



# Designing Career Centers in Lithuania

The Evaluation of the Pilot Project of the Career Center  
“Karjeras” in Alytus town

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## ABSTRACT

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*Background of the thesis.* The career center "Karjeras" is a pilot project, founded in 2019 in Alytus town in Lithuania as a knowledge hub to serve school pupils for their career journey. A case study was conducted in 2020 December to evaluate the services of the newly established organisation and determine if any points of improvement could be made for it to serve as the exemplary center nationally.

*Purpose.* The objective of this thesis was to collect feedback about the career center's services from its related stakeholders and the main service recipients. Furthermore, the study aimed to equip the data received in order to provide the interested parties with the practical recommendations for the further development and expansion of career center network.

*Methods.* This research was carried out as a case study to collect quantitative data in the form of an online survey, using statistical analysis in *Excel* and qualitative evaluation with the help of semi-structured interviews and content analysis. The data were collected from 80 school pupils and 5 career guidance field representatives during December 2020.

*Results.* The key finding revealed that the majority of school pupils knew that the "Karjeras" existed in their town, however only 20% of them actually used its services. What is more, the experts were of aligned approach that the career center plays a significant role regionally and nationally for many reasons: education, partnerships, creation of opportunities. This research also uncovered that although the center seemed to be serving its purpose, a clear operating model, broader visibility, and clear structure would be needed.

*Conclusions.* The results indicate that there exist challenges in the "Karjeras" and changes have to be made. Furthermore, the recommendations how to address necessary improvements for the center are presented as a practical and easy to apply tool.

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Key words: career center, organisational development, change, improvement, pupils, leadership

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS**

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OD	Organisational Development
RCCs	Regional Career Centers
YG	Youth Guarantee

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Careers play an important role in people's lives. Thus, choosing a profession is one of the most difficult tasks. Undoubtedly, the right decision enables a person to fully realize his potential in order to contribute best to his ability. However, most of the times young graduates tend to follow the path, influenced by their family's and friends' opinions, in contrary to their desires and passion. A rapidly developing economy and increasingly competitive global labour market does not lessen a burden of decision making as well. Needless to say, planning a career requires a diligent exploration as well as assessment and this can be done easier with the right resources and tools.

On 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the Lithuanian Government approved the National Progress Plan for the period of 2021-2030, which purpose is to outline the key areas Lithuania has to improve over the upcoming ten years so the advancement in the social, economic, environmental and security fields could be achieved. A part of the action plan intends to not only reduce the income inequality as well as social exclusion, but to strengthen an inclusive labour market too.

Lithuania is no exception when talked about its ageing population and will certainly face challenges. The country's working-age population is forecasted to decline by 20% until 2030 (OECD 2018) and the main concerning matter is that Lithuania is listed among the top of the OECD countries to experience that. According to the Lithuanian Education Management Information System (2021), only one in two students who start ICT (Information and Communication Technology) studies, around 23% stop their studies in the first year, 10% in the second year and another 16% in the following years. Undoubtedly, there can be a number of reasons leading to such a result, however experts tell that one of the factors can be a student's readiness to study a particular subject. Krumboltz Social Learning Theory on Career Choice suggests that one of the main factors influencing career choice are the learning experiences and tasks to assess skills. (Krumboltz & Nichols 1990, 163)

The aim of this thesis is to investigate and evaluate the pilot version of the career center in Alytus town, Lithuania, in terms of its effectiveness. It is necessary to assess the role of participation experience of the students to see how they benefit of the center's services and how it at the time of a conducted research, responds to their interests. The outlook of the investigation will involve coverage of the theoretical background and empirical research through the direct feedback received from the main users of the career center and the specialists, responsible for its governance.

This study seeks to obtain data which would help address the research gaps and examine the emerging role of career guidance centers. Based on the collected direct customer feedback, supported by the research literature, its thorough interpretation and discussion, this thesis aims to make a hands-on proposal (including identification of tools and the presentation of an action plan) for the center's improvement areas and further successful expansion of the career centers' network in Lithuania.

### **1.1 Research objectives and research questions**

The aim of this research is to investigate and evaluate the pilot version of the career guidance center "Karjeras" in Alytus town as well as provide recommendations for its further development based on the analysis of collected theoretical and empirical data.

The research examines the emerging role of career guidance centers and aims to generate practical insights into the organizational framework. The focus of the aforementioned center's assessment is conducted while measuring the quality of performance in the years of its existence and estimating the impact for its customers, meaning taking into consideration pupils' awareness about center's existence, usability and satisfaction of the services.

Hence, the following research questions were formulated:

- How is the pilot career guidance center “Karjeras” in Alytus town evaluated by the pupils and government representatives?
- What are the improvement areas of the existing career center?
- What would be the recommendations for the expansion of the career centers in Lithuania in the future?

## **1.2 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis is composed of seven themed chapters. The first section of the thesis will introduce a reader to the “career guidance” topic and will examine the nature of its consultation centers more in depth, talking about the formation and execution.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of the thesis, the author introduces the theoretical dimensions of the research and looks at the organizational operating models in order to find the best fit for the organisation, discussed in this case study.

The third chapter is concerned with the methodology used for this research paper and gives reasons for the applied methods to acquire data.

In the chapter four the empirical research results of the taken interviews and conducted online survey are presented, described and analysed.

The final sections, comprised of 5, 6 and 7, guide a reader towards the conclusion and discussion of the study, supported by the recommendation plan for the center’s further development.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Career Guidance Centers

The concept of “career” has been changing: in the past, careers were associated with an organisation, nowadays it is more individual - his or her ability to adjust, change, if necessary, and achieve career goals and to be mobile are being assessed. For this reason employees need to develop new career strategies, behaviours, skills, competences that help achieve career success and adapt to the ever-changing environment. (Ballout 2009)

Career in the narrow sense explains an individual's choice of occupation and its planning, his or her skills, values and interests. According to the Lithuania’s Law on Education (2017), career is the totality of learning, self-expression, work activities and roles throughout a person's lifetime that are meaningful to the individual and society.

Most guidance and counselling professionals say that careers need to start with self-knowledge, and that it is an important factor in choosing the right path of occupation. Thus, better knowing yourself helps understand the needs, ambitions, aspirations and values more explicitly and determine what kind of work environment one desires.

On the report of the Euroguidance (2021), career guidance can be seen as a process, during which the information sources and tools are provided in order to assess one’s interests in the areas of education, training and employment. In the definition by The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) (2018), portrays the term as:

*A continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make education, training and occupation decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are*



*learned and/or used. Guidance covers a range of individual and collective activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support, and the teaching of decision-making and career management skills.*

Confirming an aforementioned approach, a career counselling's importance is undeniable and a career center serves society as a hub for knowledge exchange, practice oriented consultancy and network. Morem & Schutt (2008) state that there are certain steps to be taken to establish one according to the so called "cyclical approach", which involves the following stages: planning, developing, implementing and "improving" and finally return to the first stage to review and make it better.

The researchers as well suggest that career centers play a crucial role while providing individuals with the knowledge and tools on how to gather and integrate the information according to one's career development needs and in such way serve as outstanding resource places for the communities:

*Whether they serve second grader or senior citizens, assembly line workers or academic researchers, career centers must take all of these factors into account and provide services geared, toward today's world of work - and ready for tomorrow's. (Morem & Schutt 2008)*

What is more, in order to witness a successful work of a career center, specific elements have to be covered, to name a few:

- Instruct educational institutions and its responsables with a need to evaluate and advance the career development needs of the users;
- Follow the main aims of the center aligned with the purpose of career development;
- Stay open and honest with declaring which services the center is able to provide;
- Let the service users own the career center's services and processes;
- Finally, provide individuals with special practical instruments like a personal career programme. Morem & Schutt (2008)

## 2.2 Career Guidance in Lithuania

The launch of the Euroguidance project - the development of vocational information and counselling in Lithuania dates back to 1998 and the legislation of the counselling system in Lithuania has been reported as rather fragmented. (Euroguidance 2021) Despite the fact that career guidance topic is named to be of the fundamental importance, Lithuania's expenditure on education and training in the last years has been reported to be low and not systematically evaluated comparing to the other member countries. (OECD 2021)

The law on Education (Republic of Lithuania 2017) states that the purpose of career guidance is to support everyone with career advisory by providing tools and resources so that the professional path is chosen confidently. The national document stresses that educational information assistance shall include the development and implementation of educational information programmes and ensure the enhancement of the information network system. Such responsibility is divided among the educational institutions, such as: general education schools, vocational training, higher education institutions and other career guidance organisations) in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education Science and Sports together with the Minister of Social Security and Labour. Additionally, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange is held accountable for coordination of career guidance services nationally, therefore such services are provided by the territorial labour exchange divisions, called youth job centres. (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport 2004)

### 2.2.1 The Career Center "Karjeras" in Alytus

In this thesis the career center, called "Karjeras" (eng. "The Career"), located in the northern side of Lithuania, Alytus town, was founded in 2019. Currently, there are 8 primary and lower secondary schools, 4 gymnasiums and one merged adult and youth school in Alytus. For the fact, all of these 13 educational institutions have one career counsellor, who is entitled to dedicate 10 hours per week to provide pupils with career advice, promote employment possibilities and organize

relevant events (Dilienė and Naginionytė 2018). The latter example is the result of the lacking systematic approach towards the career guidance system in Lithuania. As barely research has been conducted about the development of career centers in Lithuania, this particular topic was chosen to look into more in depth.

The division of the responsibilities for the center within the governance is described in the paragraphs below.

The Alytus Town Municipality, located in Alytus, which is the largest town in the southern Lithuania. As emphasized on the municipality's website, as part of the town's vision and strategy, education plays a meaningful role - from organising the activities and introducing young people to different professions and the competences to strengthening cooperation with the regional career center "Karjeras". (Alytus Town Municipality, 2022)

The Lithuanian Employment Service operates under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour after its restructuring in October 2018 and implements policies to support individuals with consultancy on employment opportunities, providing training to jobseekers to acquire the right skills competitive labour market. On the agency's website, one can find a section, dedicated for youth, where "Karjeras", its website and the services are explained as well. (The Lithuanian Employment Service, 2022)

The Department of Youth Affairs acts under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor and leads its way for the implementation of the established National Youth Policy measures to strengthen the motivation of young people to participate in the active life of the society and to take part in solving youth problems. The main tasks of the Department are to coordinate the activities of state institutions and bodies in the field of youth policy, to develop and implement state youth policy programmes and to analyse the situation of youth's role and involvement in the country. As part of the Department's mandate, the objective is to provide career guidance services, such as individual counselling, volunteering opportunities, self-awareness activities, entrepreneurship promotion programmes under the "youth policy sections". (Department of Youth Affairs, 2022) The figure 1 below provides with a visual demonstration.

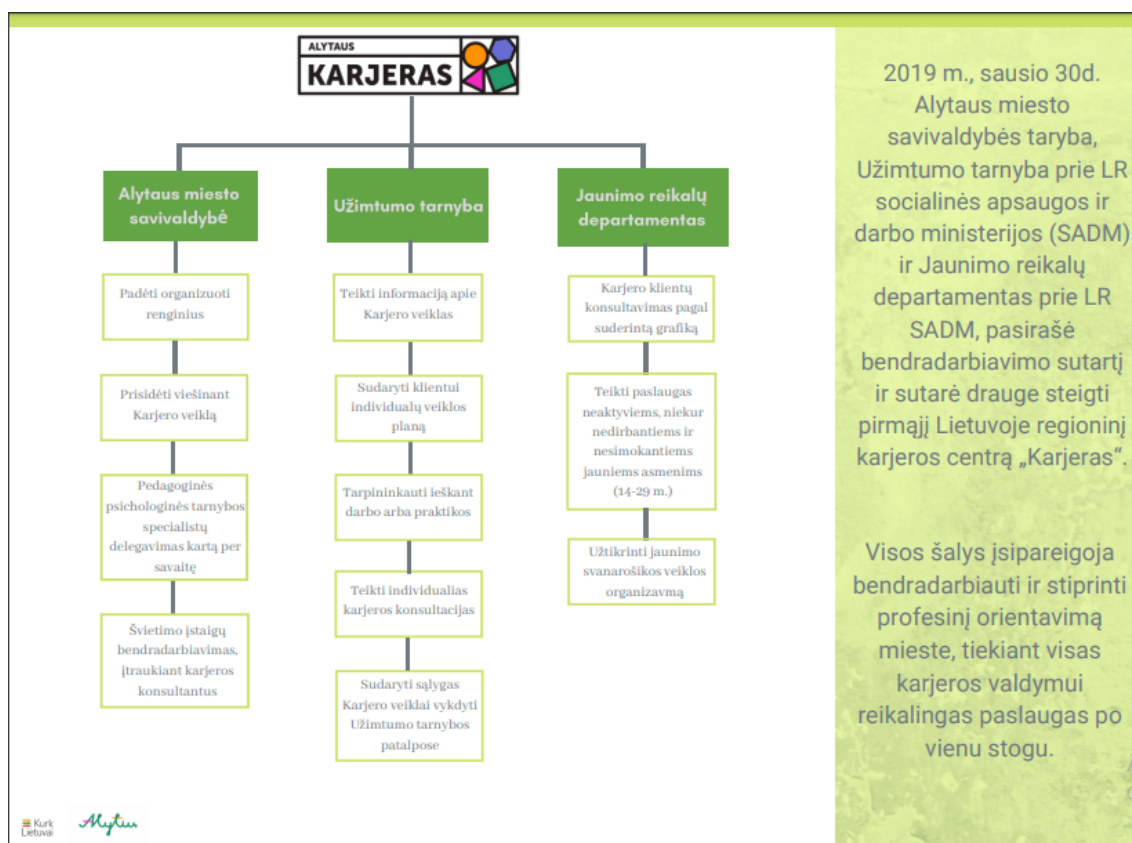


FIGURE 1. “Karjeras” in Alytus and its responsible governmental bodies (Dilienė and Naginionytė 2018)

Evidently, the majority of the information about the center’s activities and services today is published mainly on the website of “Karjeras”, which is worth mentioning, was created in 2022. The example of activities that are listed within the scope of the center can be seen in the figure 2.

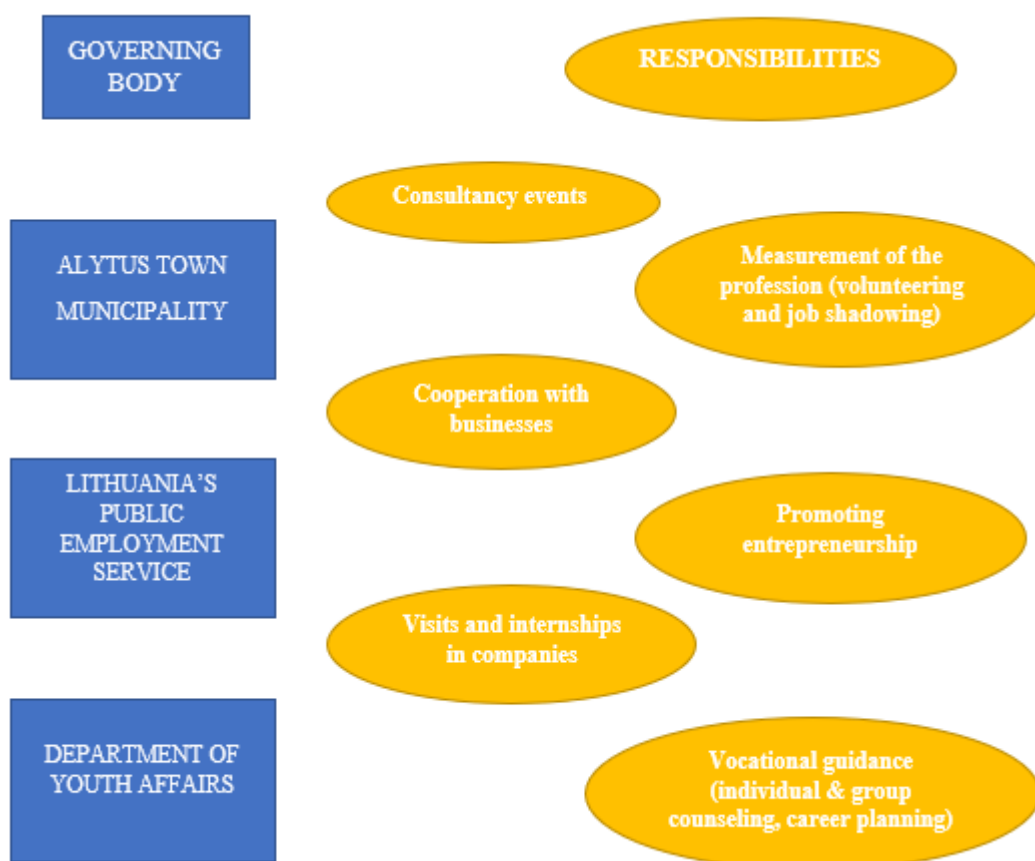


FIGURE 2. "Karjeras" center and its responsibilities (created by the author of the thesis)

### 3 UNDERSTANDING CAREER CENTERS AS ORGANISATIONS

#### 3.1 The role of an organisation

The International Dictionary of Words explains the term “organisation” as someone's structure, system or a group of people, brought together for some work or activity, usually with separate assets and leadership. What an organisation is and what its basic characteristics are have changed significantly over time. Since the notion of the organisation being seen as an impersonal mechanism (Taylor 2004). The theoretical view on organizational change could be divided in two main phases, seen by the researchers, whereas:

- The first stage was the idea of mechanistic organization, which derived from the period of industrialization at the end of the 19th century and led to the approach whereby the employer's prosperity heavily depended on the physical efficiency of the workers (Taylor 2004). The organisation was observed as a machine, working for the manager to achieve the given goals and employees were treated as objects to fulfill particular tasks.
- The second stage presented the idea of the organisation as a social system, mainly supported by Barnard (1968), who was the pioneer in portraying the organisation as a social unit, functioning efficiently, when aligned with the employees' objectives. Of a particular importance, he considered the aspect of teamwork, since “collaboration leads to greater results, than can be achieved through individual activity” (Barnard 1968, 110). To add more, Barnard emphasized that an organisation that wants to survive must formulate its core purpose towards its consumers instead of themselves.

The notion that an organisation must first and foremost serve the society were backed up by such authors like Drucker (2002), whose approach was characterized as follows - an organisation is part of a larger system and is interdependent with other parts of society, in other words - an organisation serves society and vice versa.

A review of organisation's evolution from the historical perspective by eminent practitioners in the field, reveals that an organisation can be considered as a purposeful, complex system, made up of interconnected parts. In line with the way in which different authors define the term "organisation", Drucker (2002, 9-17) expressed that there is no such thing as the "right" organisation and it just can be seen as a mean of helping people work together more efficiently. Thus, an organisation is an open social system, connecting a group of people with a common purpose. Perhaps the most important observation is that the historically evolving concept of the organisation allows us to see the phenomenon of change within it.

### **3.2 Development of Organisations**

Coming to "organisational development", authors like McLagan (1989) state that the term is mainly seen as the interconnectedness of people and procedures so the impact on the organisation as the whole could be initiated and executed whereas Cummings and Worley (2014, 1) propose that it is a system of different procedures, plan of activities that strive organisational efficacy. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2022) agrees that while organisations exist in a ever-changing environment, over time they need to adjust in order to operate to their best capacity, because the ultimate purpose is its continuous strive for the best performance. CIPD (2022) adds that there are specific components influencing organisational development significantly, such as: "organisational culture, capability, values and relationships".

McLean (2005) identifies a series of fundamental elements that are revealed in the Organisational Development Process Model, presented in the figure 3 below.

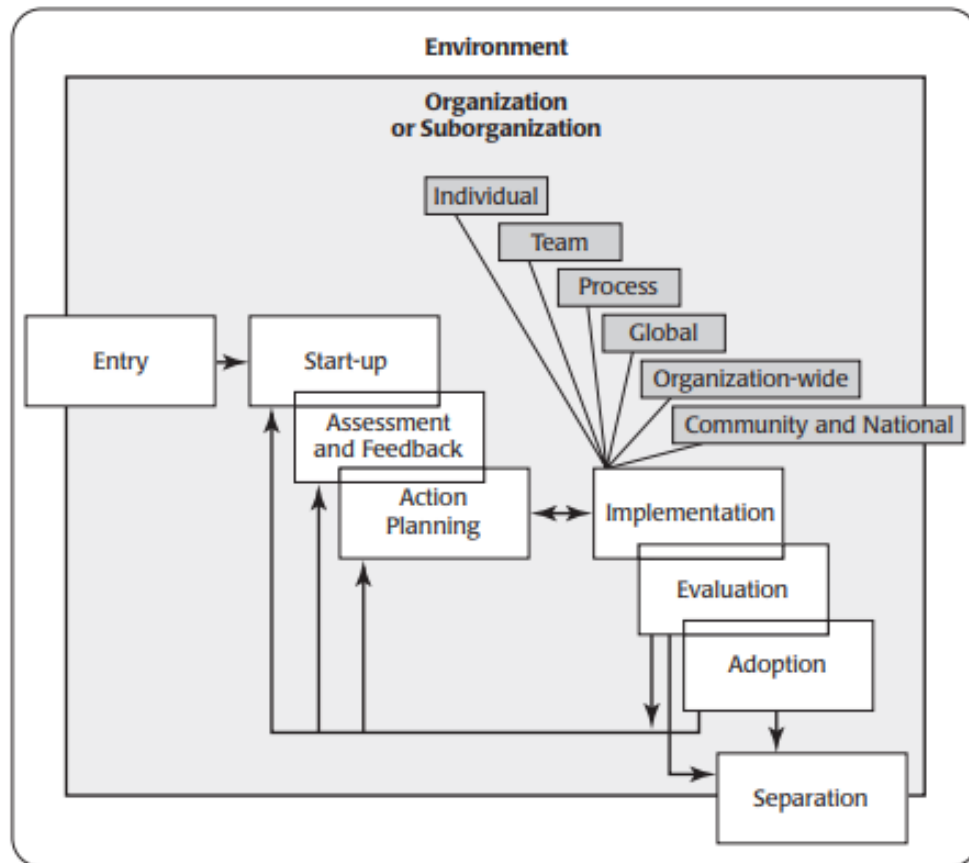


FIGURE 3. Organisational Development Process Model (McLean 2005)

Commitment towards the continual progress of an organisation is reflected throughout the displayed eight phases above. Although every stage could be analysed and described to a certain extent, in the relevance to this study, only particular stages of the model are discussed. It is worth drawing attention to that fact that occasionally certain phases have to be merged or eliminated due to the needs of an organisation, whereas:

*“Assessment and Feedback”* represents the conduct of the analysis of an organisation where its strengths and weaknesses are assessed and the further action items foreseen.

*“Action Plan”* step calls for practical application of the assessment that was run. It lays the focus on what it takes and how an organisation can be improved.



*“Implementation”* phase is the result of the previous stages and exhibits how successfully it was executed.

Moving on, after the *“Evaluation”* step was critically examined, *“Adoption”* follows, which indicates one of the last stages of the cycle when in most cases the processes and changes are being institutionalized within an organisation. Otherwise, after the meticulous review, if the outcome is undesirable, the procedure is renewed and comes back to the beginning. (McLean 2005)

All is all, there might not be a perfect OD model, however, every organisation aims to operate to the best of one's ability. Clearly, the OD is a well planned, systematic and constant enhancement of an organisation.

### **3.3 Addressing Change in Organisations**

The general theme of “organizational change” has received a great deal of attention from theorists and practitioners. Researchers from all over the world have carried out numerous studies on various aspects of managing change in organisations. This has led to the development of a wide range of definitions of change, theories for identifying and managing change, as this process is inevitable in any organisational setting.

Organisations are constantly confronted with an unstable, dynamic environment that encourages them to renew themselves in order to survive and stay competitive in today's world. As Burnes (2004) points out, it should be stressed that change is a permanent characteristic of an organisation on the both, the operational and the strategic level. Undoubtedly, changes that are made to improve or even revolutionize one or more elements of an organisation's development. Such changes are caused by organisation's external or internal factors. In addition to the latter statements, they take place completely irrespective of the nature of its activities, performance, management and other aspects. (Fullan 2012) This is how changes are deliberately implemented to avoid negative consequences and to improve the performance of the organisation.

It is worth pointing out that the factors that lead to changes in organisations are not always unpredictable and sudden, before they are applied. On the contrary, some factors that affect them can be anticipated and one can prepare for them. The fact that the only changes that can be controlled by an organisation itself, are those that take place within it, notes Warrick (2009).

When examining the work of various scholars on the analysis and implementation of change, it is noticeable that change has been classified in a number of different ways, based on the objectives of change. A fairly simple classification of the term is provided by Brightman and Moran (2000, 69), who categorize change as structural, technological, managerial, human and organisational. Meanwhile, Conner (1993) argues that all change can be divided into micro-change, macro-change and organisational change.

Thus, the term “change”, although defined differently by various authors, in all cases implies the transition – an introduction of innovations, the emergence of improvements, influenced by internal and external factors. In line with this idea, a definition of the organisational change means its continuous and gradual process when an organisation moves from its current state towards a desired future state.

To summarise, Kouzes and Posner (2003, 57) argue that no organisation can achieve the best results by maintaining the status quo. They suggest that, whatever challenges an organisation face, if responded to them properly, they can be exploited to achieve operational efficiency and competitive advantage. Organisations responding adequately to internal and external challenges taking place inside and outside their organisation, also change themselves. To Armstrong's (2006) view, these changes can affect areas such as: organisation's purpose and mission, quality, values, which impact people, customer service and technology directly.

The understanding of the change process as one of the main drivers of change has also been identified by Michael Fullan (Cuttress et al. 2005, 55). Additional views can also be extended to Kurt Lewin's (Bridgman et al. 2016) assertion that

one of the main reasons for the failure of change implementation is the unprepared implementation of change. It can therefore be argued, that in order to understand how to implement change successfully, it is necessary to understand the change process itself and the steps that need to be taken in it.

Following the ideas of authors who studied the change process, it is useful to classify it in three main phases, falling under *initiation*, *implementation* and *institutionalization*. To begin with, initiation, according to Fullan (2001), depends on three main factors:

- The need to update the process in terms of urgency, quality, practicality, clarity and complexity;
- The readiness of the staff to participate in the process;
- The availability of resources and support.

The second stage is the practical implementation of the reform, in which the action items were planned already in the first phase. This step influences the creation of new rules, procedures, values, behaviours, say Freeman (2010, 24) The implementation level is mainly determined by the characteristics of the reform, the organisational and environmental factors.

The last stage is called institutionalization, also known as a post-change action. It shows whether innovations introduced into everyday practice become part of organisation's day to day activities (Freeman 2010). In terms of the prerequisites for successful change, the leadership expert Kotter (2012), developed a set of principles and requirements for successful change, where he links people's roles of responsibility with their attitude, according to which people see, feel and apply processes and adapt themselves.

### **3.4 McKinsey 7S Model for Organizational Effectiveness**

After reviewing the prevailing literature on the topic of organisational development and change, an additional valuable source, the "McKinsey 7S framework", serving as tool to assess organisation's effectiveness, stands out. The McKinsey

model considers seven fundamental components like: strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff and skills so that organisation could reach its mastery. (Singh, 2013)

The McKinsey 7S model can be effectively applied to assess an organisation's performance, identify the problems and changes needed to improve performance, and organise their proper implementation to minimise the risk of negative consequences. After thorough theoretical and empirical analysis of the career center in Alytus, the decision was made to use the McKinsey 7S model to provide useful recommendations for the purpose of career guidance network's further successful development.

The model can be described as a strategic planning tool which helps identify the problems of an organisation that undermine its performance and implement the necessary changes to improve performance. The model was developed in 1980 by a group of McKinsey consultants Tom Peters, Robert Waterman, Anthony Athos and Richard Pascale and is widely used in the design and optimisation of business processes within organisations. The advantage of this framework is considered to be seven key elements of the organisation and their compatibility with each other which will be described below. (Weiss 2011 ; Michalski 2011; Cameron and Green 2015)

The elements analyzed in the McKinsey 7S model are the following: Structure, Strategy, Systems, Shared values, Style, Skills, Staff (Weiss 2011). All seven elements are interrelated and can be divided into: "hard" as tangible, such as: structure, strategy, systems; and "soft" as intangible, being: shared values, style, skills, staff. The figure 4 displays them in the visual format.

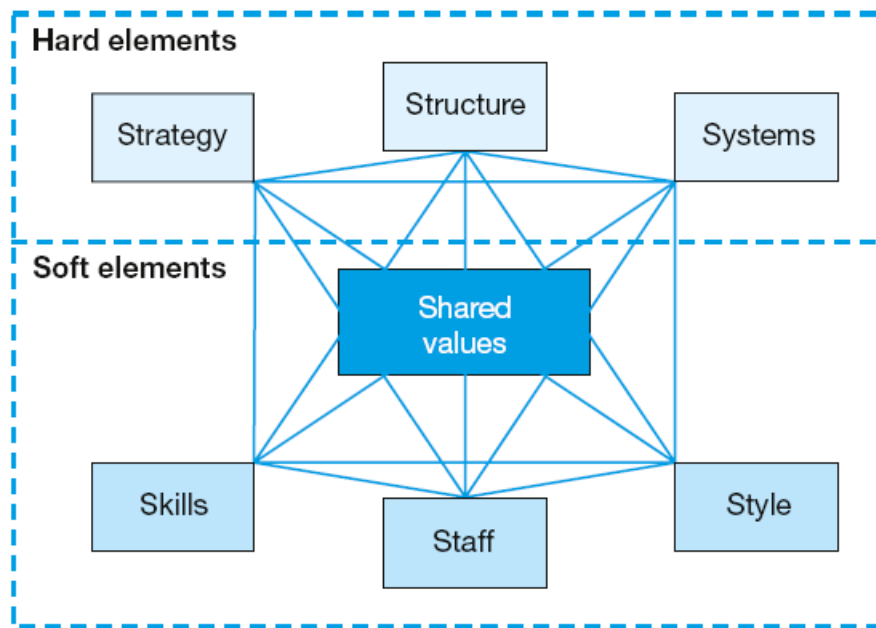


FIGURE 4. McKinsey 7S framework – the hard and soft elements (Weiss 2011)

Each of these elements must be consistent with the others, meaning that in case of a change in one of the elements will lead to a change in the other elements. When analyzing the structure of the McKinsey 7S model, it should be noted that the element "**Shared Values**" is placed in the middle of the model to emphasize the importance of the mission of an organisation that as well influence the internal environment. It is considered to be the key element, describing the norms and standards of cooperation along with the principles of an organizational culture.

**Strategy:** a significant component, which provides a long-term development plan for the organization that helps increase the competitiveness of the business and create a sustainable competitive advantage. The following essential criteria can be identified:

- The strategy must be precisely formulated;
- The strategy must have long-term objectives;
- Aimed at achieving competitive advantage;
- Aligned with the organisation's overall values and mission. (Michalski 2011; Singh 2013)

**Structure:** the model sees 'structure' as the interaction between the different departments of an organisation. The structure portrays the inter-departmental relationship, highlighting priorities and responsibilities for each of them. The latter model is the most mobile and amenable to change. (Michalski 2011; Singh 2013)

**Systems:** describe and evaluate the day-to-day working procedures in an organisation. This element is responsible for how management decisions are made, how daily work is organised in the company, and the ways and methods by which the business is developed.

**Style:** this component tells us about the leadership style of the head of an organisation. It defines the importance of the leading positions in it and their role in making principal decisions related to its further development.

**Staff** is part of the framework to define the role of the employees working in an organisation – shares their responsibilities and drives the topics of training, motivation and reward.

**Skills:** this element provides with an overview of the skills, capabilities and competences of an organisation's staff. (Weiss 2011; Michalski 2011; Cameron and Green 2015)

Based on the carried out analysis, the latter framework, will be discussed in the last chapter of the thesis and applied to the particular case of the regional career guidance center in Alytus as part of a recommendation plan in order to contribute to the successful development of the existing pilot project and expansion of the career centers' network in Lithuania.

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a crucial part of any scientific project which determines the validity and significance of the research. In order to ensure that the methodology of the study best reflects the reliability of the results obtained, various theoretical approaches and methods of the development work, which aims “to bring about useful changes” written by Moilanen, Ojasalo and Ritalahti (2022), were learned and applied in this thesis.

The conducted research served as a multi-method evaluative research design, comprising the pupils, who also can be described as “customers” of career center “Karjeras” in Alytus town, Lithuania as well as the policy experts in the field, who are referred in this project as key “stakeholders” in the later chapters. Based on a review of the literature, this research project made it possible to run two empirical researches.

The main objectives of the empirical research are the following:

- to gather feedback from the service recipients and evaluate the functionality and the quality of the activities provided by the career center “Karjeras”;
- to collect the background and opinions from the policy and field experts who possess the knowledge about the concept, implementation as well as execution of the career center “Karjeras”;
- on the basis of the results, received out of the carried out study, to determine, whether the activities of the center are useful and effective;
- to provide recommendations for the further advancement of the career center’s operations
- as part of recommendations section, elaborate on a potential replication of such model of a center in Lithuania for a long term perspective.

While conducting the research, guided by the research questions, the goal was to prove or disprove the below mentioned hypotheses:

1. The pupils, living in Alytus town, are aware about the career guidance services, provided at the career center “Karjeras” and are content with their quality.
2. The operating model of the pilot version of the career center in Alytus has no improvement areas and is suitable to replicate for the expansion of further career centers in Lithuania.

#### **4.1 The Case Study of “Karjeras” in Alytus**

The case study of this thesis focused on the regional pilot project of “Karjeras” in Alytus, Lithuania which counts its existence since 2019. The career center was chosen for two reasons: firstly, out of a personal interest of a researcher as she believes that career guidance plays a paramount role in every young person’s academic and professional life and secondly, because the career center is the pioneering concept in the country. Since the center’s establishment, it has undergone several important changes in a relatively short period of time, therefore it was captivating to witness from a more closer look its performance and further development.

The main ambition of the career center is to support school pupils with resources, tools and guidance about their career development. The career services encompass career planning, individual counselling, career guidance sessions, possibilities to find an internship and volunteering placements.

The pilot project refers to the fact that such center in Lithuania was the first, the only one and was given a probationary period to prove its necessity for two years, after which the official evaluation followed. As the aim of the pilot project was to secure its continuation to operate, only recently this year, in 2022, relying on the good practices in the foreign countries, it was agreed to set up additional 14 regional career centres providing group and individual career guidance counselling (Youth Guarantee in Lithuania 2022). On the website of the YG in Lithuania it is stated that the RCCs (Regional Career Centers) are financed by the project funds, however without further elaboration by which specifically and for which period of time. The aim of the RCCs persists to combine the career guidance



activities of municipalities, schools, social and business partners in order to provide effective, career guidance services in the form of career education, vocational guidance, counselling and information services.

The expectations to show performance and deliver results in a couple of years' time since its foundation (especially during the times of Covid-19), to secure successful provision of the services and willingness to adapt the changes have led the organisation to major challenges. Therefore, it was very moving to investigate the performance of the center from a closer look and see what kind of, if any, improvement could be made to assure its even greater functionality. It should also be mentioned that a study of this kind has not yet been carried out since the establishment of the center.

## **4.2 Research methods**

In order to validate the raised hypotheses, various research methods were explored. As described by Moilanen et al. (2022), theoretically, any development work consists of six stages, that a researcher is advised to follow although not necessarily in the sequence, displayed below, in the figure 5, as each given step shares new information which has to be reconsidered in a particular case.

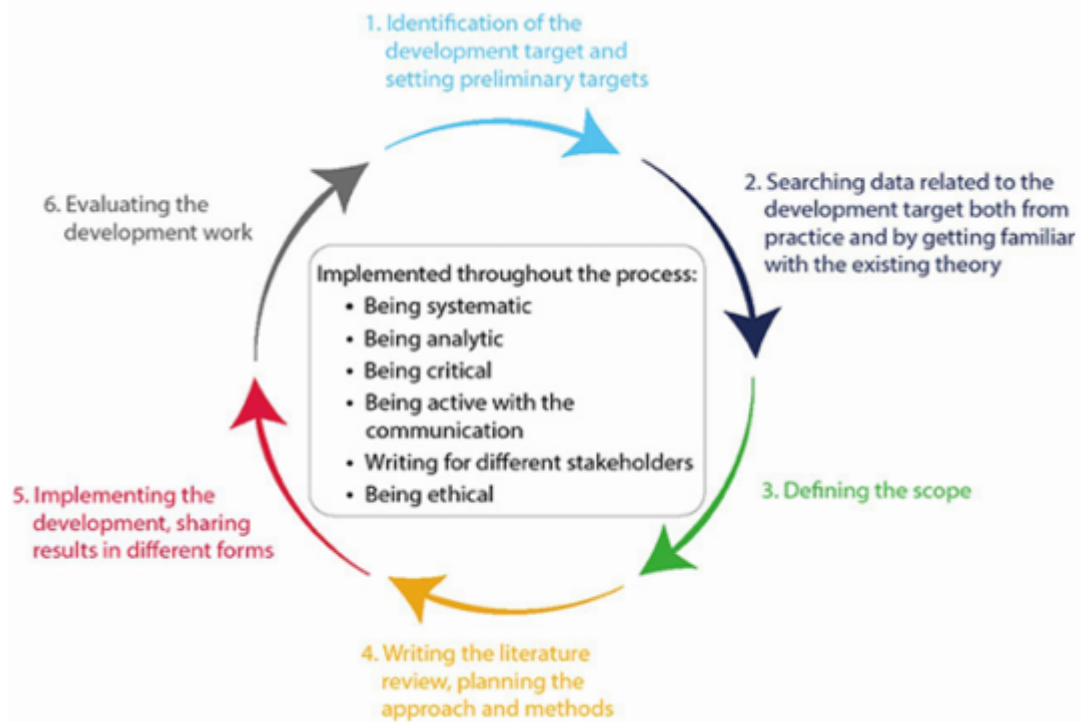


FIGURE 5. Research based development work process (Moilanen et al. 2022, 36)

Since the goal of this thesis is to get familiar as much as possible with the organisational model and operations of the “Karjeras” and apply necessary tools to help the organisation develop and improve, for this development work a case study was chosen (55). Since a case study can include both, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the research methods, a decision was made to use both methods and:

- a) to create and run a survey as a quantitative approach to quickly gather extensive reliable results. According to Moilanen et al. (2022, 59) could help receive information from many people at once and measure pupils’ satisfaction of the received services at the career center;
- b) to prepare and conduct semi structured interviews as a qualitative approach to produce data, containing deeper insights into a topic. What is more, according to Bryman (2012), this type of interviews provide with a possibility to take the advantage of interviewees’ opinions and point of view, thereby providing and more meticulous responses. Especially, whilst improvising on the order of the questions or posing extra ones, in such a way revealing important and relevant

insights of an interviewee. As Leavy (2014) states, such form of an interview gives a possibility to create a flow in the conversation reassure herewith if the information provided is well understood while allowing additionally to pose more questions.

In this thesis, the primary research consisted of semi-structured interviews with the policy experts and online survey, created for the recipients. The secondary research included the journal articles, reports, different publications of governments and international organizations. It should be stressed that the statements for the online survey together with the suggested answer options as well as questions for the expert interview were formulated only after a thorough analysis of the academic literature. It was made sure as well that the questionnaires were formed as objectively as possible in reflecting the problem under the study.

### **4.3 Data Collection Methods**

#### **4.3.1 Online Survey Questionnaire**

To begin with, the online questionnaire, dedicated for center's service recipients, also known as school pupils, contained altogether the mix of 17 statements and questions, and was structured into 4 main following blocks:

1<sup>st</sup> Question Block: Demographic profile of respondents, indicating gender and age;

2<sup>nd</sup> Question Block: Inquiring about the questions regarding the existence of the career center in Alytus town and its offered services;

3<sup>rd</sup> Question Block: Targeting the group of pupils, who have already accessed and used the services at "Karjeras" center, taking into consideration a personal view on the center, services, advantages and disadvantages;

4<sup>th</sup> Question Block: Targeting the group of pupils, who have not been exposed to the services at “Karjeras” center by the time the survey was conducted.

The survey questionnaire, sent to the respondents in their mother tongue – Lithuanian, consisted of 17 questions: 12 closed and 5 semi-closed questions, which can be seen in the Appendix 1. In addition, the translated version of them into the English language can be withdrawn in the Appendix 2. In order to make the best use of the questionnaire and to receive as detailed information as possible, the mixture of closed (when respondents can choose one or more answers from several possible ones) and semi-closed type (when respondents can share their opinion by entering it in the "Other" field where respondents could in case no suitable one was provided. Such methodology was chosen in order to avoid any possible misinterpretation.

In the beginning, the format of the possible given answers was chosen to be provided based on Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with a middle category of neutral assessment (“I am not sure”). However, after the target group of this research was evaluated in more detail, the researcher took freedom to select the certain wording and other aspects as the chosen approach of the selected survey questionnaire is the key way of communication between a researcher and a respondent. (Manfreda & Vehovar 2008) Therefore, during the development of the questionnaire, the choice of the available replies was adjusted and narrowed down taking into consideration pupils’ age. For instance, limiting the choice of answers in order to get more accurate results. Manfreda and Vehovar (2008) suggest that a suitable design of questions can support with a user-friendly survey experience, by engaging the respondents to be more active in expressing their views and sharing more detailed answers.

Moving on, it is worth noting a few additional matters when it comes to the design of the questionnaire. Firstly, a brief introduction about the purpose of the survey was described in the beginning whilst referring to a respondent as “You”; Your support“. As the questionnaire was created in the Lithuanian language, which happens to be the mother tongue of pupils, it is worthwhile exploring that there are some distinctions between the systems of personal pronouns in the Lithuanian and English languages. For instance, the second pronoun “You” in English,

has two counterparts in Lithuanian, such as: “Tu”; used for a singular version of the second person and “Jūs”; referred for a plural or formal version of a second person. This particular way was chosen due to the reason to be more empathic and relatable to the pupils, who were aged between 14 and 19 years old.

The introduction to the questionnaire indicated the purpose of the survey and explained how to complete it. It also emphasized that the questionnaire was anonymous and guaranteed data confidentiality. Moreover, the survey was carried out via Google Forms, offering a free access and user-friendly interface, which was of the most importance for both, a respondent as well as a researcher. Before the questionnaire was distributed to the target audience, the trial version to a number of recipients was sent out in order to ensure the quality and validity of the questions as well as to lower risk of any possible misinterpretation, as Moilanen et al. (2022, 189) suggest.

Making sure that the online survey reached the respondents as well as aiming for bigger survey's reversibility, the pupils' teachers were contacted prior to sending out the questionnaire. To provide a more detailed explanation, the link to the survey, placed on Google Forms, was distributed to class teachers via email after introducing them to the whole concept of the conducted survey via the telephone conversation beforehand in the beginning of December 2020.

Thanks to the flexibility of the teachers and purpose of the research, they agreed to take 5 minutes off in the beginning of their class to instantly share the link of the questionnaire to pupils and asked them to fill it out. Once the link of the survey was shared, the replies were collected instantly. It is worth mentioning that the classes took place on different days during one week between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2020. The aim was to receive the answers within 2 weeks which outperformed the expectations and all responses arrived within one week after the questionnaire was sent out.

#### **4.3.2 The Expert Interview**

In order to fully assess the quality of services provided by the pilot project of a career guidance center in Alytus town, simultaneously, another empirical research with the policy experts was conducted as well. The idea to conduct two

forms of research was reasoned by the willingness to grasp the holistic view of the existing state and development of “Karjeras”. Thus, to evaluate more carefully if the statements provided by the key stakeholders in the policy making, contradicted or supported the information shared by the youngest center’s clientele, the expert semi structured interview was created. According to Merriam (1998), the researcher should explore rather a few sources through data collection, such as: surveys and interviews in order to support the legitimacy of the research. Otherwise, gathering information through one instrument can be “questionable, biased and weak.”

As the qualitative research adopted a targeted semi-structured interview method and allowed the respondents to be unrestricted in terms of content and form (thus creating a more relaxed atmosphere for communication and obtaining more detailed information, which ensures a more comprehensive study), the questionnaire instrument was designed. The questions were developed in the light of the scientific literature and were formulated to reflect the situation of the main stakeholders’ attitude towards faced challenges and their perception of the implementation of change. For the researcher it was important to have freedom to connect with a interviewee and create a dialogue in a more flexible format, when additional questions could be formulated or some of them, prepared in advance, eliminated. Moilanen et al. (2022, 150)

The selection of suitable interview partners is an essential component of successful planning and realization of the expert interviews. Undoubtedly, the interview partners determine the scope and quality of the information and influence the content of the interviews. According to Kaiser (2021, 77), it is particularly important that the experts are intrinsically motivated for an interview to express professional challenges and experiences related to the topic. Hence, three criteria are used as guiding questions for the selection of interview partners:

- Which experts have the information needed?
- Who is most likely to be able to give precise information and to formulate it as clearly as possible?
- Who is most willing and available to provide this information? (Gläser & Laudel 2010, 118)

Since the topic of this thesis aims to identify the areas of improvement of the career center and herewith intends to suggest a practical tool for the change process, the experts, holding the positions from a director of an institution to a career guidance counsellor were asked to take part in the interview. Prior to the interviews, the background check about the pilot project of a career center “Karjeras” was done, which lead to an identification of the principal stakeholders and its representatives who were contacted for the more in-depth research purpose.

The interviewees represented the following institutions:

- The Pilot Career Guidance Center “Karjeras” in Alytus town;
- The Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor;
- The Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania;
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (*although the representative was contacted and followed-up multiple times with a request for an interview, there was no response received*)

In total, there took place five interviews with the representatives who were closely involved in the operations of the career center in Alytus. Since the interviews were organized during the pandemic and no physical presence of both, the interviewer and interviewee was possible, a researcher chose to hold a face-to-face meetings using the virtual video communication platform *Zoom* (Zoom 2020), which enables users to schedule and hold video meetings. This resulting into a lively dialogue whilst observing the gestures, facial expressions and body language (Leavy 2014).

Before the agreed date and timing of the interview with each participant, an individual email was sent, followed by a telephone call. The latter activity was done in order to introduce the researcher to an interviewee, her background together with the purpose of the study in such way creating for a participant a more clear and comfortable environment before and during the interview process. In addition

to selecting the interview partners, another important step in conducting the expert interviews is drawing up the interview guidelines. They should be comprehensible to the experts based on their experience and contribute to the targeted research. (Kaiser 2021, 67) Therefore, the interviews, consisting of 8 core questions, lasted between 30 and 40 minutes and were held in the period of 11th – 19th of December 2020. The language of all the interviews was Lithuanian, which represented the mother tongue of the participants. (Appendix 3) The translated version of the questions posed to the experts are provided in the appendices part as Appendix 4 “Expert Questionnaire”, together with the original version of the questions, posed in the Lithuanian language.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used in the data analysis where the acquired information was interpreted, described, compared with each other and supported by the theoretical assumptions. The survey and interview participants were informed about the purpose of the research prior to the date when they took place which allowed the participants to get acquainted with the scope, format and objectives in a timely manner. In addition, the confidentiality of the information received was guaranteed. Hence, all data obtained during the study are presented as received, without any distortion.

The qualitative research data were analysed using the Excel tool which contributed to analysis of the inserted information as well as production of the graphical representations in a visual form, which can be recognized in the chapter 5, where results of the research are discussed.

During the expert interviews, the calls were recorded on a Zoom platform, and later transcribed on a computer. The text of the interviews was read several times, looking for semantically similar answers. This led to the identification of analytical content units and the construction of commonalities. The content received was interpreted, quoted and compared with other authors' data to form the analytical text.



Both, the online survey questionnaire and the expert interview were carried out from the 11th to the 19th of December 2020 to collect data and evaluate the status quo of the existing career center in Lithuania in accordance to ethical principles that are essential in the development work (Moilanen et al. 2022, 69 ):

- sharing all possible background information of the research and its main objectives;
- obtaining permission from the school teachers in Alytus to conduct a survey with the pupils;
- the survey's respondents' consent to participate in the research on a voluntary basis;
- the interviewees' consent during to record the conversations for the purpose of the analysis;
- to assure the participants of the research the information confidentiality

The next chapter provides a reader of this thesis with exhaustive research analysis and synthesis of the results.

## 5 RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter covers the analysis of the gathered empirical data through the qualitative semi-structured interview and online survey instruments. The goal of the empirical data collection was to evaluate the status quo of the current pilot career center, draw conclusions as well as suggest recommendations for the development of such career center in the long term perspective. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the thesis author upon request.

As Hahn Fox & Jennings (2014) state, the outcome section might be one of the most significant parts of the paper that are revealed whilst declaring the quality of the research conducted. In the first part of the chapter the results of the online survey are discussed, followed by the findings collected during the expert interview phase.

### 5.1 Analysis of the online survey questionnaire

During the research in total 80 pupils were targeted to answer the questionnaire and in total 74 (92,5%) school pupils took part in the survey. The rest of the students did not take part in the classes during the time when the survey was distributed. The scope of the respondents involved 58 female (78,4%) and 16 (21,6%) male participants. The age of respondents ranged from 14 to 19 years old, representing the 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade at the secondary school. The aforementioned age is exactly the target group of the research, from which the majority of group fell in the 16 -17 age category (the table, illustrating the full picture can be seen in the Appendix 5, FIGURE 6 ).

In the clustered bar chart below can be seen that the majority of pupils, representing 62% of the respondents are aware about the fact that they can seek career counselling outside their school. However, it is worth noticing, that the third of the respondents were not sure about such a possibility.

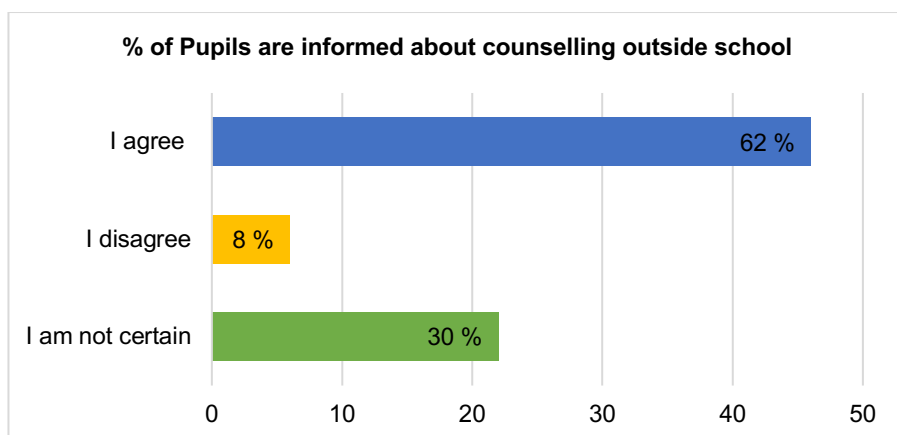


FIGURE 7. "I am informed about the career counselling possibilities outside the school"

Moving on to the next question, asking, if the pupils know that the career center "Karjeras" was established, the positive replies dominated, showing that 74% of the respondents were aware of the center's existence. It is worth highlighting that the respondents were asked to participate in this survey (December 2020) after the center was opened for 20 months (April, 2019).

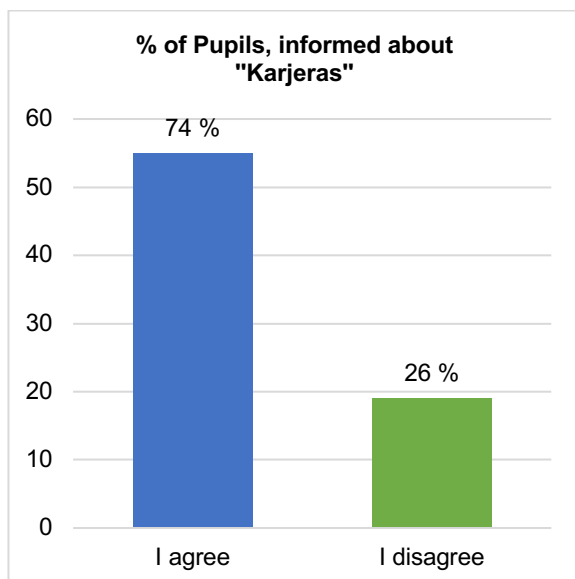


FIGURE 8. "I am informed about the career guidance center in Alytus "Karjeras"

Following up the previous question, the next one intended to find out, if besides the establishment of the center, pupils knew as well about the possibilities of the services, which are offered at the center. Therefore, the following table illustrates

the fact nearly the half of the respondents either do not know or are not sure what kind of activities and knowledge they could receive at the center.

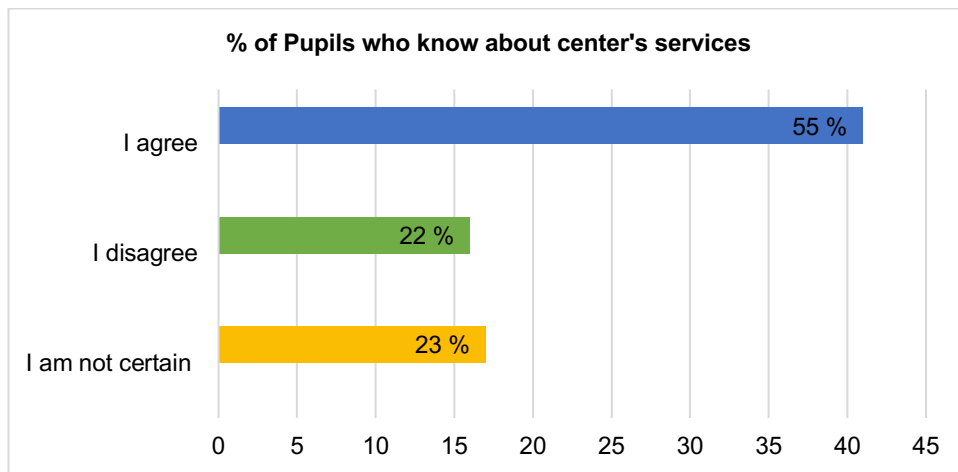


FIGURE 9. "I am informed about the services provided at the career center"

To get more clarity and investigate the results in more depth, the respondents were asked to state, whether they had already visited the center and used it provided services or not by the time they filled out the questionnaire. The sunburst chart below is displaying that the greatest group of pupils had not approached the career center yet.

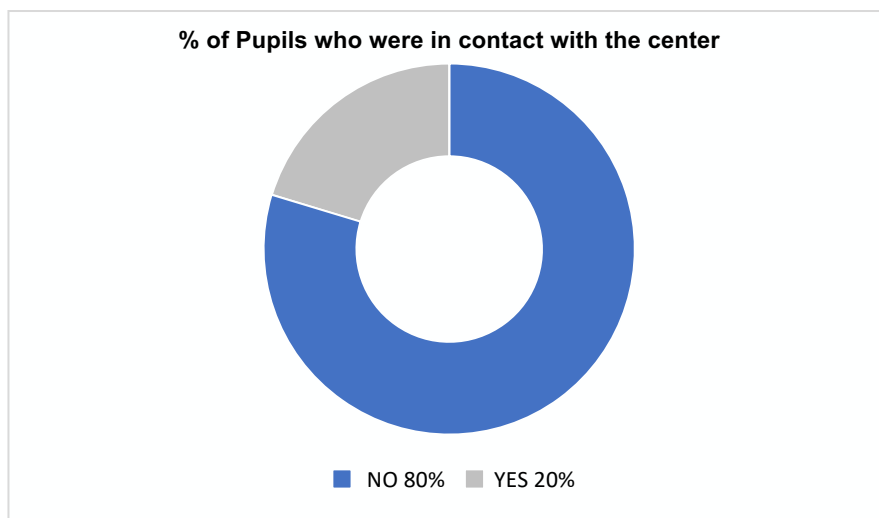


FIGURE 10. "I have already approached career guidance center "Karjeras" for the needed services"

Consequently in regards to the 7<sup>th</sup> question, a number of follow-up questions popped up for the ones, who submitted the answer "YES" and additional ones

who provided “NO” as an answer. In the beginning, the extra questions after clicking on the option “YES” are discussed.

After investigating that 1/5 of respondents made a choice to reach out to “Karjeras” to seek the services they needed, were inquired for what exactly they came in contact with the center’s representatives. Based on the answers of 15 pupils, the results of the most popular services provide us with the following picture:

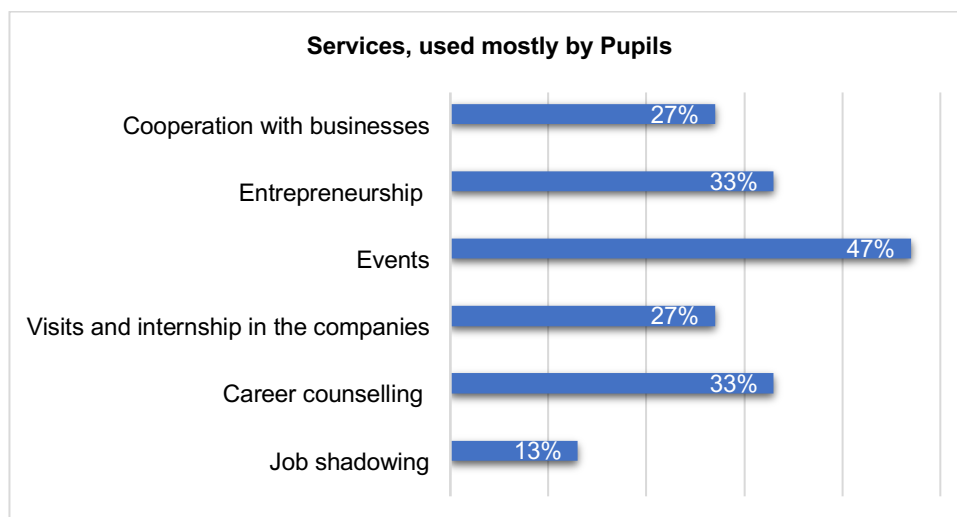


FIGURE 11. “I used the following services at “Karjeras””

A chart above shows the activities, being prioritized by the users. The consultation events are of primary importance, followed by the secondary channels, such as: learning entrepreneurship and receiving the career counselling services. Not of the less relevance are the activities which involve cooperation with businesses as well as the company visits and possibility to complete an internship in the certain companies. On the whole, it might be an interesting fact that none of the pupils, who had already been involved with the center, left out any of the listings not mentioned, including the job shadowing, for which even a few recipients contacted the center.

The next follow up question was about the usefulness of the services they used. Remarkably, the greatest part of respondents (97%) were in agreement that the services they chose to approach the center for, were undoubtedly useful (Appendix 5, FIGURE 12). Additionally, the same percentage of pupils responded to the questions, when asked about the utilization of knowledge gained at the center

(97%) which left additional 7% of respondents in disagreement. (Appendix 5, FIGURE 13)

Furthermore, it was valuable to observe what was the most satisfactory element while getting acquainted at the center as it is one of the main aims of to be pursued. The chart below maps out that more than a half respondents (59%) value the scope of the information available and the sources how it can be accessed, which was followed by the career counselling. Additionally, a few pupils added that they found events they had a chance to attend rewarding as well.

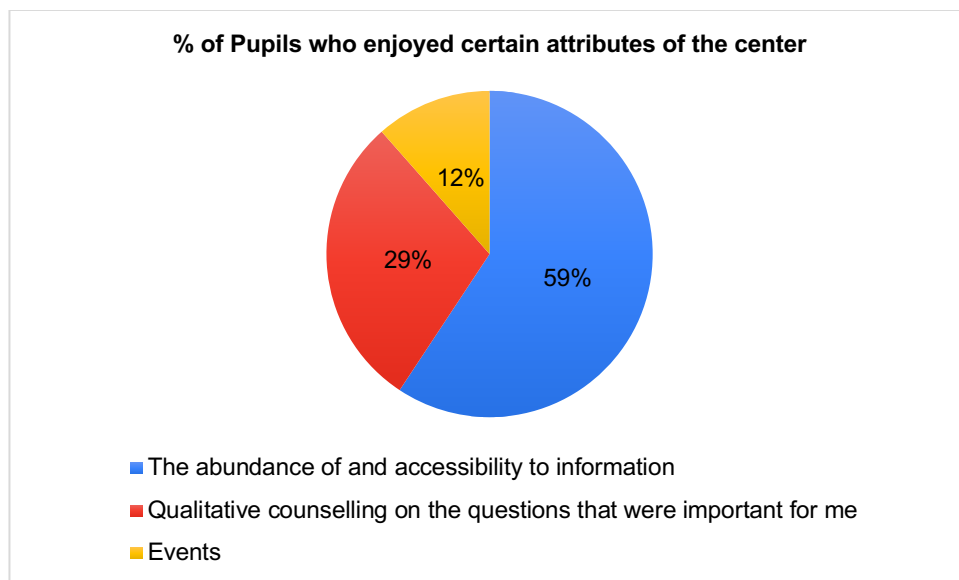


FIGURE 14. "I enjoyed mostly these attributes of "Karjeras""

To challenge the respondents and promote the diversity of opinions as well as receive a full picture about the quality of the services, pupils were asked to share their opinion about the actual disadvantages at the center together with what in particular they wish could be improved. Besides the already provided answers, such as: the missing qualitative counselling as well as the accessibility to more information, the participants in the survey openly elaborated that some of them would appreciate a chance to attend lectures or participate at events with prominent speakers.

Nearing to the end of the survey, the ones who answered to the question 6<sup>th</sup> positively, meaning that they got in contact with the center's representatives and used any of the services, were inquired if to get in touch with the center was

simple. Without a doubt, 100 % of respondents confirmed that they did not face any inconvenience throughout the process.

Finally, whilst responding to the last question of the survey, for the long-term perspective, the vast majority of pupils shared that there currently were enough services provided by the center. However, for improvement reasons, the following needs were shared:

*It would be essential to get more information where to refer for possible internships or job placements during summer holiday.*

*I would like to get to know more successful people and hear their stories about how they pursued their career path.*

*It would be beneficial to get more diversified services than offered at school.*

To gain a more qualitative perspective, those respondents (26%) who did not know or were not so sure about “Karjeras” yet, continued the questionnaire while answering to the question 7<sup>th</sup>. It inquired whether they knew the center existed before, they would have contacted it - it became apparent that the largest group, representing 46% of respondents confirmed that they would have contacted the center. On contrary, when investigating the chart in more depth, it can be seen that more than 1/3 of pupils still would not have used center’s services.

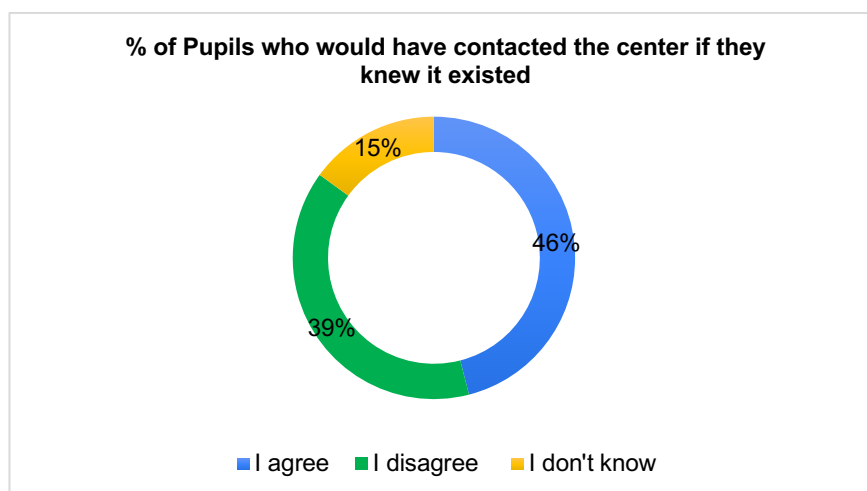


FIGURE 15. “If I knew before that “Karjeras” existed, I would have contacted it”

The outcome of the question nr. 8 of this batch of the survey indicates clearly that the center plays a significant role for pupils, as most respondents (68 %) reported that they would seek assistance at the center since they are from now on aware about its existence.

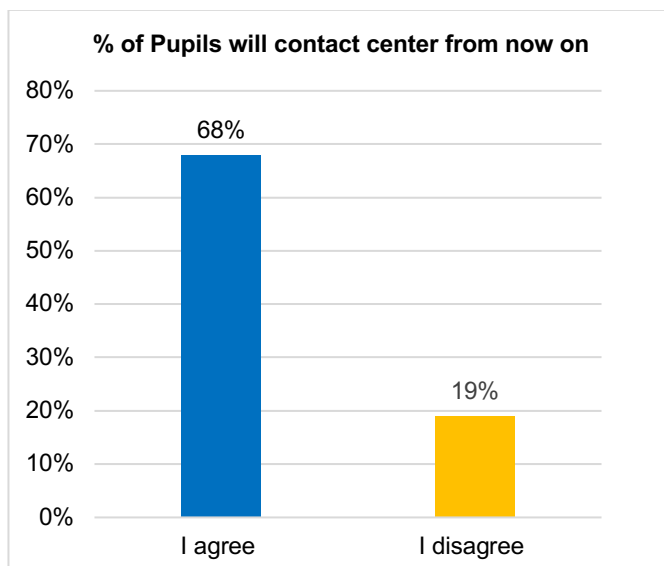


FIGURE 16. "Since I know that "Karjeras" exists, I will contact it from now on."

If answered to the latter question "I agree", a respondent was guided to the last question about the services that he or she would be interested in. The top priority composed of seeking the career counselling (selected by 78% of pupils), together with trying different job opportunities (39%) and learning entrepreneurship (chosen by 37%). Company visits and internships appeared also as a relevant topic, were not left unmentioned by the quarter of the respondents.

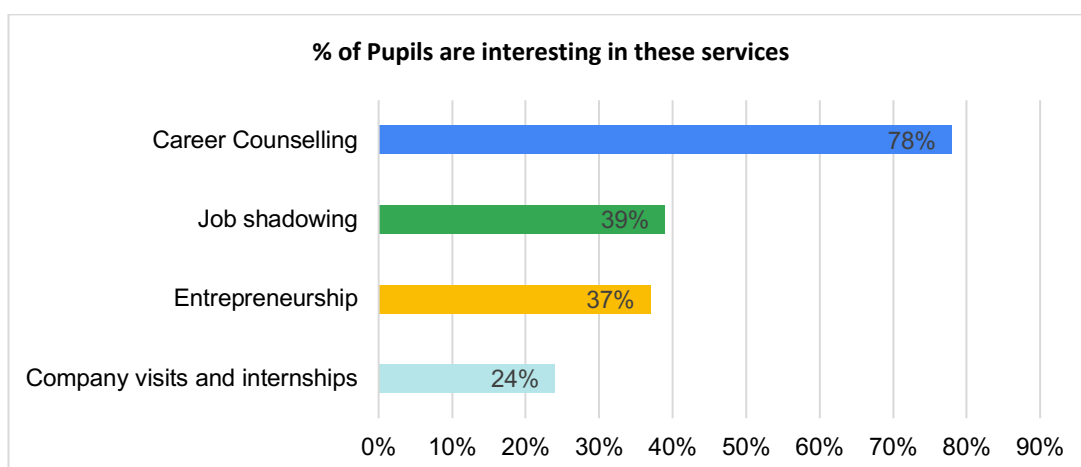


FIGURE 17. "It would be beneficial for me to get this kind of services"



If answered “I disagree” – the last question for a respondent popped up related to the necessity to seek such career related services. As shown in the figure 18, 68% of pupils did not find it necessary to receive such career related services. Opposing the primary view, from the 32% of respondents arguing that they would be down for exploring more the topic, a few additional comments in the extra window were submitted, such as:

*In my opinion, the center’s representatives should be more active in schools and present their value.*

*More proactive approach should be taken to reach out to students, because sometimes we do not know where and what kind of help we could get.*

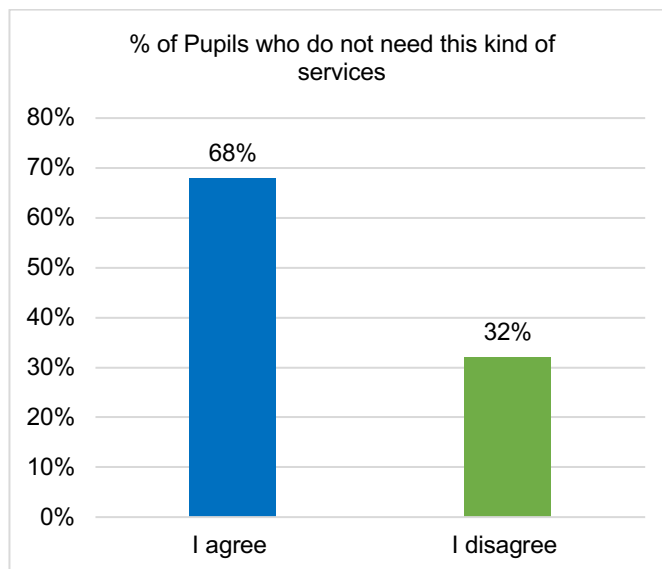


FIGURE 18. “Currently I do not need this kind of services, provided by “Karjeras””

From a statistical point of view, a common trend identified that the vast majority of pupils surveyed (74 %) are acquainted with the career center “Karjeras” in Alytus town. Despite this fact, merely of them (20 %) have already approached it and used the services offered. Judging from the additional comments, provided to some questions, it can be stated that pupils lack awareness about the center and how they can benefit from it. An enlightening note could be made about the matter that the pupils who did not know about the center before (26 %), almost half of them would have reached out to it, if they knew it existed.

## 5.2 Analysis of the Expert Interview

In the following chapter the second phase of the qualitative research is explored in more detail with the focus on views and opinions of the experts in the career guidance policy making and implementation.

There were conducted semi-structured interviews with five experienced professionals in the career guidance field. The positions of the respondents varied from the leadership to hands-on roles, representing the state institutions as well as the ones, currently active in the center's pilot project phase.

Starting with the question of the general view on the current situation about the career counselling in Lithuania, the interview participants shared that the topic has never had a unified approach from the key stakeholders:

*There has never been a systematic approach towards the career planning in Lithuania, rather a lot of institutions were involved, but inconsistently.*

*The current situation shows that the career orientation system in Lithuania works only partially, not well enough and the systematic approach towards the execution is missing.*

Another common issue highlighted by the interview participants was the distributed responsibilities and shared leadership. A few mentioned that the town municipality is not involved enough in the decision making and ought to have a stronger say during the implementation process. According to the European Commission, backed up by the interviewee:

*The owner of the concept should not be only one stakeholder, cooperation between the concerned partners should be enhanced.*

When asked about the existing strengths of the career center, all the participants agreed that the pilot project of the career center helped establish an aligned coordination of the specific activities for youth:

*What did not exist before the career guidance center was the common database of information and know-how which has been strengthened ever since the center came to a shape.*

There was a common ground on clearly defined responsibilities and key performance indicators (KPIs) for the center and how they are observed. Nevertheless, the respondents came to share similar views on weaknesses of the current center while expressing that:

*There is a large amount of administrative burden and amount of work which could lead to a burnout due to the lack of permanent employees.*

Although the career center has started the work only a couple of years ago, it is believed that the practices applied are rather outdated:

*We need today modernized methods, advanced tools, upscale of the infrastructure and contemporary approach while coaching young people.*

There was no discussion as well when it came to the budget system of the center. There is a lot of disagreement between the stakeholders involved regarding the financing of the pilot project:

*Finances, dedicated for the center are really limited since there are no EU funds. Therefore, it seems that there is too much discussion going on just because of one full-time employee (currently there work 4 people part-time) without tangible results.*

As the financial aspect of the career center network is fundamental, all the interviewees agreed that financial resources are scarce and the experts work there voluntarily. It was stated, that there used to be the EU funds allocated but by the time the interviews took place, they ended.

Going forward, the interviewees shared that no certain guidelines for the work of the counsellors are provided. They usually rely on international practices that are

found online as well as investigate the recommendations, provided by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor. The interviewed counsellors expressed that they would be interested in attending seminars and would appreciate their skills to be strengthened since it is as well of great importance to have aligned knowledge and competencies.

What is more, the majority of the interviewees mentioned the lack of awareness about the center in Alytus and shared that more pupils could be attracted to benefit from the services. They elaborated that there has been almost no investment done into the marketing of the center, meaning that the information has been only shared with schools, although not sure how frequently.

Besides, neither the counsellors, nor the ones, supervising the center could not tell the approximate number of the visitors due to the fact that it has been not monitored how many people approach the center.

### **5.3 Synthesis of the results**

#### **5.3.1 Strengths and weaknesses of the “Karjeras” pilot project**

After combining all the results, gathered from the online survey and the interviews, it is useful to highlight the common trends in responses received:

- The data gathered during the interviews, enabled to see that by the time the research was conducted there was no structured information available on the services provided by the “Career”. Most students found out about the center’s services through school events or other initiatives.
- The career centre only partially fulfilled the functions of the centre of such direction, and the services, cooperation with businesses, access to internship or volunteering opportunities were limited and could be certainly strengthened.
- When delving through the student written responses, it became apparent that publicity of “Karjeras” activities was passive, while the main information about

its main news and events being presented only on the websites of the Alytus Municipality and the Public Employment's Service, which had limited visibility for the audience of center's clients.

- From a statistical perspective, a common trend uncovered that there was no stable and sufficient source of funding for the activities.
- The findings portrayed that collaboration among the stakeholders asks for improvement. Stakeholders must join hands to improve the service collectively to assist students in exploring and thriving their potential.
- Last but not least, the majority of the interviewees showed agreement with the need for a sustainable model for the center which would provide with more clear guidelines for its coordination activities and accountability for the services provided.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter serves as an ultimate reflection of the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis. In the first part of the thesis project, a reader was introduced to the main idea of the research and got acquainted with the overall purpose of the it, which was formulated, based on the following questions:

- How the existing state of the pilot project of the career center “Karjeras” in Alytus town is evaluated by pupils?
- How could the existing career center’s activities be improved in order to support its further development of the career centers’ network in Lithuania?
- What would be the recommendations for the expansion of the future career centers in Lithuania?

The results of the case study revealed that in “Karjeras” several major hindrances persist that do not allow the center to operate to its best ability. Based on the collected sharings, below in the table can be seen the summary of the necessary improvement points:

<b>Improvement Elements</b>	<b>Specifics</b>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the digital infrastructure – the regular maintenance of center’s website has to be assured;</li> <li>• Ensure access to and modernization of the learning spaces: creating areas, suitable for group meetings and discussions as well as one-to-one talks;</li> <li>• Ensure access to constantly updated resources, career tests, assessments tools.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw explicit guidelines and clear responsibilities of at the center employed staff;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen partnership development and empower municipalities through cooperation between the key stakeholders whilst assuring united approach on the national level;</li> <li>• Intensify services, including more expertise about internships, shadowing, job placements and encourage initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Finances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby and ensure sustainable budget for career guidance sector for the long term;</li> <li>• Define and dedicate specific budget on the municipal level;</li> <li>• Allocate budget for employees and their competence development.</li> </ul>

FIGURE 19. Necessary Improvement for “Karjeras” (created by the author of the thesis)

The research uncovered that the information provided about the career to pupils at the center is insufficient. Pupils lack a wide range of information on the labour market situation and its needs, pathways to choosing a career, suitability for the chosen profession, opportunities for further training and studies, procedures and requirements for admission to education institutions, the requirements of a specific profession which lead to underutilization of potential and opportunities. For more precise results and on the national level, it would be important to conduct a parallel analysis of the good practices in foreign countries, such as Denmark, Finland and their suitability in the context of Lithuania.

As the purpose of the thesis was to gather information on participants' experience in the pilot phase of the center, further research would be needed to see how the center's services are evaluated every year. When it comes to professional career counselors, a regular training should be planned so they can stay up to date with the latest information while selecting a particular learning that meets pupils' needs. While a career center depends heavily on the state support, it has to be

backed up at least by the sufficient inter-institutional cooperation not to hinder its further expansion.

Thus, the research results can be used to approve the first hypothesis raised in the beginning of the case study:

1. The pupils, living in Alytus town, are aware about the career guidance services, provided at the career center “Karjeras” and are content with their quality.

Nevertheless, the second raised hypothesis, written below, could be disapproved due to the fact that pupils, who use the career center’s services and the experts, who are in charge of designing them jointly agree about the advancement of the existing center’s organisational model.

2. The pupils, living in Alytus town, are aware about the career guidance services, provided at the career center “Karjeras” and are content with their quality.

Altogether, corresponding to the feedback from the targeted users of the center and its founding stakeholders, it is advisable to raise more awareness about the center, strengthen, advance and expand the portfolio of its services offered to guarantee the career center’s success in the future.

All in all, the author believes that the best outcome possible of a successful thesis is to not only discuss the output, provided by the participants of the survey and weight them against the theoretical base, but to provide the organization, in this regard, the regional career center in Alytus with practical recommendations for its potential successful expansion in the future.

## **6.1 Improvement areas according to the McKinsey 7S Model**

As a long-term goal is to develop an integrated career guidance model with parallel face-to-face and multi-channelled online services, it is essential to identify



the key problems of any organisation in order to provide tactical solutions. In developing their activities, organisation's face performance problems that adversely affect individual areas of the organisation's activities, reducing their competitiveness and its ability to advance.

The McKinsey 7S model has been selected to drive a change and create an impact within an organisation, therefore, to advance the performance of the career center "Karjeras" in Alytus. Based on the tool, described above, the improvement process in the career center can be followed according through six stages which will be thoroughly elaborated below. (Fleisher and Bensoussan 2015; Cameron and Quinn 2006)

In the first stage it is essential to gather and structure the information according to the elements of the McKinsey 7S model – to put it practically, accumulating the necessary data in the current career center and investigating in depth every component of the model according to the this particular organisation's case would be the primary step.

Next, the identification of the occurring problems is run by analysing all the described elements, comparing them with each other, identifying contradictions and challenges. It is recommended to start the analysis with the element, called "Shared values", as emphasized earlier in the chapter, to measure whether it corresponds with the organisation's strategy and structure, followed by the evaluation of the "hard" features. Once they have been analysed, the "soft" attributes have to come into thorough consideration. The assessment of the values will provide with a clear understanding of inconsistencies and will lay the ground for further steps.

Thereafter, in order to build the desired organisational performance model, it is proposed to simulate and evaluate several alternatives. Its design should start with what can be changed in the "soft" elements to better match the "hard" ones. Then the possibilities of implementing changes in the "hard" elements could be considered.

Following, the fourth stage represents the determination of the principal changes, which pave the way on how to set the organisations' responsibilities, what fundamental changes should be considered to attain the desired outcome. The aim of the change plan is to ensure that all the elements of the organisation's operating model are secured and complement each other (Hill and Wilson 2013). Whilst anticipating the required changes, particular attention should be paid to the contradictions in the organisation's operations that hinder its effectiveness and coherent development.

Implementing the change is a crucial phase to witness the aspired organisation's performance on a practical level. The analysis and action items will barely improve the organisation's performance unless it is properly implemented. To ensure a successful realization of a change in the organisation, a dedicated working group should be set up and the necessary resources should be provide to use.

Last but not least, the control of the process should not be undermined. A regular feedback and consistent report on the status quo by the responsible ones to the management is encouraged until the ultimate goal is achieved. Evidently, often a common problem persists when organisations face employees' and in particular cases stakeholders' resistance to change (Cameron and Green 2015). In order to tackle such problem and reduce employee resistance, it would be advisable to propose comprehensive action steps, such as:

- Inform in advance and provide facts to employees and stakeholders about the importance of change for the organisation;
- Ensure that the ones concerned are included in the change process;
- Strengthen employees' motivation to create an impact an enable them to to develop themselves. (McCalman et al. 2015)

All is all, applying the McKinsey 7S model can certainly provide the guidance to seek change in the organisation and advancement of it – from identifying the bottlenecks effectively to driving towards the aspired results. Despite this fact, to state that every adoption of the model can be a success, would be rather an overestimate due to the efficacy of several aspects – a thorough investigation, carried inside the organisation and the realization of addressed changes within it.

On the whole, a focused effort, shared by the group of stakeholders to bring about the desired changes within the foreseen timeframe are critical to begin with.

## 7 SUMMARY

Organisations, characterised by the variety of functions, goals, performance and complexity of relationships are ever-changing. Influenced by various predicted and often also unseen factors every organisation must adjust itself and change in order to thrive and sometimes to survive.

A review of the theoretical base of the change process suggests that the success of it depends on many factors - strategy and vision, infrastructure, people, adopted culture and applied leadership. Every organisation should run a regular temperature check-up to see its existing state and need for change, taking into account the organisation's values, skills, objectives and structure. Of a particular importance is the identification of the barriers to achieve the favourable outcome. The analysis of the scientific literature and the quantitative and qualitative data center's pilot project in Lithuania. It also allowed the author of the thesis to suggest evidence based recommendations to advance the career center's existing operational model and potentially apply it to the future same purpose driven organisations.

The findings of this research play a significant role for the development of the career centers in the country as they were non-existent until 2019 April, when the pilot project "Karjeras" was launched. In 2020 December an online survey was sent to 80 pupils, aged between 14 to 19 years old school pupils who actively engaged in the survey and instantly provided insights into advantages of the career center and the problems that occurred there during the time they had the experience with it. Thanks to the interest of 5 policy and government experts, the valuable facts were collected as well which contributed to a more in depth investigation of "Karjeras".

With the help of all the respondents, who participated in the online questionnaires and virtual meetings, it was possible draw more attention to the career guidance topic and, if seen as useful, to transfer the knowledge from the thesis to the practice, especially in light of the establishment of additional 14 regional career centers in Lithuania.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Online Survey Questionnaire in Lithuanian

# Karjeros konsultavimo centras „Karjeras“ Alytuje

Labas!

Mano vardas Eivina ir šiuo metu rašau magistro baigiamąjį darbą apie karjeros konsultavimo centrų vystymą Lietuvoje.

Šiuo metu atlieku tyrimą, kuriame dalyvauti kviečiu ir Tave! Noriu, kad žinotum, kad Tavo atsakymai į kiekvieną klausimą yra labai svarbūs ir vertingi.

Visa informacija, surinkta šios apklausos metu, bus panaudota karjeros centrų paslaugų kokybės gerinimui ir tinklo plėtrai Lietuvoje tam, kad geriau įsivertintume, ką pasirinkti pabaigus mokyklą.

Ačiū Tau už laiką.

\* Required

#### 1. 1. Lytis \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Moteris

☐ Vyras

#### 2. 2. Amžius \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ 14-15 m.

☐ 16-17 m.

☐ 18-19 m.

3. 3. Aš esu informuota/s apie karjeros konsultavimo galimybes už mokyklos ribų \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku  
☐ Nesu tikra/s  
☐ Nesutinku

4. 4. Aš esu informuota/s, kad Alytuje yra įkurtas karjeros centras „Karjeras“ \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku  
☐ Nesutinku

5. 5. Aš esu informuota/s apie karjeros centre „Karjeras“ teikiamas konsultavimo paslaugas \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku  
☐ Nes tikra/s  
☐ Nesutinku

6. 6. Aš jau kreipiausi į karjeros centrą „Karjeras“ dėl man rūpimų klausimų \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ TAIP      *Skip to question 10*  
☐ NE

7. 7. Jeigu būčiau žinojęs/usi apie karjeros centrą „Karjeras“ Alytuje, būčiau ten jau krepęsis/usi. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku  
☐ Nesutinku  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. 8. Kadangi dabar jau žinau apie karjeros centrą „Karjeras“ Alytuje, kreipsiuosi į jį man rūpimais klausimais. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku    *Skip to question 17*  
☐ Nesutinku

9. 9. Šiuo metu neturiu poreikio paslaugoms, susijusioms su karjeros konsultavimo klausimais.

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku  
☐ Nesutinku  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Skip to question 10*

Jeigu atsakėte „TAIP“ į 6-ąjį klausimą

10. 6.1 Kokiomis karjeros konsultavimo paslaugomis tu jau naudojaisi „Karjere“? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Profesinio orientavimo (individualios konsultacijos, grupinės konsultacijos, karjeros planavimo testai)
- ☐ Profesijos pasimataavimo (savanorystė ir šešėliavimas)
- ☐ Verslumo ir motyvacijos skatinimo
- ☐ Konsultacinių renginių
- ☐ Bendradarbiavimo su verslu
- ☐ Vizitų ir praktikos įmonėse

11. 6.2 Paslaugos, kuriomis jau naudojaisi karjeros centre, buvo man naudingos \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku
- ☐ Nesu tikra/s
- ☐ Nesutinku

12. 6.3 Po paslaugų, kuriomis pasinaudojau karjeros centre, gautas žinias panaudojau praktikoje. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku
- ☐ Nesutinku

13. 6.4 Karjeros centre man labiausiai patiko: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Informacijos gausa ir prieinamumas
- ☐ Kokybiškas konsultavimas man rūpimais klausimais
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. 6.5 Karjeros centre man pritrūko: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Informacijos gausos ir prieinamumo
- ☐ Kokybiško konsultavimo man rūpimais klausimais
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. 6.6 Suorganizuoti susitikimą/skambutį karjeros centre buvo lengva \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Sutinku
- ☐ Nesutinku

16. 6.7 Man būtų naudingos šios papildomos karjeros konsultavimo paslaugos, siūlomos karjeros centre: \*

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeigu atsakėte „TAIP“ į 8-ąjį klausimą

17. 8.1 Man būtų naudingos šios karjero centro teikiamos konsultavimo paslaugos. \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Profesinio orientavimo (individualios konsultacijos, grupinės konsultacijos, karjeros planavimo testai)
- ☐ Profesijos pasimatavimo (savanorystė ir šešėliavimas)
- ☐ Verslumo ir motyvacijos skatinimo
- ☐ Konsultacinių renginių
- ☐ Bendradarbiavimo su verslu
- ☐ Vizitų ir praktika įmonėse

Other: ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 2. Online Survey Questionnaire in English

**Question Nr. 1: What gender do you identify as?**

Possible Answers:

- a) Female
- b) Male

**Question Nr. 2: What is your age?**

Possible Answers:

- a) 14 – 15 y.o.
- b) 16 – 17 y.o.
- c) 18 – 19 y.o.

**Question Nr. 3: I am informed about the career counselling possibilities outside the school**

Possible Answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I am not certain
- c) I disagree

**Question Nr. 4: I am informed about the career guidance center “Karjeras” in Alytus town**

Possible Answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree

**Question Nr. 5: I am informed about the services provided at the career guidance center “Karjeras”**

Possible Answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I am not certain
- c) I disagree

**Question Nr. 6\*: I have already approached “Karjeras” for the needed services**

Possible Answers:

- a) Yes
- b) No

*\*If answered Yes, please skip to Question Nr. 10*

**Question Nr. 7: If I knew before that “Karjeras” existed, I would have approached it earlier**

Possible answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree
- c) Other

**Question Nr. 8\*: As I am aware that “Karjeras” exists, I will approach it from now on when I need it**

Possible answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree

*\*If answered Yes, please skip to Question Nr. 17*

**Question Nr. 9: Currently I do not have a need for such services, provided by “Karjeras”**

Possible Answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree
- c) Other

*\*If answered Yes to Question Nr. 6*

**Question Nr. 10: I have already used the following services at “Karjeras”**

Possible Answers:

- a) Career counselling
- b) Job shadowing
- c) Entrepreneurship
- d) Events
- e) Cooperation with businesses
- f) Visits and internship in the companies

**Question Nr. 11: Services that I used provided by “Karjeras” were beneficial for me**

Possible Answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I am not Certain
- c) I disagree

**Question Nr. 12: Services that I used and knowledge that I gained at “Karjeras”, I was able to utilize in practice**

Possible Answers:

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree

**Question Nr. 13: What I enjoy most from the experience with “Karjeras” was**

Possible Answers:

- a) The abundance of and accessibility to information
- b) Qualitative counselling on the questions that were important for me
- c) Other

**Question Nr. 14: I missed the following aspects “Karjeras”**

Possible Answers:

- a) The abundance of and accessibility to information
- b) Qualitative counselling on the questions that were important for me
- c) Other

**Question Nr. 15: It was easy to organize a meeting and a call at “Karjeras”**

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree

**Question Nr. 16: It would be beneficial for me to receive these additional services at “Karjeras”**

Please write your answer: ...

*\*If you answered Yes to Question Nr. 8:*

**Question Nr. 17: It would be beneficial for me to receive these additional services at “Karjeras”**

Possible Answers:



- a) Career counselling (consulting individually & in groups; career planning tests)
- b) Job shadowing
- c) Entrepreneurship
- d) Events
- e) Cooperation with businesses
- f) Company visits and internships
- g) Other

### Appendix 3. Expert Questionnaire in Lithuanian

**Klausimas Nr. 1:** Ar galėtumėte pristatyti save ir savo dabartines pareigas?

**Klausimas Nr. 2:** Gal galėtumėte pakomentuoti savo požiūrį į esamą profesinio orientavimo sistemą Lietuvoje?

**Klausimas Nr. 3:** Jūsų nuomone, kuri institucinė įstaiga turėtų būti profesinio orientavimo centro valdytoja?

**Klausimas Nr. 4:** Kokios, Jūsų nuomone, yra dabartinio bandomojo profesinio orientavimo centro "Karjeras" Alytaus mieste stipriosios pusės?

**Klausimas Nr. 5:** Priešingai, gal galėtumėte pasidalyti, kokius Alytaus miesto bandomojo profesinio orientavimo centro "Karjeras" aspektus būtų galima tobulinti ir dar plėtoti?

**Klausimas Nr. 6:** Ką manote apie bandomojo profesinio orientavimo centro "Karjeras" matomumą ir prieinamumą, ar yra sričių, kurias galima keisti ar tobulinti?

**Klausimas Nr. 7:** Jei galėtumėte pasidalyti profesinio orientavimo sistemos Lietuvoje ir tolesnės profesinio orientavimo centrų plėtros vizija, kokia ji būtų?

#### Appendix 4. Expert Questionnaire in English

**Question Nr. 1:** Could you please introduce yourself and your current responsibilities?

**Question Nr. 2:** Could you please comment your view on the existing career guidance system in Lithuania?

**Question Nr. 3:** In your opinion which institutional organ should be manager of the career center?

**Question Nr. 4:** In your view what do you as strengths of the current pilot career guidance center “Karjeras” in Alytus town?

**Question Nr. 5:** On the contrary, could you please share which aspects could be improved and still developed of the pilot career guidance center “Karjeras” in Alytus town?

**Question Nr. 6:** What do you think about the visibility and accessibility of the pilot career guidance center “Karjeras” and are there any areas that can be changed or improved?

**Question Nr. 7:** If you may share the vision of a career guidance system in Lithuanian and further development of the career centers, what it would be?

## Appendix 5. Figures

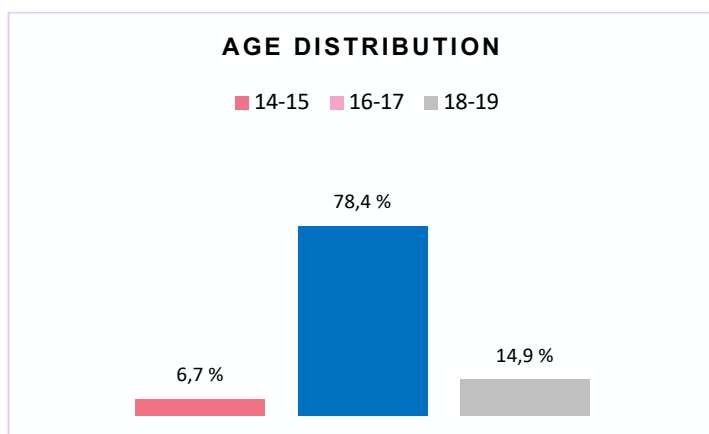


FIGURE 6. "Age distribution of the online survey respondents."

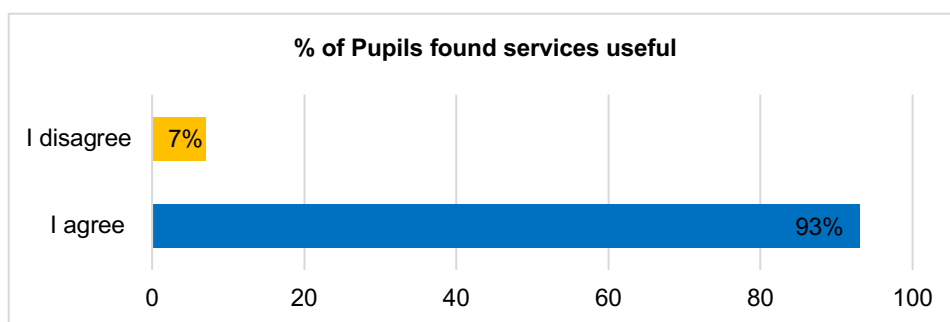


FIGURE 12. "Services that I used at "Karjeras" were beneficial for me".

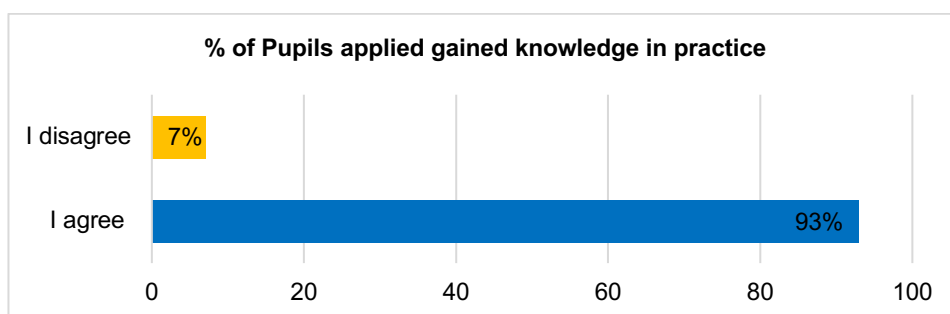


FIGURE 13. "Services that I used, utilized in practice."