



Lifehacks for Career Guidance within the Boundaries of Zabaikalkskaya Railway



Nikolay V. RAEVSKY



Dmitry N. KOZHIN



Polina E. RAEVSKAYA

Raevsky, Nikolay V., Zabaikalsky Institute of Railway Transport – a branch of Irkutsk State Transport University, Chita, Russia.

Kozhin, Dmitry N., Zabaikalskaya Railway – a branch of JSC Russian Railways, Chita, Russia.

Raevskaya, Polina E., Zabaikalsky Institute of Railway Transport – a branch of Irkutsk State Transport University, Chita, Russia.*

ABSTRACT

The success of modern transport enterprises depends largely on availability of highly qualified employees, motivated for effective work. The formation of a competent team of employees is impossible without involvement of new young personnel who make an informed choice in favor of working in transport field. The most important tool for this is organization of career guidance in secondary schools, which allows schoolchildren to make a right choice for their future, and

permits enterprises to get a well-informed and involved employee.

There are many known methods of conducting career guidance work, however, taking into account the peculiarities of development of new generations of schoolchildren, it is necessary to offer innovative programs and change approaches to implementation of existing ones.

The article discusses the experience of joint career guidance activities of branches of JSC Russian Railways and educational organizations in Zabaikalsky region.

Keywords: railway transport, career guidance, secondary general education, higher education.

*Information about the authors:

Raevsky, Nikolay V. – Ph.D. (Eng), associate professor, deputy director of Zabaikalsky Institute of Railway Transport – a branch of Irkutsk State Transport University, Chita, Russia, raevskiy_nik@mail.ru.

Kozhin, Dmitry N. – deputy head for staff and social issues of Zabaikalskaya Railway – a branch of JSC Russian Railways, Chita, Russia, kozhindn@mail.zabtrans.ru.

Raevskaya, Polina E. – head of the Center for extracurricular activities and practical training of Zabaikalsky Institute of Railway Transport – a branch of Irkutsk State Transport University, Chita, Russia, polina.volo@mail.ru.

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Introduction and background. Pupils of secondary schools in their year of graduation, in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation, must choose subjects for passing the Unified State Exam (USE) until February [1]. The future destiny of a graduate and, consequently, the choice of the educational organization to which he will be able to apply in view of possible enrolment depends on the chosen subject and successful passing of exams. Career-guidance work thought out and conducted in the region on an ongoing basis and considering regional socio-economic conditions allows schoolchildren to obtain more complete information about future profession, permits educational organizations to get the applicants interested in the results of training, and allows employers to hire in future competent employees. Quality of a graduate is directly related to quality of career guidance, since universities face the objective of training competent, competitive, entrepreneurial, and proactive professionals who are in demand on the labor market [see, for example, 2].

The existing positive experience in interaction of the largest transport enterprises with specialized educational organizations allows to constantly improve the mechanisms and forms of career guidance in order to increase its effectiveness.

The *objective* of the study was to analyze the conduct of vocational guidance in secondary schools in the Far Eastern Federal District of the Russian Federation, to identify optimal forms and methods of its management adapted to regional conditions. The study used general scientific *methods*, comparative and statistical analysis.

General tasks of career guidance and its features with regard to the region and to the railway transport

Previously, the approach to solving the problem of staffing of large organizations and holding companies was based on the classical model of development of personnel, which provided for measures to develop professional competencies and improve social guarantees for an industry's employees. However, this approach practically did not take into account the following factors:

- socio-psychological aspects of professional preferences;

- professional self-identification and self-realization of the population;
- choice of place of residence;
- other factors of motivational nature.

The modern approach is based on the concept of investing in human capacity that is in education, comprising continuous training of personnel, material and informational support of labor resources at all stages of the life cycle, and particularly at the early phase of work with potential employees, their careful selection taking into account a complex of factors. If we are talking about employees with secondary vocational or higher education, then it is possible to win in the competitive area only thanks to in-depth marketing analysis and well-coordinated advance actions of future employers of graduates («customers»), management and the university staff. Such mechanisms are successfully used in interaction of one of the largest Russian employers – JSC Russian Railways with transport universities, in particular, of its branch – Zabaikalskaya Railway* with Zabaikalsky Institute of Railway Transport – a branch of Irkutsk State Transport University. Such an approach is especially relevant for the Far Eastern Federal District, because of the prevailing socio-demographic situation.

Career guidance is one of the most important tools for formation of a high-quality student population. There are several Russian and international documents that define career guidance. Now replaced Human Resources Development Recommendation, 1975 (No. 150) concerning Vocational Guidance and Vocational Training in the Development of Human Resources of the International Labour Organisation stipulated that one of main objectives of vocational guidance programmes was to «provide children and young persons not yet in the labour force with the basis for choosing a line of education or vocational training in the light of their aptitudes, abilities and interests and of employment opportunities» [3, art. 8.1]. The up-to-date ILO Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195) concerning Human Resources Development: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning stipulates that Members should «...guide individuals in their choice of

* The noun Zabaikalie and relevant adjectives mean «Trans-Baikal» or «Transbaikal». – *translator's note.*



training and career...» [4, art. 5 e)], «...ensure provision of vocational, labour market and career information and guidance and employment counselling, supplemented by information on the rights and obligations of all concerned under labour-related laws and other forms of labour regulation...» [4, art. 8 d)], as well «...promote equal opportunities for, and access to, career guidance...» [4, art. 9 i)]. ILO Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) concerning Vocational Guidance and Vocational Training in the Development of Human Resources provides that «each Member shall gradually extend its systems of vocational guidance, including continuing employment information, with a view to ensuring that comprehensive information and the broadest possible guidance are available to all children, young persons and adults, including appropriate programmes for all handicapped and disabled persons»; «such information and guidance shall cover the choice of an occupation, vocational training and related educational opportunities, the employment situation and employment prospects, promotion prospects, conditions of work, safety and hygiene at work, and other aspects of working life in the various sectors of economic, social and cultural activity and at all levels of responsibility»; «The information and guidance shall be supplemented by information on general aspects of collective agreements and of the rights and obligations of all concerned under labour law...» [5, art. 3].

The concept of career guidance is interpreted in Russia as a set of «particular measures to assist an individual in vocational self-identification and choice of optimal type of occupation with respect to his needs and capabilities, and to social and economic situation in the labor market» [6, art. 1.1].

This is fully consistent with the provisions of the Federal Law of the Russian Federation «On Education», which provides for freedom to choose and receive education in accordance with the person's interests and needs, for creation of conditions for self-realization of each person, for free development of his abilities, including the right to choose forms of education, forms of learning, educational organization, the profile of education to the extent provided by the education system [7, item 7 of Article 3].

In accordance with [6] the most important areas of career guidance are:

- professional information: familiarization of various population groups with modern types of production, the state of the labor market, the needs of the economic entities for qualified personnel, the content and prospects of development of the market regarding given occupations, forms and conditions of vocational training, requirements to a person that are defined by occupations, the opportunities for professional growth and self-improvement in the process of labor activity;

- professional consultation: assisting a person in professional self-identification with the aim of making an informed decision about choosing a professional path, considering his psychological characteristics and capabilities, as well as the needs of society;

- professional identification: providing recommendations to a person about possible areas of professional activity that are most relevant to his psychological, psychophysiological, physiological characteristics, based on the results of psychological, psychophysiological and medical diagnostics;

- professional selection: determining the degree of professional suitability of a person to be employed in a particular profession (workplace, position) in accordance with regulatory requirements;

- professional, industrial and social adaptation: a system of measures that contribute to professional development of an employee, development of his relevant social and professional qualities, attitudes and needs for active creative work, achievement of the highest level of professionalism» [6].

Accordingly, the main methods of career guidance include, among others, «individual, group, mass, direct (lecture, conversation), mediated (by the media) informing, psychological and medical counseling» [6].

Practices of Zabaikalskaya Railway

Career guidance as a system and base platform for staffing Zabaikalskaya Railway and other structural divisions of JSC Russian Railways in the region includes the following areas:

- informing future applicants about the activities of JSC Russian Railways, innovative processes in the company, introduction of new equipment and technologies, organization of work with young people and implementation

of youth projects, the main areas and opportunities for professional activities, social benefits, guarantees and services provided to employees of JSC Russian Railways, as well as interaction of the company with educational organizations;

- providing advice on the specifics of railway professions and requirements for employees, career prospects and professional development, opportunities for self-development in the process of professional activity;

- providing psychological support to students regarding formation of a positive attitude and confidence in the future through promotion of railway specialties and the prestige of working at JSC Russian Railways.

Professional orientation, consisting of several subsystems [see, for example, 8], under the conditions prevailing in Zabaikalsky region includes the following:

1. Pre-university subsystem:

- visiting schools in the city of Chita and Zabaikalsky region to inform schoolchildren about railway professions, specialties and conditions of admission;

- additional training for pupils in grades 8–9 who wish to enter Zabaikalsky institute of railways transport for training in railway specialties;

- organization of «days of open doors» for potential applicants and their parents at the university and at the enterprises of Zabaikalskaya Railway;

- placement of visual materials in all schools;

- creation of gaming and entertaining career guidance sites;

- organization of various online contests;

- conducting a remote and an in-class practical tour of the school Olympiad organized by Zabaikalskaya Railway;

- work with the Small Railway** and preparatory courses;

** In Russia it is usually an autonomous dedicated short-distance railway section, organised by Russian railway, open for passengers, particularly for younger passengers and their parents, operated by trainees executing the functions of railway employees under the guidance and supervision of railway instructors (except for some safety sensible positions). The children's railway reproduces all the facilities of a railway, using specially designed smaller rolling stock and all usual railway technics (signalling, switches, ticket desks etc.). The trainees are schoolers who are interested in railway jobs and who attend the courses at children's railway. — *Ed. note.*

- conducting creative, sports, scientific competitions for schoolchildren and applicants.

2. University subsystem:

- support of students' personal and professional development (adaptation classes for studying at a university for first-year students, supervision, professional diagnostics, psychological and pedagogical support for students' professional self-identification);

- introduction of a «portfolio» of students as a means of personal and professional development;

- use of active forms and methods of career guidance (trainings, business games, etc.);

- priority focus on innovation, research and development;

- creation for students and graduates of a permanent page of career guidance in the newspaper of the university (or/and its e-version on the Website).

3. Post-university subsystem:

- introduction of distance learning;

- monitoring of effectiveness of employment and retention of graduates in enterprises;

- monitoring of employers' satisfaction with quality of graduate training;

- monitoring of needs of the region in human resources, particularly regarding employees with higher education.

Development of the project «Campaigning bus***»

Today, in Zabaikalsky region, the least informed are schoolchildren from settlements located far from district centers and large cities, since the access to Internet is sometimes limited, local television does not broadcast everywhere, the choice of other media is also limited. In this regard, they cannot receive detailed information about educational organizations, educational conditions and subsequent employment. So, it is hard for schoolchildren to decide on a right choice of a university.

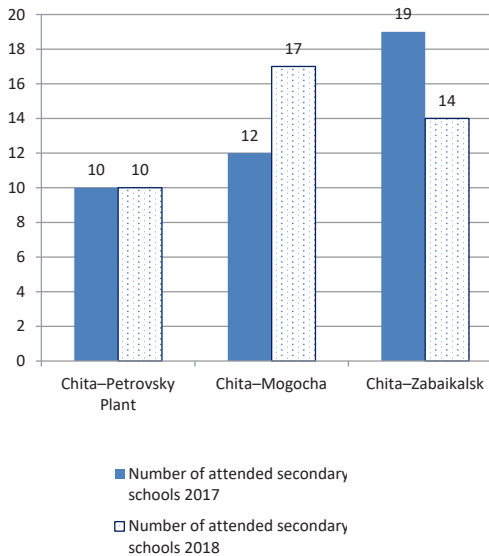
At the same time, railway human resources services consider residents of local settlements as a priority group for employment at separate railway points as the residents are more adapted to living conditions and know the working conditions in railway transport. So, there is a need to bring career guidance information to

*** The first Russian original word alludes to shortened old-time term related to propaganda or canvassing campaigns making it sound attractive. — *Ed. note.*

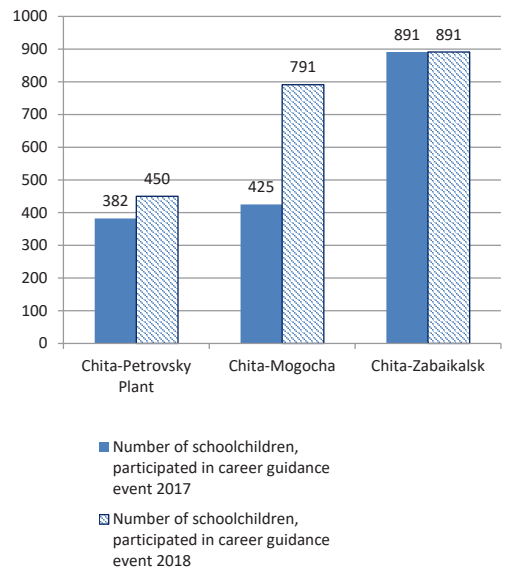


	Opportunities	Threats
Strong sides	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large coverage of secondary schools in a focus settlement, as it is possible to visit each of them. 2. Great coverage of schoolchildren, since the campaigning group arrives directly at school. 3. Simplification of delivery of handouts and presentation materials. 4. Visiting other educational organizations: technical schools, vocational schools, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weather conditions that impede movement of road transport.
Weak sides	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inability to attend all schools of settlements that are along the route. 2. Inability to visit structural units of enterprises located in settlements for the purpose of career guidance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical malfunction of road transport along the route. 2. Occurrence of a road traffic accident.

Pic. 1. SWOT analysis of the activities of «Campaigning bus».



Pic. 2. The number of schools attended.



Pic. 3. The number of schoolchildren in secondary schools who participated in career guidance events.

school youth of stations located along the railway.

During the last century, this problem was solved by organizing, with the help of universities specialized in training students for railways, of a «Campaigning train», which ran along the railway network. Many railway employees chose the profession precisely under the impression of meetings with creative teams of these trains. In the current conditions of the activities of JSC Russian Railways as a business entity, there are numerous organizational and financial difficulties to continue such practices, the main of which are:

- existing train schedule is inconvenient for organizing meetings with schoolchildren;
- employees of JSC Russian Railways and universities, either students can't be absent

respectively from job places or studies for a long time.

In this regard, the «Campaigning bus» has been successfully introduced on Zabaikalskaya Railway and has been operated for two successive years as one of the elements of pre-university subsystem of career guidance. Within this project a campaign group of students and employees of the institute travels, using road transport, from the city of Chita to three locations along the railway passing by three itineraries: «Chita-Mogocha», «Chita-Zabaikalsk», «Chita-Petrovsky Plant». Approximate mileage is more than 4000 km. In each settlement, railway employees working at this or that station join the group. As a result, a comprehensive model of work with schoolchildren in the format «student – employee of the institute – employee of JSC Russian Railways» has been implemented.

Schoolchildren have an opportunity to get first-hand information about the features of student life (that currently goes far beyond study), advice on the conditions for admission to the university and on the main points of the educational process (specialties, dormitories, etc.), as well as on possibilities of future employment and social guarantees at JSC Russian Railways.

We have compiled a SWOT analysis of the practice of «Campaigning bus» activity (Pic. 1).

During two years of operation, the total number of attended secondary schools (41) on average remained stable (Pic. 2).

Thanks to the campaigning bus and the campaigning group, over 3830 schoolchildren from Zabaikalsky region have been covered by career guidance meetings over two years (Pic. 3). In 2018, the number of schoolchildren increased by 400 people.

According to the results of the work, the following advantages of career guidance measures using «campaigning bus» compared with «campaigning train» have been identified:

1. lower cost of the project;
2. it is simpler to compile a route of movement, since there is no need to coordinate traffic with related structural units involved in the transportation process by rail;
3. greater coverage of secondary schools and educational institutions of settlements;
4. there is no need for the representatives of JSC Russian Railways to be absent at job for a long time, as they join career guidance event directly at separate points where they work.

The effectiveness of career guidance project can be determined by the following indicators. In 2018 350 people from the visited settlements entered Zabaikalsky railway institute, including those who enrolled on the basis of contracts on so called targeted training****, and, most importantly, 80 % of those who graduated from Zabaikalsky railway institute were employed by the region's railway transport enterprises [9].

Brief conclusions. Considering that career guidance is a creative activity that constantly requires new approaches in its organization, graduation of the «Z» generation schoolchildren from secondary schools encourages more

innovative methods for its implementation, however, modernization of existing forms of career guidance is also fully justified. This is proved by accumulated positive experience of information meetings with schoolchildren with the help of «Campaigning bus». This project has guaranteed for itself a worthy place within the range of career guidance activities in the nearest future.

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**** A sort of pre-employment contract between a student, university and employer, according to which employer provides some social benefits, organizes internships and pays for extra courses tuned to his needs, and a student has to be employed at employer's enterprise after graduation. — *Ed. note*.

