



From School to Work: Role of Teachers in Career Guidance for Students with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Purpose. Kazakhstan's special education system is recently facing the challenge of integrating youth with disabilities into the professional environment, through vocational training and employment readiness of students with disabilities (SD). The demographic and economic shifts, with an aging workforce, rapid digitalization, and a growing labor shortage have further deepened this issue. This study aimed to explore how teachers in special education institutions contribute to the development of vocational readiness and social integration of high school students with disabilities. **Methodology.** In a mixed method framework, data was collected through surveys, observation, and semi-

structured interviews involving a sample of 15 participants, comprising students, teachers, and school administrators from the Almaty and North Kazakhstan regions. **Findings.** Findings revealed that most students with disabilities lack a clear understanding of their professional prospects, possess limited knowledge of the labor market, and experience uncertainty regarding their future employment. While support from parents and teachers plays a crucial role, collaboration between schools, employers, and higher education institutions remains underdeveloped. Career choices are often influenced by persistent stereotypes – frequently oriented towards music or sports – and the process of professional self-determination is hindered by insufficient information and limited practical experience. **Implications for research and practice.** The study recommends taking steps to enhance career guidance practices such as personalization of educational pathways, implementation of practice-oriented approaches, development of social interaction skills, strengthening ties with potential employers, and capacity building of school staff. A need is also felt for a systemic approach to expand employment opportunities and increase the autonomy of young people with disabilities.

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Introduction

Demographic and socio-economic shifts such as population aging, automation, digitalization, and changes in occupational structures significantly transforming the employment landscape in Kazakhstan and placing new demands on its education system (Bolatova et al., 2025). In this context, the need for sustainable employment models becomes especially acute, including targeted support for socially vulnerable groups, particularly individuals with disabilities (ID) (Maratovich, 2025). One of the most effective strategies, for mitigating the negative consequences of these changes, is the development of inclusive practices in both education and the workplace (Kefalaki & Diamantidaki, 2024). In the current times, there is growing interest in organizational diversity, particularly in hiring individuals with various health-related conditions. However, the integration of such employees into professional teams often elicits ambivalent responses: on the one hand, it fosters innovation and team cohesion; on the other, it can trigger stigmatization and covert discrimination. Additionally, such integration should not only impart basic skills but also contribute to informed career choices, the development of a positive self-image, and confidence in one's professional future. In special (correctional) schools, vocational training and career guidance are critical components that determine the success of students' social integration.

The Center for the Development of Labor Resources under the Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Kazakhstan has studied current labor market conditions and issues of employment and social adaptation of graduates from special education institutions (Bolatova et al., 2025). In fact, equally important is the consideration of current and future labor market needs – that is, understanding which professions are in demand and where there is a shortage of qualified workers. It is essential to align vocational training with the actual needs of the economy. Long-term experience from auxiliary (special) schools shows that students with disabilities are capable of mastering accessible professions and engaging in conscious, productive work. The role of the school is to provide proper vocational orientation. Career guidance in special education schools must primarily aim to promote professional self-determination by activating specially organized activities that provide students with knowledge about the world of work and support the expansion of their self-awareness. Scientifically grounded determination of profession accessibility has significant socio-economic importance, as it creates the conditions for more successful vocational mastery by students of special schools. When a profession matches a person's capabilities, it becomes more accessible, meaningful, and satisfying. This, in turn, plays a major role in shaping positive personal qualities, particularly for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

According to official statistics in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the number of people with disabilities stands at approximately 637,000, accounting for 3.7% of the total population. Around 70% of them are of working age, and the majority face significant challenges in securing employment. These people with intellectual disabilities remain underrepresented in the labor market, and studies have identified numerous school-related barriers that hinder their participation (Helms et al., 1990). One key indicator of success in vocational education within special schools is the employment rate of graduates. Educational systems and special educators have attempted to increase employment outcomes by adopting legislation, designing functional curricula, and implementing career development programs. Future labor market projections suggest that a sufficient number of jobs will be available for all students who possess the necessary skills, including students with

disabilities. This implies a strong likelihood of increasing employment opportunities for such groups, provided their training aligns with labor demands (Helms et al., 1990).

Analysis of scientific and practical sources confirms that vocational training plays a crucial role in the social integration and sustainable development of students with disabilities. However, in the current educational practice in Kazakhstan, this area receives insufficient attention. Besides, there is the absence of a clear regulatory framework (Myrzakhmetova et al., 2024) for school-based vocational guidance, along with deterioration of infrastructure (e.g., vocational centers and career counseling offices), and a mere formalistic approach to career choices implementation (Ye, 2022), all of these hinder students from making informed career choices. Moreover, there is a clear mismatch between the education system and actual labor market demands, limiting graduates' opportunities to realize their professional and personal potential. Nevertheless, the experience of auxiliary schools demonstrates that with appropriate pedagogical and career support, students can successfully master accessible professions and perform effectively in production settings.

Given the current labor shortages across various sectors of the economy, supporting the professional realization of students with disabilities is important not only from a social justice perspective but also from an economic standpoint to provide them vocational guidance and support (Adibayev & Omirzhanov, 2022). Vocational guidance for students with disabilities must not be seen as a secondary concern. On the contrary, it is a core mechanism for social integration, sustainable development, and the realization of the right to meaningful employment. Contemporary research shows that with effective pedagogical support, family involvement, the use of assistive technologies, and cooperation with employers, young people with disabilities can successfully acquire vocational skills and become active contributors to society and the economy

However, despite existing regulatory frameworks, many schools face a lack of methodological tools and insufficient readiness among specialists to work effectively with specialized students who require individualized educational approaches. In the field of education, this calls for a rethinking of the role of special educators in the sense of inclusion (Kantor & Proekt, 2024). Inclusion requires a broader professional scope — moving beyond narrowly defined work with specific student groups toward creating conditions for interdisciplinary collaboration, adaptive teaching, and consultative support for both parents and colleagues (Goryunova & Polyakova, 2025). Under inclusion, particular attention is required to be paid to the pre-vocational preparation of students with disabilities. Hence, to achieve these objectives, the following research questions were formulated in this study:

1. What barriers to forming specific ideas about professions can be identified through the analysis of case studies involving students with disabilities, particularly regarding the types of work they could perform?
2. What recommendations can be made to improve the vocational training of students with disabilities?
3. Do students demonstrate the ability to align the requirements of a particular profession with their individual characteristics, especially those that directly affect success in professional activity, i.e., professionally important qualities?

Literature Review

Modern understanding of sustainable development is inseparable from the concept of accessible and high-quality education for all population groups. As emphasized by the National Managing Holding "Baiterek" (Baitursunov et al., 2025), focusing on education within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lays the foundation for improving socio-economic conditions and contributes to leveling the playing field in society. However, in the practical reality of Kazakhstan's education system, issues related to vocational training and employment of students with disabilities (SD) remain secondary within labor protection policies in Kazakhstan, ensuring regulations (Ibrayev et al., 2024). Moreover, a critical problem lies in the absence of a regulatory framework governing career guidance for students with disabilities, creating a challenge for the social security measures (Nurtazin et al., 2022). The current Law "On Education" of the Republic of Kazakhstan does not contain explicit provisions that regulate such activities, and teachers' job descriptions lack clearly defined responsibilities in this area. In practice, career guidance is often reduced to formal testing and the dissemination of informational materials. Inter-school vocational training centers, which previously played an important role in the system of vocational education, have largely lost their significance. This institutional decline contributes to professional disorientation among high school students, increasing the likelihood of inappropriate career choices, a loss of motivation, psychological difficulties, and social exclusion.

Previous studies that have emphasized upon the importance of aligning students' career preferences with their individual abilities, conclude that a mismatch between the chosen profession and a person's physical or cognitive capabilities can reduce work productivity and create psychological strain (Adibayev & Omirzhanov, 2022; Allan & Omarova, 2021; Ye, 2022). Experience from special schools shows that, with well-organized career guidance, students with disabilities are capable not only of acquiring a profession but also of becoming fully engaged members of the workforce. The issue is further highlighted by recent statistics. As of April 2024, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan reports that the number of citizens with disabilities has reached 730,500 (3.6% of the population), of whom more than 419,000 are of working age (Orynbassarov et al., 2024). Despite the existence of employment support programs, a substantial portion of these individuals continues to encounter difficulties entering the labor market. This suggests that current educational practices remain poorly aligned with labor market realities.

The development of a student's vocational orientation should be understood as the formation of a stable system of dominant behavioral motives, lasting professional interests, adequate self-assessment, and a positive attitude towards work. Despite evolving societal views on disability, individuals with disabilities still face significant barriers to full participation in the labor market. Teachers play a central role in addressing this challenge. They must act not only as providers of knowledge but also as mediators between students, their prospective careers, families, and employers. As Magauova et al. (2023) note, successful career self-determination requires the use of diagnostic tools, the development of career-related attitudes, realistic self-assessment, and adaptability to labor market demands. Goryunova and Polyakova (2025), too, emphasize that the successful preparation of students with disabilities for vocational training is impossible without systematic work with their parents. This means that teachers must be prepared for such collaboration as early as during their master's studies. The teacher thus acts as a mediator

not only between the student and the profession but also between the family and the education system.

Kantor and Proekt (2024) argue that without the deliberate development of both professional and personal competencies in teachers – including tolerance, adaptability, and mastery of inclusive methodologies – it is impossible to ensure high-quality preparation of students with disabilities for vocational education and future employment. Likewise, Robin and Kruzhkova (2024) assert that the use of eye-tracking technology in the psychological and pedagogical diagnostics of students with disabilities demonstrates high effectiveness in identifying cognitive characteristics and learning difficulties. For educators, this provides new tools to fine-tune educational strategies, particularly in the context of vocational training. Eye-tracking enables objective assessment of attention, perception levels, and emotional responses, thus expanding the teacher's diagnostic capabilities in individualizing instruction and enhancing readiness for career self-determination and subsequent employment.

Istomina and Bonkalo (2025) offer a theoretical foundation for understanding internal crises of professional identity among individuals with disabilities – a crucial factor in developing effective career guidance strategies. Their system-dynamic approach allows for a deeper analysis of self-determination and adaptation processes under conditions of social and professional uncertainty. This further substantiates the need for comprehensive support for students with disabilities at all stages of forming their professional identity. Such a support to students with disabilities has been confirmed by international bodies, which recommend that such support should be vocational, making use of flexible educational models and individualized approaches. Studies on disability and labor market tend to treat people with disabilities as a homogeneous group, failing to consider that their behavior and needs vary depending on specific variables such as the type and degree of disability, education level, gender, or age. It has been found that access to vocational preparation for individuals with disabilities largely depends on their level of education, followed by the degree of disability and gender. However, nearly one-third of people with disabilities in Spain are illiterate and have no formal education, meaning they occupy a marginal position in the labor market (Domínguez Vila & Alén González, 2023).

Early transition to vocational pathways can contribute to a successful career start, but this is not always the case. There is evidence that achieving long-term employment is particularly challenging for adolescents with disabilities, as their backgrounds may make them more vulnerable in the labor market (Båtevik, 2019). There is a growing need to expand the knowledge base in this area to ensure the continued advancement of positive educational and life outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Specifically, researchers examine differences in re-employment across various disability indicators, identify sets of individual and structural explanations for these disparities, explore how these explanations interact, and apply them to contexts involving conditional employment and job security during periods of economic crisis.

Garrels and Sigstad (2023) believe that people with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented in the labor market, with several school-related barriers to their participation in employment. The study found out that teachers can provide additional insights into their efforts to support students with disabilities in becoming valuable employees. The findings also indicated considerable variability and room for improvement in how schools prepare students with disabilities for employment. However, Arvidsson et

al. (2016) found that knowledge about individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their interaction with the labor market remains limited. Hence, education, social services, and targeted interventions should be developed with greater gender sensitivity to better meet the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Better coordination between the education system and the labor market can significantly improve employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Research involving interventions that emphasize individualized support and ongoing monitoring for employees with intellectual disabilities underscores the importance of tailored approaches (Garrels & Sigstad, 2021). Studies show that employers are generally willing to hire and view the work potential of people with disabilities positively. However, despite progress achieved during internship training, many special education students still struggle to secure competitive employment (Chandler et al., 2024).

Middle school students with intellectual disabilities tend to have limited knowledge of available professions. They often cannot clearly differentiate between occupational fields and lack a concrete understanding of jobs they could pursue. These students are frequently unaware of their own abilities and the suitability of specific jobs for them. Research shows that students in special education schools acquire practical skills most successfully during their 7th and 8th years of study, when their interest in discussing their future begins to emerge. Their ideas about prospective professions are usually shaped by hands-on school experiences and acquired skills. However, they often initially aspire to inaccessible jobs such as drivers, only later shifting toward more feasible options like sewing, carpentry, or landscaping. Russian special education and psychology have identified key challenges and barriers in organizing vocational guidance for high school students with visual, hearing, or musculoskeletal impairments (Assanbayev & Makoele, 2024). Most researchers address employment as a natural continuation of schooling, but few recognize it as a distinct component of vocational guidance. Leaving employment as an unregulated, post-graduation process and ending career support with a diploma is insufficient. Direct assistance is needed after school to help students implement career counseling advice and intentions.

Methodology

Research Design

This consideration became a key factor in conducting a specialized study involving administrators, teachers, and students of special education institutions. Interviews were held with subject teachers from the Almaty and North Kazakhstan regions. The purpose of the interviews was to examine the challenges teachers face in educating students with special educational needs, as well as the types of support and assistance provided to these students in the context of vocational preparation. Our research was aimed at studying the efforts of teachers in special education organizations in the professional training of high school students with disabilities, uses an integrated approach to data collection, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. This allows us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the problem and identify both general trends and individual characteristics.

Sampling

The sample comprised subject teachers, school administrators, and high school students from special schools in North Kazakhstan and Almaty regions. A purposive sampling approach was used to identify the interview informants as this technique involved the deliberate choice of participants based on predetermined qualities or characteristics (Patton, 2002). The sampling criteria for students focused on (1) age: high school students (14-19 years old); category: students with disabilities (visually impaired, blind, with mild intellectual disability). (2) Educational level: students in grades 8-12. (3) Participation in career guidance: students who participate or have participated in career guidance activities at school (job training, professional trials, talks, etc.). Teachers and administration: (1) Position: Deputy directors for academic or educational work; teachers directly involved in the professional training of high school students with disabilities (e.g., teachers of labor training, classroom teachers, subject teachers). (2) Work experience: at least 1 year of working with children with disabilities. (3) Participation in career guidance: the administration and teachers who are engaged or participated in career guidance work with high school students (planning and conducting classes, advising students, interacting with parents, etc.). Table 1 summarizes the information about study informants who were interviewed, including 8 high school students, 2 representatives of the administration and 5 teachers.

Table 1

Summary table of interview informants.

Category	Number
High school students with disabilities	8
Administration of special schools	2
Teachers of labor training	5
Total	15

Research Instrument

Data was collected through a semi-structured interview as it allowed to flexibly adapt to the course of the conversation, delving into interesting topics and receiving more detailed answers. The interview was conducted with three categories of respondents: high school students with disabilities, which aimed at identifying ideas about their future professions, assessing school's preparation, their awareness of the difficulties of employment, and suggestions for improving the educational process; teachers and representatives of the administration of special educational organizations, which aimed at studying the organizational preparedness for career guidance in schools, assessing the needs of teachers and logistical support, as well as identifying problems and prospects for the development of vocational training.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed through an inductive method of content and thematic analysis method, focusing on the in-depth study and generalization of responses, namely, to identify the difficulties of special educators in preparing high school students with disabilities for work training. This approach introduced us in detail the problems that arise when preparing such students for professional self-determination and further work.

The thematic content was processed and analyzed using the QDA Miner program, designed for qualitative analysis.

Results

Right at the outset, an interview with 5 students was conducted. In this small group of high school students with disabilities, we unambiguously identified such features as lack of awareness about future professions.: students did not have a clear idea of how a specialist's working day went and what skills were necessary for a successful career. There was a limited choice of professions: the choice of professions was often limited to traditional fields of activity for people with disabilities (music, sports); lack of confidence in employment. These students realized the difficulties associated with finding a job in their chosen specialty due to their disability. Finally, the predominance of individual work preferences was felt as most students preferred individual work, which may be due to a lack of experience in teamwork. This interview with students consisted of five blocks: (1) Interests and inclinations: (Questions 1-4) – aimed at identifying personal interests, preferences and favorite school subjects. (2) Professional plans and ideas about the profession: (Questions 5-10, 12-15, 17-20, 22-25, 31-33) – this block aimed at identifying a specific chosen profession, understanding its features and requirements, as well as realistic ideas about the labor market. (3) Assessment of school preparation and wishes for the educational process: (Questions 11, 21, 27-30, 46) – aimed at assessing satisfaction with the quality of school preparation and identifying specific proposals for improving the educational process. (4) Self-assessment of professionally important qualities: (Questions 13, 35, 36, 38-40, 45) – They aimed at assessing the compliance of personal qualities and preferences with the requirements of the chosen profession, as well as at identifying motivation for work. (5). Identification of support: (Questions 16, 31-33) identification of those who support the desire for the chosen profession and their opinion. [Table 2](#) presents a comparative analysis of the interview.

Table 2

Comparative analysis of interviews of students with visual impairments

Criterion	M. (Age 19 years)	B. (Age 17 years)	A. (Age 18 years)	N. (Age 17 years)	A. (Age 18 years)
Interests	Music, computers	Music	Sport	Reading, games, sports	Sport
Professional plans	Music college, singing	Music college, music teacher	Academy of Sports and Tourism	KazNPU named after Abaya, philology	Academy of Sports and Tourism
Realistic plans	Job insecurity	Job insecurity	Does not plan to work in the specialty	Does not plan to work in the specialty	Does not plan to work in the specialty
The idea of the profession	Not enough information	Not enough information	Not enough information	Not enough information	Not enough information
Work preferences	Individual work	Individual work	Individual work	Individual work	Group work
Assessment of school preparation	Considers it sufficient, ready to learn	–	Considers it sufficient	Considers it sufficient	Considers it sufficient

From the data in [table 2](#), it can be concluded that students have a predominant independent choice, that is, most students indicate independence in choosing a profession, although they recognize the influence of advice and recommendations from others.

Parental support was another important factor for most students. At the same time, the nature of support ranged from unconditional acceptance of any choice to recommendations on choosing more “realistic” professions. Most of the students (M., B., N.) admitted to the support from their parents, which created a favorable basis for professional self-determination. However, the nature of this support varied. In the case of M., the support was unconditional: “Well, they said, choose what you want. They don't mind my choice. They always support me so that I don't choose.” This indicates a high degree of trust and autonomy in decision-making, which can contribute to the development of self-confidence and independence. In the case of A. and N., parental support was more focused: “Teachers say you can have a massage center , or you can be athletes,” “In general, I like to read, so I found out everything myself and my parents tell me.” Here, parents are likely to orient their children towards professions that seem more suitable to them, taking into account their characteristics and capabilities, which may limit freedom of choice, but at the same time provides a more realistic approach to career planning. [Table 3](#) presents the support related to their professional choices. The type of support was determined by the responses to all questions in the block and reflected the general impression of the level of support. In a few cases, related to teacher or classmate support, some data was not available.

Table 3

Analysis of student professional choice support

Student	Independent choice	Parent support	Teacher support	Classmate support	Type of support	Key arguments of supporters
M.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Full	“Choose what you want”, “They support me”
B.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Full	No data available
A.	Teachers	Partly	N/A	Yes	Partly	“Teachers say you can have a massage center, or you can be athletes,” Yes, this is their recommendation
N.	Myself +parents	Partly	N/A	N/A	Partly	“In general, I like to read, so I found out everything myself and my parents tell me, “ Yes, this is their recommendation.
A.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	But they don't tell me anything, I didn't ask. I myself.

The interview with the administration representatives also comprised five following blocks: (1) The value block aimed at identifying an understanding of the importance of vocational education, identifying significant areas of activity and assessing the impact of career guidance. (2) Motivation block: aimed at identifying readiness for career guidance and identifying the necessary resources (3) Organizational issues of labor training and career guidance are aimed at identifying the specifics of the organization of labor training and career guidance. (4). Assessment of the content and career guidance work in the school, aimed at assessing the content and areas of work. (5) Methods of pre-professional training and career guidance are aimed at studying the applied methods of work.

The findings revealed that the role of teachers in supporting career choices was also important, especially when it came to choosing professions related to academic subjects. In A.'s example, it is the teachers who was her as a future massage therapist or athlete. This highlights the importance of teachers' competence in career guidance and their ability to identify and develop students' talents. It was also important to note that respondent A lacked information and made no interaction with others about his choice of profession. Lack of information and interaction was thus a risk factor. In the case of Respondent A, there was a lack of information and support from others: "They don't tell me anything, I didn't ask" causes concern. This may indicate alienation, lack of attention to his professional needs, and limited opportunities to receive useful advice and recommendations.

With regard to students' professional choice support, the administration showed having limited choice of professions and focus only on "accessible" areas: "We have a lot of people applying for massage therapists, they are applying for translators. In other words, this is everything that is not related to production activities." This response reflected the traditional approach to the employment of people with disabilities. But at the same time, there was an understanding of the importance of teachers' influence on students' professional self-determination and further employment.: "I think I'm explaining that you still need to take reality into account a little bit. Both parents and the school, we still guide them." And so independent choice (with support/ advice) was noted by 60% of students, who noted the importance of parental support, influence of teacher recommendations. On the other hand, only 20% of students noted that they did not interact with parents or teachers at all, and there was a limited choice of professions.

Despite the declared support and independence of choice, the professional horizons of students with disabilities were found very narrowed. The head teacher noted that most graduates were guided by traditional professions. The example of Respondent A demonstrated how the opinion of teachers can influence the choice of future activities. It is also very important to note the need for the active involvement of all participants in the educational process (parents, teachers, peers) in the process of professional self-determination of high school students with disabilities. It is important to strike a balance between providing support and giving students sufficient freedom to choose their own profession. Unconditional support can lead to unrealistic decisions, and excessive pressure and imposition of one's opinion can lead to a loss of interest in professional activity. The study ended with a positive note that in order to create conditions for an informed choice of profession, students should be provided with the opportunity to receive information about various fields of activity, so that they can try their hands at different types of work and develop the necessary competencies. A need was also felt of the support from parents,

teachers, and peers, to play an important role in the professional self-determination of high school students with disabilities.

Next, the study analyzed barriers preventing the formation of such ideas among students of special educational institutions is based on the respondents' answers regarding the choice of profession, understanding of its features and requirements, as well as ideas about the labor market, employment and their own limitations. From the responses of the respondents, it was possible to identify barriers to specific ideas about professions (See Figure 1).

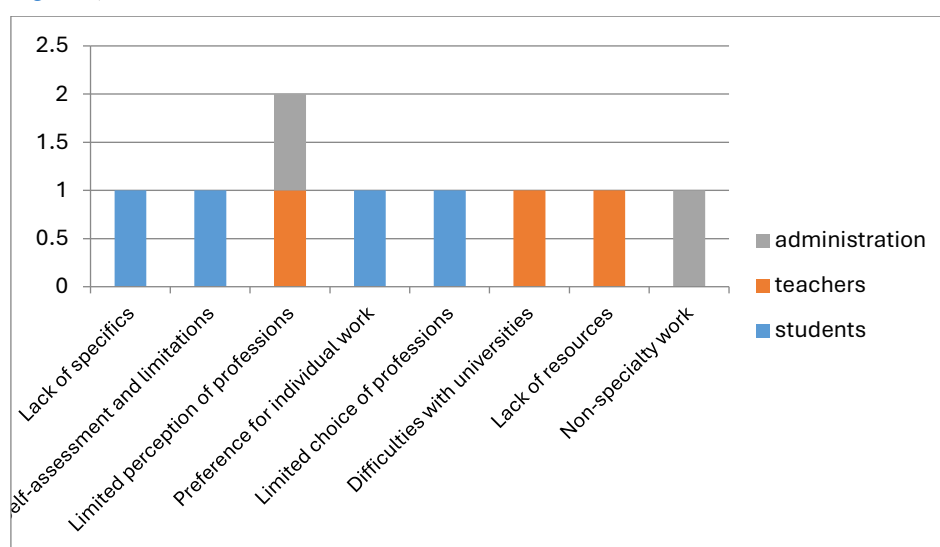


Figure 1: Distribution of barriers among groups of respondents

Students' responses about their future profession show uncertainty or general ideas that are not supported by knowledge about the content of the job and its requirements. For example: M. wants to "just sing, maybe perform on stage" (it is unclear how she sees the way to this goal). Respondent A. has no information at all, "They don't tell me anything, I didn't ask," B.: "Music. I'm a performer and a pianist, yes," meaning I have no idea about other activities. Their responses to questions about difficulties and employment opportunities show that some students are aware of their limitations and possible barriers, but not all, as respondent M. fears that it will be difficult to find a job due to disability. Questions about their preferred work style show that students may have a limited understanding of which professions are suitable for them. Students prefer to work alone, which may limit their choice of professions that require teamwork. The administration notes the limited choice of professions for students with disabilities, highlights difficulties in interacting with colleges, universities and employers, and is aware of the lack of resources to organize vocational training. Teachers believe that many graduates do not go to work in their specialty, and also note the limited choice of professions and lack of information. Thus, the main barriers are insufficient awareness of professions and the labor market, limited choice of professions, difficulties in finding employment, as well as subjective ideas about their capabilities and limitations.

On the issue of recommendations for professional training, it can be noted that students talk about more practice-oriented training, students express the need for more specific and applied training related to their chosen profession. M.: "Well, it seems to me, for example, if someone chooses a profession, it is with this We must work as a human being in the sense that we prepare them in the right subjects...". It was also noted that there is a need for an individual approach, that is, students want the training to be focused on their specific interests and needs. At the same time, the administration also recommends: a) improving cooperation with universities and employers; b) creating a career guidance cabinet; c) improving staffing; d) Expanding the list of professions. Teachers recommend: a) improvement of the material base; b) professional development; c) expansion of interaction with employers. Recommendations include individualization of training, provision of practical experience, expansion of cooperation with employers and educational institutions, as well as professional development of teachers.

Do the skill indicators meet the requirements of the profession: The students' answers to the questions show that students mostly assess their qualities correctly, but do not always correlate them with the requirements of specific professions, as M. loves music, but does not know who he wants to work for. Students who prefer solo work do not consider professions that require teamwork. Choosing a profession related to sports, but not the fact that they are ready to work in their specialty. Thus, personal qualities meet the requirements of the profession, but students cannot correctly relate them to the needs of the profession, which indicates the need for deeper career guidance, including familiarization with the requirements of specific professions, assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the development of necessary competencies.

Discussion

The formation of adequate and realistic ideas about the future profession was a key factor found in this study for a successful professional self-determination, especially for high school students with disabilities. The study realized the premise that sustainable career choices cannot be achieved without comprehensive support that includes not only knowledge and skills, but also such factors like the development of self-esteem, motivation, goal setting, and adaptability. Teachers play a central role in this process and must possess specialized competencies—from inclusive assessment and diagnostics to curriculum adaptation and family engagement. Additional opportunities are emerging through the use of modern tools such as individualized education plans, eye-tracking, and other technologies that help tailor educational trajectories to each student's specific needs.

International experience further confirms that early career guidance, flexible learning environments, close collaboration with employers, and individualized support significantly improve the likelihood of stable employment for students with disabilities. Thus, vocational guidance and preparation of students with disabilities should become a priority of national education policy and a fundamental component of their right to dignified, socially meaningful employment. This analysis of academic sources allows us to highlight several priority areas for reforming the system of vocational guidance and training for students with disabilities. First, vocational guidance must be institutionalized as a systemic function of schools through regulatory frameworks. Second, the

rehabilitation of career guidance infrastructure is essential – this includes counseling offices, vocational training sites, and career centers. Third, teacher preparation should include the development of specific competencies: inclusive diagnostics, individualized trajectory planning, and cooperation with families. Fourth, education must be more closely aligned with labor market needs, including the development of regional maps of in-demand professions and proactive involvement of employers in guidance processes.

With regard to overcome the barriers identified, it is necessary not only to expand the range of professions offered and improve the quality of professional training, but also to intensify career guidance aimed at developing students' skills of introspection, goal-setting and informed decision-making. In addition, it is important to strengthen cooperation between schools, families, employers and public organizations in order to create favorable conditions for the successful socialization and employment of graduates with disabilities.

Conclusion

To conclude, a final word must be said to solve the identified problems and improve the effectiveness of vocational training for high school students with disabilities. The study makes the following recommendations to implement a set of measures:

1. First, improving the educational process, such as: a) individualization of education (development of individual educational routes and professional training programs that take into account the characteristics, inclinations and educational needs of each student); b) practice-oriented learning (including practical exercises, master classes, professional trials, project activities, case studies and business games in the curriculum); c) development of social skills (organization of group projects and events that require interaction and collaboration; conducting trainings on the development of communication skills, self-confidence and teamwork)
2. Second, strengthening the links between school, family and the labor market, viz., : a) interaction with universities and employers (organization of joint events (excursions, master classes, round tables) with the participation of representatives of colleges, universities and employers; development of internship programs and internships for students with disabilities at city enterprises; creation of a database of vacancies available to persons with disabilities; b) involvement of parents (support the child's interest in professional activity; assistance in assessing opportunities and limitations; encouragement of the development of independence and responsibility); c) informing and consulting: Providing access to information about the labor market and educational opportunities; organizing consultations with professional career guidance counselors and psychologists.
3. Development of personnel and logistical support, viz., a) staffing (introduction of the position of a career guidance and employment specialist to the school staff; provision of advanced training for teachers in the field of vocational training for persons with disabilities)

These recommendations aim at improving the effectiveness of the educational process by adapting it to the individual needs of students, focusing on the practical application of knowledge and the development of key social competencies necessary for successful work, creating a favorable environment for professional self-determination of students, ensuring

their access to relevant information and support from various participants in the educational process..

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