

Liudmyla BAZYL<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0003-4130-5436

Valerii ORLOV<sup>2</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0002-1843-390X

Mykola PRYHODII<sup>3</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0001-5351-0002

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## **Perceptions of the students in vocational education and training about professional success in future entrepreneurship**

## **Postrzeganie studentów kształcenia i szkolenia zawodowego na temat sukcesu zawodowego w przyszłej przedsiębiorczości**

### **Introduction**

The main task of modern vocational education is to prepare future professionals for life, the realization of professional functions and the high-

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<sup>1</sup> Liudmyla Bazyl, PhD, Associate Professor, Institute of Vocational Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine, e-mail: ljudmilabazyl@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Valerii Orlov, Professor, PhD, Institute of Vocational Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine, e-mail: v.f.orlov@ukr.net

<sup>3</sup> Mykola Pryhodii, Professor, PhD, Institute of Vocational Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine, e-mail: prygodii@ukr.net

quality performance of tasks within the profession they have mastered, as well as a successful career. “The professional career of every person”, Norbert G. Piķuła says, “is individual and unique and depends on many factors, including the choice made” (Piķuła, 2016; 162). A graduate of a vocational school realizes this choice when determining the future strategy of life: as an employee at an existing enterprise, where the success of his/her professional self-realization, professional self-improvement and further career growth will be determined by a number of circumstances (established norms and rules of work, diligence and conscious responsibility for fulfilling the professional duties assigned to the employee, etc. In this regard, we consider relevant the opinion of Polish scientists that “a career expresses the personal and natural desires of each individual who seeks to achieve certain goals or a place in the social and professional hierarchy” (Piķuła, 2016; 162).

A negative impact on the formation of students’ career orientations to vocational education and holistic objective ideas about the future career is exerted by the negative attitude of citizens to the phenomenon of career inherited from the Soviet past. Despite this, over the past decades, this term has gradually acquired the meaning of a criterion for the success of a person’s life, achievement of a significant social status, recognition, high level and quality of life, and realization of personal and professional potential.

Similar transformations in the perception of the future specialists and teachers of vocational education institutions are taking place in terms of understanding the essence and key concepts such as “entrepreneurial activities” and “entrepreneurship”. Entrepreneurship, in our opinion and the opinion of our Polish colleagues, is a set of characteristics, intentions and beliefs that describe a specific way of human behaviour, which is determined by the formation of such traits as initiative, ingenuity, creativity, the need to choose the most effective solution under conditions of uncertainty. Based on the essential characteristics revealed in the above definition, public opinion about an initiative, entrepreneurial person is crystallized. Given the current market requirements, such a specialist is extremely desirable for employers.

Entrepreneurship is rightly considered a key competence of a person that enables his or her career development, decent employment and self-realization. The public demand for successful entrepreneurs who generate innovative ideas and are able to predict career success based on the implementation of these ideas necessitates revision and updating of the purpose, objectives and

content of vocational education, its cross-cutting focus on preparing future professionals for life and professional activities, which is made possible by implementing ideas to form realistic visions about future careers among students, including starting their own business and accumulating career capital throughout their lives.

**The aim of the study** is to determine and describe the transformations that take place in the imagination of the subjects of the educational process – pupils, students, teachers – regarding the career success of future specialists in entrepreneurship.

We are aware that in Ukraine, under martial law, and especially in the post-war economic recovery, it is important to train a new generation of young people – entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial way of doing business has a powerful social effect (entrepreneurs create jobs, increase innovation, increase competition, respond flexibly to the changes in economic opportunities and trends, etc.). A young person who creates his/her own business is able to provide a “demonstration” or external learning effects that can serve as models, stereotypes, and behavioural models for other young people (Youth entrepreneurship, 2013).

## Materials and methods

In order to study, describe, interpret and explain the above social, psychological and pedagogical phenomena, a qualitative study was conducted, using empirical material ranging from the concept of youth entrepreneurship counselling and the study of the teachers experience in vocational education institutions in the integrated formation, and development of career and entrepreneurial competencies, to the analysis of relevant forms and methods of work, as well as the coverage of certain methodological recommendations. The analysis focused on the importance of future specialists’ entrepreneurial competence for their career success in professional activities. The study aims at determining the narratives of students’ understanding of success in their future careers, at identifying the factors associated with the choice of their own future, namely: the vision of themselves and their career as an employee or a person who determines their own career trajectory, in particular, by starting their own business and successfully running their business, taking into account civilizational circumstances.

**The object** of research is the educational process in vocational education institutions.

**The subject** of the study is the priority career orientations of vocational education students.

In accordance with the stated aim of the research, the following **research tasks** were formulated:

- to identify priority career orientations of vocational education students;
- to provide practical recommendations for teachers of vocational education institutions.

**The methods are:** analysis and synthesis – to determine the development state of the problem under study, to substantiate the advantages of group learning for the formation of students' perceptions of professional success in future entrepreneurial activity; summarisation – to formulate conclusions and recommendations for forming an idea of professional success and the role of entrepreneurship; to identify the priority career orientations of vocational education students, the method of analysing creative works was used.

**The hypothesis** of the study is that the effectiveness of professional development of vocational education students will increase if there are used methods that promote their awareness of priorities for their own career orientation (to form knowledge about the goals of professional development).

### Analysis of current research

In the modern scientific and educational space, a significant arsenal of research has been developed thematically related to the preparation of students of different levels of education to start their own business and successfully conduct business activities in the future, taking into account socio-economic circumstances. Currently, the economic theories substantiated by Z. Varnalii, A. Karsrud, R. Kiyosaki, V. Madzigon, O. Padalka, and others remain relevant. We consider the publications on the evolution of entrepreneurship as a type of management and its main concepts to be scientifically significant, namely: "risk" by R. Cantillon, I. Thunen, F. Knight; "factors of production" by J.-B. Say, A. Marshall; "innovative essence of entrepreneurship" by B. Clark, J. Schumpeter; "internal entrepreneurship" by G. Pinchot; "innovative management" by P. Drucker, B. Karloff, B. Santa; "the ratio of managerial and entrepreneurial approaches to management" by J. Galbraith, G. H. Stevenson; "classical analysis of competition" by M. Potter; "cultural and sociological concept" by

W. Zombart, M. Weber, etc. We consider the theoretical and methodological foundations for training future qualified personnel for entrepreneurial activity in the context of small business development, substantiated in the works of S. Alekseeva, L. Bazyl, V. Baidulin, I. Hrytsenok, L. Yershova, D. Zakatnov, V. Orlov, and others, to be socially important in today's conditions. Scientific publications by O. Kredentser, L. Karamushka, S. Maksymenko, H. Matukova, Y. Pachkovsky, R. Hizrych, and others are of theoretical and applied value, in which the mechanisms of successful preparation for a career in entrepreneurship, team building, and characterize by stereotypes and models of entrepreneurial behavior (Bazyl, Orłow, 2022).

In the modern scientific psychological and pedagogical dialogue, it is recognized that the optimal career orientation is an individual career, which is based on self-knowledge, self-improvement and self-government. Edgar Schein differentiates the career orientations of specialists in eight areas – a kind of “career anchors” (Schein, 2004), which are considered the most important value orientations in the theory and practice of career development. Let us briefly comment on the developed classification of career orientations.

Among the most important are: professional competence, which is an individual's focus on professional self-improvement and the ability to implement their knowledge and skills in professional activities; career competence, which means the ability to find a job and career growth. We associate this value orientation with the availability of abilities and opportunities for self-realization in a particular field of professional activity.

As the analysis of educational practices and personal experience shows, among the vocational education students there are individuals with clearly expressed leadership qualities and the desire to organize and coordinate team activities. This orientation was defined by E. Shane as “management”. It is worth noting that people who are oriented toward leadership (“management”) tend to believe that they have not achieved their career goals until they take a managerial position (Schein, 2004).

A characteristic feature of modern vocational education students is their focus on autonomy (independence), their desire to free themselves from organizational rules, regulations, and restrictions. Such individuals have a clearly expressed need for independent activity, focusing on their own experience, knowledge, and skills, sometimes ignoring the instructions and guidance of teachers.

The definition of a successful entrepreneurial career is presented in the works of S. Covey, who substantiated his theory that the modern world is transitioning from the industrial age to the knowledge age. The result of this transition is a paradigm shift in career and entrepreneurship. "In the industrial era," notes S. Covey, "people did not always find satisfaction in mechanical work that did not require creativity and initiative, and as a result, they devoted themselves to it as little as possible" (Covey, 2013; 22). However, the age of knowledge and informatization is changing everything. Each individual has the opportunity to customize their professional work "...to suit themselves, that is, to give free rein to what they are capable of and what they love, to do what no one else can do. So, people who just want to find a job write resumes. People who want to create a great career write a statement of contribution to a common cause" (Covey, 2013; 31).

The basis of the new paradigm of successful career development is the assertion that a truly successful career will begin, according to Peter Hawkins and Nick Smith, if "you stop asking yourself: "How do I get ahead?" and start thinking about the question: "What do I want to change? What do I want to contribute?" (Dr. Fiona Wood, 2005; 3). Modern employers mostly believe that a person who has received a vocational education will come to work not only for instructions on what to do and how to do it, but also with a proposal on how to improve production, at least at a particular workplace, and thus open the way to success. Such an employee can count on a successful career in the new paradigm of the knowledge age. Today we are already talking about the age of digitalization, and, therefore, we are witnessing corresponding changes in the understanding of the essential nature of pedagogical processes of forming and developing career and entrepreneurial competencies of pupils and students.

## **Materials and results**

A person who has chosen a profession should form an idea of future success in his or her personal life and professional activities. Such an idea is formed through the realization of one's own desires, psychological characteristics and capabilities, as well as the needs of the labour market. A significant step towards success for the vocational education graduates is the correspondence of their career orientations to the processes of becoming a specialist and the objective structure of individual and personal characteristics for future professional work.

The total number of respondents was 721 vocational education students in 2019 and 689 in 2022. In this context, it should be noted that the study on preparing young people for entrepreneurship has been conducted since 2019 by the staff of the Professional Career Laboratory of the Institute of Vocational Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine. The final results will be published at the end of 2024. This article highlights the interim results of the empirical research. The percentage of the sample is not final. The figures may have slight deviations. However, the main trend of the prevailing desire of students to start their own business and make a successful career in entrepreneurship has been unchanged for many years.

The choice of priority career orientations of vocational education students was determined by analysing the texts of the essays on students' ideas about the future. When analysing the results of the creative exercise, attention was focused on one of the two key positions of choice:

- A. The job of an employee.
- B. The work of an entrepreneur.

***Examples of applicants' statements:***

**Option A.**

"I don't want to be an entrepreneur and can't imagine myself in this field."

"I live one day at a time; I don't think about the future."

**Option B.**

"In my ideas about future work, I will be an entrepreneur. Together with my fellow students, future car mechanics, we will create start-up capital and open our own car service station. This industry should be the most profitable in our country."

"After graduation, I'm going to organize my own business in the service sector."

"When I am an entrepreneur, my business will develop rapidly in the field of innovative technologies."

**Table 1.** Choice between employment and starting a business

Total number of respondents: year 2019 – 721; year 2022 – 689						
Perceptions	They chose entrepreneurship for future employment		Do not consider themselves entrepreneurs, tend to work for hire		Have not decided about their future employment	
	respondents	%	respondents	%	respondents	%
2019	203	28.2	457	63.3	61	8.49
2022	412	59.7	242	35.1	35	5.07

Source: own study.

Based on the analysis of empirical results to determine the vocational education students' choice between employment and starting their own business and their generalization, the following was found: at the beginning of the study in 2019, a significantly smaller number of respondents were found to consider entrepreneurship as a career development area where they could achieve the desired success. At the same time, in 2022, after the introduction of the methodology and numerous technologies for the development of entrepreneurial competence in 2020-2021, significant shifts in the minds of vocational education students were observed. Thus, out of 689 (100%) respondents, 412 (59.7%) chose entrepreneurship in their ideas about future employment; 242 (35.1%) people preferred employment; 35 (5.07%) have not yet decided on their ideas about future employment.

At the same time, the staff of the Professional Career Laboratory of the Institute of Vocational Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine diagnosed the levels of entrepreneurial competence of vocational education students. Based on the analysis of empirical results, it was found that according to the motivational criterion, the number of respondents with a sufficient level of entrepreneurial competence increased by 8%, of those with an average level – by 1.47%, while of those with an initial level decreased by 9.53%; according to the cognitive criterion there is an increase in the number of respondents with a sufficient level of entrepreneurial competence – by 18.89%, and a decrease of 18.16% in the number of vocational education students with an initial level of entrepreneurial competence; according to the activity criterion, the number of respondents with a sufficient level of entrepreneurial competence increased by 10.8% and, accordingly, the number of people with an initial level of entrepreneurial competence decreased by 10.5%; according



to the personal criterion, the number of respondents with a sufficient level of entrepreneurial competence increased by 23.48%; with an average level – by 3.43% ,and the number of respondents with an initial level of entrepreneurial competence decreased by 26.91%. The differences in the analysis of empirical results before the introduction of methods and technologies for preparing young people for entrepreneurship (2019) and after the introduction of experimental tools (2022) are statistically significant ( $\chi^2=7,195$ ), do not go beyond the established limits and are at the level of  $0.05 \leq \rho \leq 0.01$  ( $5.991 \leq 7.195 \leq 9.21$ ), which indicates the reliability of the data obtained (Sokhatska et al. 2021).

It is worth noting that the experimental studies revealed 73 (17.7%) respondents with a pronounced tendency to leadership and 92 (22.3%) with strong aspirations and intentions to start social entrepreneurship.

In our opinion, in Ukraine, where the percentage of youth entrepreneurship is the lowest in Europe, such an increase in the number of young entrepreneurs should contribute to the post-war revival and socio-economic development of the state. Formation of value orientations for a successful entrepreneurship career in vocational education students will help to create favourable conditions in vocational education institutions for preparing young people for their future entrepreneurship career. Since the article highlights the results of a study conducted among the vocational education students and teaching staff of these institutions, we specify the author's understanding of entrepreneurship as a field of professional activity within which young professionals build their careers, manifest the best personal and entrepreneurial qualities, and form their own successful business.

One of the most important aspects of personal and professional development is an adequate self-assessment of professional opportunities. With this in mind, it is important to start the conversations about the career orientations of vocational education students with the questions: "Do you know someone rich and famous? Is he or she always confident, popular, and always happy? Is he or she the embodiment of life success for you?" This encourages future professionals to think and discuss different opinions. In such activities, it is important for teachers to listen carefully to students, stimulate their desire to speak out, and discuss the results of their own reflections. In the Basics of Sectoral Economics and Entrepreneurship class, consultations on youth entrepreneurship are conducted, thereby helping students develop draft business plans.

The results of our observations show that the majority of vocational education students, when thinking, refer (appeal) to their experience of communicating with adults and peers who believe that material goods (having a lot of money, living in a large house, owning the latest cars, etc.) are a kind of “key to happiness” and, therefore, success. This orientation, in our opinion, is hardly the best in real life.

Therefore, it is important for a teacher to help a young person realize that a real career is not based on the desire to gain recognition and significant income, but on the social effects of professional activity, i.e. the contribution that a person makes to the world. Real success is determined by the respect and gratitude of people and comes through honesty and patience, possessing traits that are really hard to acquire. Thus, during the conversation, future specialists independently come to the conclusion that material wealth can facilitate a person’s life, but will not necessarily improve the level of their civilized existence, which is expressed in statements such as: “money cannot make a person smarter, more competent in their profession – this comes only through hard work and self-improvement”; “money cannot help a person form warm relationships with the beloved ones – this comes only through love, devotion and sacrifice”; “all the money in the world cannot teach respect or devotion – this comes only with good upbringing and constant care for the feelings of others”.

It is advisable for the teacher to conclude the conversation with the following reflection: “Can money give patience, gratitude, courage, friendship, or even generosity? All of these traits – knowledge, wisdom, love, respect, patience – are the most important features of a successful person with a developed career orientation. Money cannot help achieve any of these vital traits, and only diminishes the desire for success, distracts attention, tempts and leads to crime and corruption. Therefore, it is easy to refute the unlawful claims of clever marketers that money equals success. This is not a career orientation that will really lead to success”.

Conversation with vocational education students about their career orientations is an important method for shaping their worldview. However, we consider psychological and pedagogical training to be the best stimulus for the targeted development of career orientations and the need for self-improvement. In modern theory and practice, it has been proven that training is the most effective form of correcting the perception of oneself, one’s own professional

and life success, forming a self-concept, reducing conflict and stimulating the need for achievement. It is possible to interest future professionals and attract them to participate in such training by discussing their ideas about future life prospects. In this regard, we believe that training should be used not to refer to teaching methods, but to refer to methods of developing the ability to learn or master any complex activity, including communication, i.e., training is not only a method of developing abilities, but, above all, a method of developing various mental structures and the personality as a whole. Trainings (educational games) combine educational and gaming activities that take place in the context of modeling various entrepreneurial situations.

This form of training, which originated in psychology, is used primarily for psychological correction through play. We set ourselves a different goal. Pedagogical training, in our understanding, is an element of professional development technology aimed at helping future and current professionals to form their ideas about future professional, career and entrepreneurial success, to help them plan their careers, to create conditions for the development of their entrepreneurial culture and professional self-improvement (Vachkov, 2000). Our goal is to help each student establish their own professional self, develop their own principles, style and ideas about career and entrepreneurial success, and develop a desire for creativity that combines ideas about ideals. The teacher who conducts the training realizes that each student is a self-esteemed individual with a significant potential of personal resources for self-development. Training is a unified system of exercises for changing internal intentions, value orientations and attitudes towards human behaviour. In our opinion, the effectiveness of the training is determined by the atmosphere of each session (it is important that each participant is as open and frank as possible, and treats others with respect). The main difference between this form of training is that students use their experience and accumulate career potential during the training. Thus, training contributes to the rapid acquisition of the necessary qualities that are formed over many years in the context of life realities.

The results of our research allowed us to identify the following advantages of group training:

1. An academic group of vocational education students is a special social unit that counteracts alienation by helping to resolve complex interpersonal relationships; each student in such a group avoids unproductive “closing in on

himself, with his difficulties” and finds that his problems are not unique, his peers also had to experience similar emotions and feelings; it is important that this phenomenon already serves as a powerful psychotherapeutic factor for many students.

2. The academic group of future professionals reflects the micro-society, revealing a number of hidden factors, namely: pressure from partners, social influence and conformism. In fact, the group already models a complexly structured system of relationships inherent in the realities of civilizational existence of each of the applicants for professional education. This makes it possible to identify and thoroughly (in detail) analyse psychological patterns, effective mechanisms of communication interaction, stereotypes of social roles and behavioural patterns of future professionals, which are not always manifested in life situations.

3. The ability to quickly establish feedback and receive timely emotional and sensory support from the people who have experienced similar emotions and overcome similar difficulties. In real life, it is not uncommon for an average person to receive sincere, unselfish feedback that allows them to see their own reflection “in the eyes of others” (having such experience, such persons not only deeply understand the essence of the interlocutor’s experiences, but also share their emotions, trying to support them in a non-standard life situation). In an academic group, vocational education students have the opportunity to learn different stereotypes of actions and behavioural patterns of the representatives of different social roles (to analyse the gallery of “living mirrors”), which we consider to be the most important advantage of psychological and pedagogical training for vocational schools.

4. It is in an academic group that future professionals have the opportunity to master innovative (non-standard) ways of solving situational exercises, improving professional skills and experimenting with different styles of relationships among equal partners, while in real life such experimentation is always associated with the risks of misunderstanding, rejection and even punishment. In a group training environment, there is a real opportunity to change traditional algorithms and behavioural patterns, to review and change attitudes towards oneself and others – all in an atmosphere of goodwill, friendliness and interaction.

5. Within the academic group, students identify themselves with other representatives of the micro-society, master various social roles to know

themselves better and understand the interlocutor, as well as to learn new effective, tested by others, ways of behaviour; emotional connection, empathy. The empathy that arises in this way contributes to the personal growth of students and the development of their level of self-awareness.

6. Interaction in an academic group of vocational education students creates tension, which makes it possible to identify the psychological problems of each of them. This effect cannot be achieved in the conditions of individual psychological and pedagogical work, causing additional difficulties in the work of the teacher. Psychological tension is a significant resource for constructive solutions and effective interpersonal interaction, fuelling the energy of group processes; at the same time, the teacher's task is to prevent tension from getting out of control and destroying productive work.

7. In the conditions of an academic group of professional education students, the processes of self-disclosure, self-study and self-knowledge are significantly facilitated; otherwise, these processes are not fully possible through other people; opening oneself to others and opening oneself to oneself contributes to deep self-knowledge, self-improvement and increased self-confidence.

Classes can provoke acute moments that cause future professionals a kind of shock. For this purpose, the following techniques are practiced: confession, frank discussion of actions and deeds of one of the participants by all the participants. Carefully planned and well-prepared trainings form interpersonal relationships that exclude pronounced sceptical remarks of vocational education students with strong psychological defences, who, with their comments, complicate the process of concentration during the training.

In the practice of vocational education, the use of training elements is mostly reduced to modelling a role play in a particular pedagogical situation. In our opinion, psychological and pedagogical training has much more possibilities – it is a form and method that creates favourable circumstances for each person to revise and change their value and worldview position, attitudes towards others, which determines both individual actions and behaviour in general. In this case, it will no longer be just a game.

Thus, each training participant can change his or her image and self, modifying the attitude towards the personal and professional self. The use of game procedures in the professional training of future specialists has a long history and is so popular that we see no need to dwell on all its aspects. Suffice

it to say that, in our opinion, it is expedient to study and implement simulation-role and business games in the pedagogical practice and research work of vocational education students in the context of improving the efficiency of the educational process and obtaining prompt feedback (diagnostic function). Such a connection is determined by the fact that it is predictable, predictable more than any other type of human activity, firstly, because future specialists and adults in conditions of game maximize their emotions and feelings, intellectual and creative forces, and, secondly, the game itself is a “field of self-expression” in which all subjects are the most natural, sincere, open (Alekseeva et al., 2018).

### Conclusions

An important determinant of success is the attitude to career and a conscious choice between employment and starting your own business. The desire to start their own business and make a successful career is one of the most important desires of 59.7% of vocational education students (out of those who participated in the study). This category of respondents has already formed a desire to realize their personal potential and ideas about professional success during their studies. Therefore, it is important for each of them to realize the priorities of their own career orientations in order to know where success awaits them and what to strive for in their professional development. The diversity of career orientations of the graduates of vocational education institutions in social and professional interaction allows them to enjoy their work, overcome problem situations more easily, and realize themselves more actively. It is an important task of teachers working in vocational education institutions to help them in this. To this end, researchers at the Professional Career Laboratory of the Institute of Vocational Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine are working on the development of modern methods and technologies for the formation of career orientations in the context of the problem of counselling young people on entrepreneurship.

**Abstract:** The research-scientific discussion in the article is devoted to the category of ideas about career success in entrepreneurship. The theoretical part presents the main assumptions related to this category: professional education, ideas about the future career, entrepreneurship, career and entrepreneurial competence, forms and methods of work of pedagogical workers. They determined the direction of scientific research. The study was conducted within the educational paradigm. The results of the research were obtained using observational methods, in particular, the analysis of creative works of professional education students, conversations with pedagogical workers, the method of statistical analysis of empirical research data.

The analysis and interpretation of the obtained data made it possible to draw conclusions about the representative sample, as well as recommendations for further research of the identified categories.

**Key words:** work, professional education, entrepreneurship, ideas about a successful career, professional education student, pedagogical worker, professional education institution.

**Streszczenie:** Badania i dyskusja naukowa w artykule poświęcone są kategorii postrzegania sukcesu zawodowego w przedsiębiorczości. W części teoretycznej przedstawiono główne założenia związane z tą kategorią: edukacja zawodowa, wyobrażenia o przyszłej karierze, przedsiębiorczość, kariera i kompetencje przedsiębiorcze, formy i metody pracy nauczycieli. Badanie przeprowadzono w ramach paradygmatu edukacji opartej na kompetencjach. Wyniki badania uzyskano za pomocą metod obserwacyjnych, w tym analizy prac twórczych uczniów szkół zawodowych, ankiet, wywiadów z nauczycielami oraz analizy statystycznej danych empirycznych.

Analiza i interpretacja uzyskanych danych pozwoliła na wyciągnięcie wniosków dotyczących reprezentatywnej próby, a także rekomendacji do dalszych badań w zidentyfikowanych kategoriach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** praca, edukacja zawodowa, przedsiębiorczość, postrzeganie udanej kariery, uczeń edukacji zawodowej, nauczyciel, instytucja edukacji zawodowej.

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