as student's motives, plans and drive are also determinant in the process of choosing profession. The fact that consultants' trials to figure out those factors was not seen. Moreover information about chosen profession request on labour market was not provided. Which is crucial for students who's the only drive is to be employed in future. Providing superficial orientation resulted that none of the students in this study registered suggested professions. Similar picture is discussed by European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2006. The reason why students are not interested in the choices proposed, is that training programmes are not suited to students' interests and needs.

Positive aspect that was mentioned during professional registration is that some students with special needs had availability of exploring physical environment. This possibility was named by students as decisive and necessary part of professional orientation. Direct observation of the environment rather than theoretical explanation gives more adequate impression about future educational process. "Several studies have identified that personal maturity and person-environment interactions are the main factors influencing the involvement of a learner with special educational needs in the process of vocational education and training." (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education in 2012, p. 30)

Gaining Some Work Experience

"Students should have as many opportunities as possible to have practical experiences of different professional fields in order to better understand their abilities and capacities. Objective tools for assessment will help to address this issue" (see Practices section, Spain, ES1, *Perez Urruti*).

Within this study it was outlined that half of the participants had chosen educational programme, in which they used to have some experiences. Rest of participants' without

experiences meant to run chances while choosing future profession. That is why professional orientation should not be based only on theoretical explanation but it should involve practical activities as well. Lindstrom L, et al (2007) also shares the idea that life experiences or some prevocational experiences plays an enormous role in the process of decision making.

Professional testing that is the alternative testing process for students with special educational needs had triple meaning based on students' reflection. First meaning was to provide the tiny process of professional orientation. It gave possibility to try out some small tasks of given educational programme. Secondly It appeared that testing process gave student opportunity to test himself in given practice, to figure out how this activity is manageable for him. Thirdly it gave teachers and specialists' opportunity to observe students while implementing practical task. Last meaning was perceived by participants as a primary one of whole transition process. Professional testing was seen as a one way process where teacher and other specialists were assessing student. Which is a pity as this professional testing might be seen as the first step of collaboration between, teachers, specialists and students as well. Active collaboration between them will clarify each other's roles within transition process (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). And Observation results generally gave food of thinking for students, specialists and teacher to plan and prepare adequately study process (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2006).

Second phase of ITP such as training and qualifications is connected to particular education process in order to gain some trade. This phase was not scope of investigation of this study and so it will not be included into discussion part. To gain and later analyse some information that corresponds to last phase of ITP - empowerment, employment and follow-up was not intended as well. However closing question of the interview, gave important relevant information. Outlined several issues seen in findings and issues discussed wider in literature prompt me to make a concession to this part.

5.1.2 Empowerment, Employment and Follow-up.

Applying to college and gaining some profession should not be last point in the whole transition process. The last step is to become employed and so become financially (fully or partially) independent. (Harvey, 2001). On this phase the goal of ITP is to succeed in getting and maintain a job. The benefit from it is an increased quality of life (European Agency for

Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Though during the time this study was conducted it appeared that none of the students were employed. Some of them still were student however rest of them were sitting at home. The concept of transition described by Labour Force Survey (2000) highlights that (within transition process) leaving education process is not necessarily directly followed by beginning work (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012 p.10). However students' reflection on this situation caused the thoughts that collaboration between vocational colleges, student and employers was not sufficiently active. That is why multi-sectorial collaboration should start as early as possible in order to prepare students for transition to adult life, including employment (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2006)

To sum up in general, all factors that were described within the frame of Individual Transition Plan could be defined as *combined* factors. (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2006). That means that those factors are strongly interrelated to each other. Failure in one section of whole transition process will cause challenges in other parts. In order to plan and implement effectively transition process analyses of the situation should be multidirectional on each level of Education System.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on information mentioned in findings and discussion several recommendations are suggested in order to be considered in future. For developing effective transition system in Georgia it is recommended to:

✓ Give more time for students with special educational needs to assess their possibilities, gain work experiences, and figure out maximum information about existed professions. Focused on this experiences student will make informed decision about future profession. Decision will be rational rather than emotional one. This goal might be possible to be achieved when professional orientation that is interwoven in National Curriculum will to be connected to orientation services provided in VET.

✓ Provide maximum information for every person participating in transition process. Students should be aware about all kind of information connected to their rights, future study process and social and physical recourses. Specialists on the other hand should be

informed very well about legislation, their roles, available services, and recourses in order to plan and later implement effective transition process.

✓ Recommendations mentioned above would be possible to translate into reality if Individual Transition Plan would be established in education system. It should be considered as an integral part of Individual Education Plan in future and started to be implemented before young person finishes compulsory education.

5.3 Conclusion

Findings and discussion presented above responded research questions that is: What kind of experiences do the students with special educational needs have with the enrolment process to vocational education and training system? Goal of this study was to investigate how students with special educational needs experience and perceive registration and professional testing process;

Data of the study helped to promote the understanding of the effectiveness of the enrolment process from the student's perspective. Comparing current situation in education system in Georgia to the experiences of other countries discussed in literature outlined some similar as well as dissimilar factors and issues in the process of transition. Based on students' positive response as well as report done by MoES, I can assume that first steps done toward implementing of inclusive education in VET system were successful. Items which were highlighted in discussion coincide with report suggested b*y European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. Thus, the outcome of the study turned out to be essential and based on the findings three recommendations were developed.*

Provided recommendations might be useful in the future to develop effective transition process from compulsory education to work. They will increase student's possibility to make informed decision and choose profession based on his motivation, interests and possibilities.

5.4 Limitation of The Study

Limitations of this study were conditioned by different factors. First of all language was a barrier in this study. Interview guide first was developed in English and then translated into Georgian. That caused some difficulties as some words in English have not direct translation

in Georgian and vice-versa. In order to avoid to lose the meaning of the question, more explanations were added to some particular questions. Additionally transcribes that were done first in Georgian were translated into English. It was a risk to misinterpret participant's answers and in order to appropriately translation took much time and efforts. Still it was difficult to paraphrase some slang words or sentences. Due to limited time the meetings with participants were restricted and it was difficult to explore the topics deeper.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Study

The study in which all students with special educational needs and caregivers will be involved, would gather valuable information for Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. That would give possibility to see issues from different perspective.

Elaborate the effectiveness of transition process for students' with special educational needs from the perspectives of specialists and teachers. Conducting this study will make data more thoroughpaced. These both studies will support the process of developing of recommendations and serve every specialists that will take part in transition process.

A longitudinal study from school to working place will include all aspects of transition process. It will help to understand the gaps and resources available in education system in Georgia.

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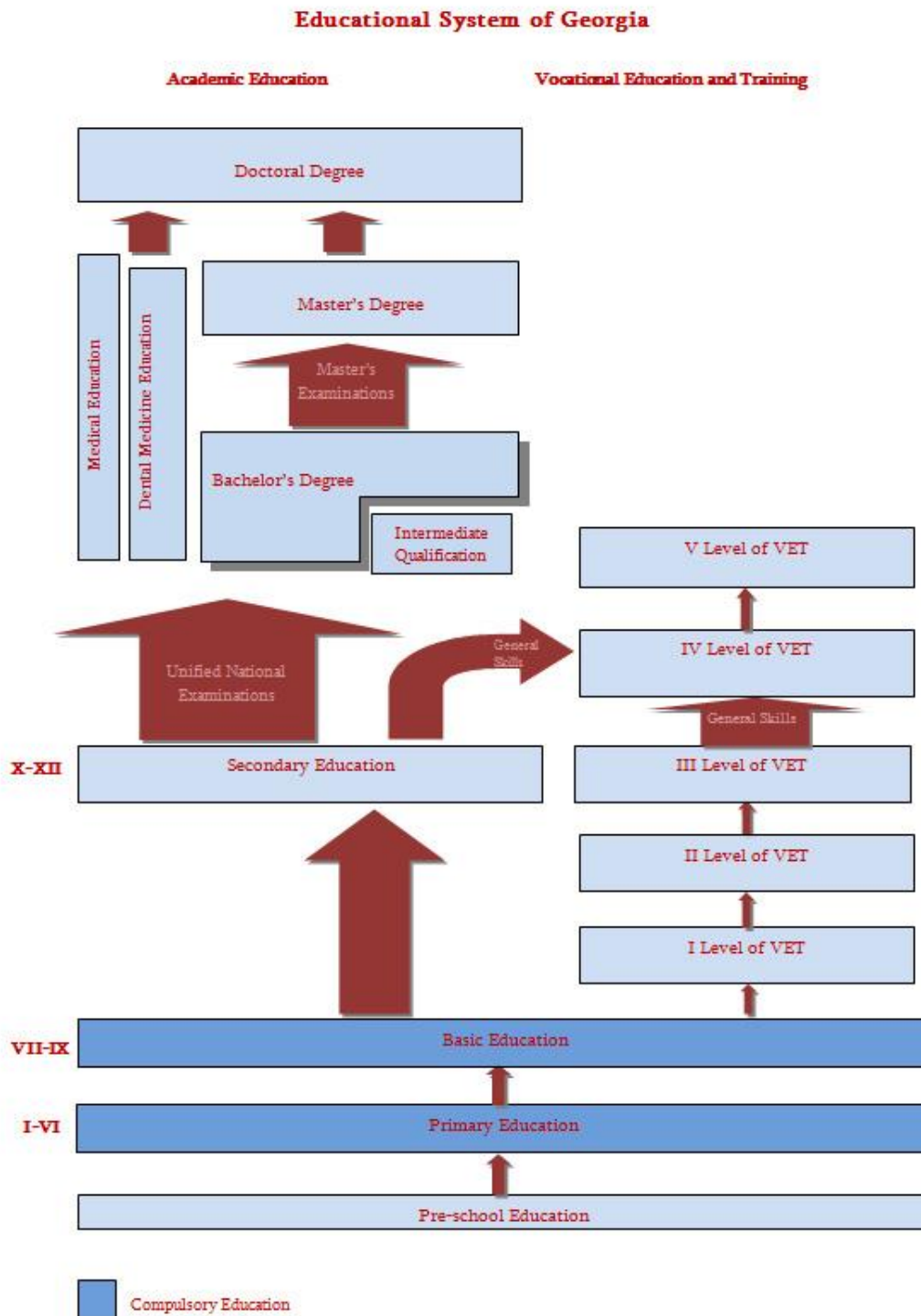
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Appendixes

Appendix N1

Educational System of Georgia

Academic Education — Vocational Education and Training

Doctoral Degree

Master's Degree

Medical Education

Dental Medicine Education

Master's Examinations

Bachelor's Degree

Intermediate Qualification

V Level of VET

Unified National Examinations

General Skills

IV Level of VET

General Skills

X-XII — Secondary Education

III Level of VET

II Level of VET

I Level of VET

VII-IX — Basic Education

I-VI — Primary Education

Pre-school Education

Compulsory Education

(Ministry of Education and Science, 2014)

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Appendix N2

I Level	•Qualification holder is able to fulfill his/her obligations in homogeneous situations under the supervision.
II Level	•Qualification holder is able to fulfill his/her obligations with certain level of independence
Level	•Qualification holder is able to fulfill his/her obligations in different situations and function adequately for solving of the problems.
IV Level	•Qualification holder is able to use professional knowledge in changeable situations, supervise others and undertake the responsibility for evaluation and improvement of conducted work.
V Level	•Qualification holder is able to fulfill the task, requiring planning, administration, evaluation and perfection of other's work.

(MoES, Introduction of Inclusive Education in Vocational Education and Training (VET) System in Georgia, 2013, p 3)

Interview guide

Hello,

I am particularly interesting about your experiences, about the processes that you went through while entering Professional College.

Can you tell me, how did you come to continue your education in professional college?

- How you decide, on which profession programme you wanted to choose and why?

How you have been registered to this College and particularly to this study programme?

Can you tell me more about your experiences with the registration process?

- What did you do during registration process?

- In general how would you would assess registration process?

In general, what do you think, what role did registration process play in your chosen study programme?

Can you remember what was the most pleasant fact/process during registration?

How would you assess the environment where the registration process went through?

- How adaptive the environment was for your needs?

Can you remember the activities that you do during registration process?

How do you think the time that you spend during registration process was enough for you to choose programme/s for testing?

Can you remember what the most unpleasant fact/process was during registration?

Is there something you want to change in registration process and why?

- If yes: in what way you want to make these changes?

Have you any other recommendations or suggestions about registration processes?

OK thank you, now I am interesting about your experiences, ideas and feelings connected to the testing

Can you tell me about your experiences with the testing?

What do you experience about the activity that you did during ….. testing?

- What did you do during testing?

- Can you describe the tools/instruments and materials that you used during professional testing/s?

- Can you describe the room/environment where your professional testing took place?

- What was your experience about the teachers and specialists who were guiding you during activities that you were trying?

Introduction of testing; instructions clear; feedback and recommendations were interesting

How many professions did you try?

How did the testing help you to understand what this programme is all about?

- In your opinion what where the factor/s, that influences on your programme choice?

In case if the person tried more than one profession:

What were you doing between first and second profession testing?

- What were you discussed with the relatives about between these testing?

- How do you felt was the time between the testing processes enough for you to relax or discus with your family members?

- Can you remember what your opinion was about in this period?

- Have you discussed with the parents at home about testing processes?

     - If yes what you were discussed about?

Did you have a finding during or after testing, that this is exactly the right programme that you would like to learn in the future?

- If yes - what gave that impression to you? - Activities you did; discussion with specialists or family; feedback from future teachers

- If no- why do you think so?

How did you judge the time given to make a decision on which programme you would like to learn?

Can you tell me how satisfied you are now with your choice after you learned more about this profession?

   - What role did the testing play in your choice?

If you had chance to go back in testing what will you do?

- In case of changing- In what way you would like the testing process be changed?

What kind of recommendations would you give to the specialists, connected to the testing process, in order to consider them in the future?

What would you suggest to the new students who are going through these testing?

- What kind of preparation they should do before hand?

- What kind of information they should be aware of?

Tell me what are your main occupations now?

- Do you currently work?

- Do you currently study?

Request for participation in research project

"Transition Process of Students with Special Needs to Vocational Colleges in Georgia"

Background and Purpose

Considering the reforms processed which is now developing in vocational education system in Georgia, it is utmost important to find out how effective profession explorations and choosing processes were for those students with special needs who entered Vocational Colleges in 2013-2014 academic years. This is the Master project at the University of Oslo and the research question is:

What kind of experiences do the students with special educational needs have with the enrolment process to vocational education and training system?

It was explored with sub-questions such as

What kind of experiences do the students with special educational needs have with the registration and testing process?

How does this (enrolment) system works in order to help students with special educational needs to choose profession?

The criteria's by which the participant was selected were: Students with special needs who already went through transfer process (registration and professional testing) to Vocational Colleges in 2013-2014 academic years; Student who have possibility to follow the whole interview, can understand and answer the questions independently; two students should be from Tbilisi (capital city) and two others should be from regions;

What does participation in the project imply? Semi-structured interview will be used in order to collect data, which will last approximately one hour. During interview tape recorder will be used and additionally to that notes will be taken by interviewer. There will not be used other additional sources (registers, records, student files, other informants, etc.) about the participant. During interview the questions will concern the registration and professional testing process.

What will happen to the information about you? All personal data will be treated confidentially. The access to all data will have student. Recordings will be stored in to the computer with locked access. Recordings will be deleted from the voice recorder as soon as it will be transferred to the computer in order to ensure confidentiality. The names in the recordings and transcriptions will be changed and coded. In the publication all names will be changed and participant will not be recognizable. The project is scheduled for completion by 1st July 2015. After completion all recordings will be erased.

Voluntary participation - it is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous. If you do not want to participate in this research or if you at a later point decide to withdraw from it will not affect any relationship with researcher or others

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact to student Rusudan Lortkipanidze +995 593 630700 or personal mail: rlortkipanidze@yahoo.com. Supervisor Steinar Theie +47 22858058. The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate ----------------------------

--- (Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 5

To the Head of the National Curriculum Division

of the Ministry of Education and

Science of Georgia

Rusudan Lortkipanidze

Address: Sh. Meskhia str. N1a,

Tel.:+995 593 000 288

Mail: rlortkipanidze@yahoo.com

APPLICATION

I am a second year student at Master Program of Philosophy in Special Needs Education, the University of Oslo (Norway); I am working on my Master project aiming to explore transition process of students with special educational needs to VET system in Georgia from the students' perspective.
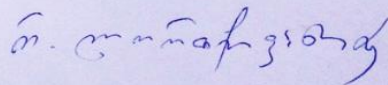
As the pilot project "Introduction of Inclusive Education in Vocational Education and Training System in Georgia" is run in the bases of your division, I am asking for your permission to conduct the study with students with special educational needs participating in the abovementioned pilot project.

This is a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews. The questions will mainly connected to the registration and alternative professional testing process that was developed mainly for students with special educational needs.

The short description of the study and the letter from the Special Needs Education Department of the University of Oslo are provided as an appendix.

Sincerely,

Rusudan Lortkipanidze

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UiO ᛟ Faculty of Educational Sciences
University of Oslo

LORTKIPANIDZE, Rusudan

Date: 25 June 2014
Your ref.:
Our ref.:   int./2014 JBH/db

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that **LORTKIPANIDZE, Rusudan,** date of birth 06.10.1980, is a full-time student pursuing a course of study at the Department of Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo, Norway, leading to the degree of Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education (M. Phil. SNE).

This is a continuous two-year programme run on the "sandwich" principle, which involves periods of study and field work/research in both Norway and the home country. The student has successfully completed both the first and second semester of the initial study period in Norway and is now working on the collection of data and the writing of a thesis during the autumn semester 2014. This involves a period of field work in Georgia. The student will return to Norway at the beginning of January 2015 and the period of study will be completed at the end of May 2015 in Norway.

The main responsibility for supervising the research, developmental work and thesis remains with the Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, Norway. However, we would kindly request that the relevant authorities give the student the access required to the schools and educational establishments necessary in order to undertake field work and research. We would also be most grateful for any assistance that is afforded to the student which enables her to carry out this work, particularly the use of facilities such as access to telephone, fax, e-mail, computer services and libraries at the various educational establishments.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Jorun Buli-Holmberg

Joint Academic Head of International Master's Programme

Department of Special Needs Education

Officer in charge:
Denese Brittain (+ 47) 22 85 80 75, *d.a.brittain@isp.uio.no*