

Supporting Students in Choosing a Field of Further Education as an Element of Pedagogical and Psychological Activities in Secondary Education in Poland

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Abstract: For an adolescent, as well as for the environment and society, a decision to choose the correct field of education is vitally important. Nowadays, new choices of education, training and retraining have to be made as a result of the fast pace of life, constant changes in the labour market, the progress of knowledge and technology, cultural and social change. Therefore, it is necessary to ask a question how to prepare young people for the future. There is a need for people that think and act creatively, and are able to adapt to the continuous and unexpected changes.

The paper aims to present the tasks, objectives, rules and methods of career counselling as a system of multi-stage pedagogical and psychological activities that accompany an individual during his/her career and that help him/her to make education-related choices. Moreover, the paper presents the main tasks and role of a career counsellor, as well as examples of good practice in the area of career counselling in Poland.

Key words: choice of a field in education, career counselling, career orientation, career counsellor.

1 Introduction

The correct choice of a field in education is made by an adolescent is extremely important both for the decision maker and for the environment society. In the past, a job was chosen for the whole life. In this way, the importance and irreversibility of the decision were emphasized. Nowadays, the pace of life, permanent changes in the labour market, the progress of knowledge, technology, cultural and social change result in an increasing need to make new choices of education, training and retraining.

The new world implies a multiplicity of choices. The identity of a man, including the professional one, used to be shaped by ready, universal and indisputable patterns, but now, it is a kind of puzzle characterised by continuous

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construction, deconstruction and reconstruction (Melosik, 1998, cited in Melosik and Przyszczykowski, 1998). Contemporary careers are increasingly fragmented and biographies of a mosaic type appear. Therefore, the significance of assistance obtained during the process of educational career transitions is increasing.

Therefore, it is necessary to ask a question how to prepare young people for the future. There is a need for people that think and act creatively, and are able to adapt to the continuous and unexpected changes.¹

2 Educational and career orientation

In literature, one can find many similar-sounding terms that are used to present the content related to the choice of education and career. The most common terms include: career and educational pre-orientation and orientation, career and educational counselling, outplacement. In order to organize the terminology as criteria, four factors are distinguished. The first relates to the period in which the activities related to knowledge of professions take place. Another factor is the scope of these activities, and, above all, their content. Another factor is the form and methods of such activities, i.e. the way they are conducted. The final factor is the result of such activities, which is related to their efficiency or the lack of sufficiency effects (Wiatrowski, 2000, p. 173).

According to Z. Wiatrowski, educational and career orientation is “targeted and organized among students in schools of general education (lower and upper secondary schools). They must choose an appropriate college or higher education institution, and consequently, their career.” (Wiatrowski, p. 173).

Moreover, in relevant literature, the following terms appear: career pre-orientation, educational orientation, career orientation, educational and career orientation, counselling, career guidance, outplacement, career selection and retraining.

Career pre-orientation is a system of random but deliberate activities that enable both individuals and teams to acquire knowledge about professions. These are activities taken by parents, organized in kindergartens or in primary schools.

¹ More about challenges of education in the contemporary world: KARGULOVA, A., KWIATKOWSKI, S. M. and SZKUDLAREK, T. (eds.). *Rynek i kultura neoliberalna a edukacja: praca zbiorowa*. Kraków, 2005.; BOGAJ, A. and KWIATKOWSKI, S. M. (eds.). *Szkola a rynek pracy: podręcznik akademicki*. Warszawa, 2006.; ŚLIWERSKI, W. (ed.). *Edukacja w wolności*, Kraków, 2008.; WALANCIK, M. *Współczesne konteksty kształcenia pedagogów szkolnych w sytuacji różnorodności zagrożeń wychowawczych i społecznych występujących w środowisku ucznia*. Małach, J. (ed.). *Specializační vzdělávání ve školství – pojetí a rozvoj profesního zdokonalování vedoucích pracovníků výchovných poradců a preventistů sociálně patologických jevů*. Ostrava: Ostravská Univerzita v Ostravě, 2008, pp. 88-92.

Career orientation is a deliberate activity conducted among the students of lower and upper secondary schools who are facing career decisions related to the choice of a field of study and of a job. Career orientation and counselling are the activities conducted in vocational schools, so among the youth who have already decided their profession, but their knowledge of is still very low and needs to be broadened. Career guidance itself involves working people who either aspire to master their profession or, therefore they will expect some advice or will have to switch careers and choose a new one that will fully meet the new circumstances and their new needs. Activities in the field of career counselling involve people who are looking for a job, who are unemployed. Outplacement involves those who work but want to switch careers, or those who are not employed and are forced to change their careers and also those who want to retrain. Career selection is used both in choosing a career and reviewing suitability of employees.

The term of career orientation was adopted at the conference of UNESCO experts in November 1970, where it was agreed that career orientation is “[...] assistance offered to an individual so that they could take advantage of their characteristics, as well as creating the possibility of such development that they are able to choose for themselves in the course of changing conditions of life; the most appropriate type of education and career useful for the society on one hand, and on the other hand to achieve self-fulfilment.” (Woyczyńska, 1973, p. 9).

While examining different definitions of the above mentioned terms in literature, educational and career orientation can be defined as helping students in choosing their education and career path, taking into account their psychosocial abilities and limitations, interests, needs, aspirations and systems of values.²

3 History of career counselling in Poland

Socially and legally regulated activities in the field of career counselling appeared in an organized form only in the late 1890s and the early 1900s as a result of the scientific and technological revolution. However, there is evidence that in ancient times, some activities aimed to develop an ideal profile of a worker. In Plato's Republic such personal qualities were emphasised that enable people to play their professional roles well (Szajek, 1979, pp. 13-14).

² See also: BARANIAK, B. (ed.). *Współczesne problemy poradnictwa i edukacji zawodowej*. Warszawa 2007.; BEDNARCZYK, H., FIGURSKI, J. and ŻUREK M. (eds.). *Pedagogika pracy. Doradztwo zawodowe*. Warszawa: Radom, 2004.; GERLACH, R., KULPA-PUCZYŃSKA, A. and TOMASZEWSKA-LIPIEC, R. (eds.). *Wybrane problemy pedagogiki pracy w aspekcie przygotowania do zatrudnienia*. Bydgoszcz, 2008.; KARGUŁOWA, A. *O teorii i praktyce poradnictwa*. Warszawa, 2006.

In Poland, the origins of career counselling date back to the 16th century, when the works of Polish authors mention the need to take into account one's abilities and interests in career development since their early childhood. Counselling had been developing in the 19th century until the post-war times in the 20th century, when career counselling activities were hindered due to the criticism of dividing people according to their abilities. The late 1950s and the 1960s in Poland were the times of changing career counselling organizations. The idea was to prepare young people for the proper choice of their career in accordance with social needs, individual abilities, aptitude and interests (Szajek, pp. 14-37). A characteristic feature of counselling in the 1970s and 80s was the specialists' help to young people in choosing their career, which was offered by Educational and Career Counselling Centres, reporting to the Ministry of Education. In the 1970s, counselling units for adults were established in departments of employment social affairs, which reported to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. After political transformation, career counselling was given a new dimension. It turned out that in a market economy, people themselves had to take responsibility for their own professional future so they should plan their careers themselves.

An increase in the phenomenon of unemployment caused the issue of career counselling becoming particularly important. Not only did the purpose of career advice change, it was also suitable for employment. Adults, whose professional qualifications and aspirations did not fulfil the needs of the free market, were seeking for information as well.³

4 The legal foundations of career counselling in Poland

The issue of counselling in choosing a field of education is regulated in Poland by numerous acts of law.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland from the 2nd of April, 1997 in Art. 65 says that every citizen has the freedom to choose a job and a place of work. The Article also states that public authorities pursue a policy aiming at full productive employment by implementing programmes to combat unemployment, including organizing, supporting career counselling and training, as well as public works and assisted employment (<http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/polski/kon1.htm>).

³ More in SZCZEPAŃSKA-WOSZYNA, K. Challenges of the labour market for knowledge, skills and attitude of managers-to-be. MIKOŁAJCZYK, Z. and MARTIN, C. (eds.). *Formation et developement des competences manageriales dans l'Europe elargie*. Łódź: Wyd. UŁ, 2004, 358-365; LIS, M. Innowacyjny system zarządzania WCM na przykładzie przedsiębiorstwa produkcyjnego. DAWIDZIUK, S. and LEWANDOWSKI, M. (eds.). *Innowacyjność w zarządzaniu: jakością, produkcją, logistyką, personelem i organizacją. Nauka i praktyka*. Warszawa: Wyd. Wyższej Szkoły Menedżerskiej w Warszawie, 2012, pp. 63-64.

The Act from the 7th of September, 1991 for the System of Education in Section 1, obliges schools to adapt the fields and content of education to the labour market requirements and to develop students' basic entrepreneurship conducive to actively participate in economic life, to prepare students for choosing their job or the field of education and to provide conditions for the development of students' interests and talents by organizing extra-curricular activities and after-school programmes, as well as developing social activity and leisure skills.

The Maastricht Treaty from the 7th of February, 1992 also relates to career counselling in part - in Art.126. The scope of career counselling issues was extended to the education-related issues (Art.126), linking it with the process of vocational training and preparation for the labour market (Article 127) (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/pl/treaties/dat/11992M/htm/11992M.html>).

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport from the 15th of January, 2001 on detailed rules of operation for psychological and educational counselling centres and other public specialist counselling centres, and the framework of the Statute of these centres (Journal of Laws No. 13 item 109) emphasizes that centres must provide assistance to students in choosing a field of study or a job (http://www.interklasa.pl/portal/index/strony?mainSP=subjectpages&mainSRV=nauczyciel&methid=1074927672&page=subpage&article_id=321200&page_id=20075).

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport from the 21st of May, 2001 on the framework statutes of state kindergartens and state schools (Journal of Laws, 200, 1 No. 61, item 624 as amended) says that principals are required to include the intramural career counselling system and activities related to the choice of education in the statute (<http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20010610624>).

Another Regulation of the Minister for National Education and Sport from the 7th of January, 2003 on the rules of providing and organizing psychological and pedagogical counselling in state kindergartens, schools and institutions (Journal of Laws, 29 January, 2003) says in Section 2.1 that the psychological and pedagogical counselling involves in particular: supporting students in choosing further education, job, career planning and providing information in this area, as well as supporting teachers in organizing the intramural counselling system and the activities associated with the choice of education and career. It also specifies the tasks and qualification requirements for career counsellors (Section 15) (<http://pedagog szkolny.pl/zmoje/rozporzadzenie2.htm>).

The Regulation of the Ministry of National Education and Sport from the 23rd of May, 2004 on the pedagogical supervision and the list of positions requiring pedagogical qualifications specifies indicators of activities, related among others to career orientation and student's career planning.

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education from the 12th of March, 2009 specifies qualifications required for teachers, defining schools and cases in which teachers with no higher education or completed teacher training can be

employed (Journal of Laws, No. 50, item 400). The Regulation specifies the desired qualifications of candidates for the position of a teacher - counsellor in various educational institutions.

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education from the 17th of November, 2010 sets the principles of providing and organizing psychological – pedagogical counselling in state kindergartens, schools and institutions (Journal of Laws No. 228 item 1487), says that psychological and pedagogical counselling in kindergartens, schools and institutions is provided to students by teachers, tutors and specialists who perform tasks in the field of psychology and pedagogy. In kindergartens, schools and institutions, especially psychologists, educators, speech therapists and career counsellors are called “specialists”. Psychological and pedagogical counselling is provided to students, among others in the form of activities related to the choice of a field of education, of a job, education and career planning. The Regulation also defines the duties of a career counsellor.

The acts of law regulating the activities in the area of career counselling include documents in force in the Public Employment Services. The Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions from the 20th of April, 2004 (Journal of Laws 2008 No 69, item 415) defines that a career advisor, through group or individual career counselling helps to choose a field of education and a job. He/she takes into account psycho-physical abilities and a life situation of advice seekers, as well as current labour market needs. The Act also specifies rules of career counselling (http://www.google.pl/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCwQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fisap.sejm.gov.pl%2FDownload%3Fid%3DWDU20040991001%26type%3D3&ei=IUZ6Ur6hL5HTsgbe2ICwAg&usg=AFQjCNFz-cPEF_ikEnw_H4mrXa4iE5qHg&sig2=LnP-sczwuUh1YzuBq8coRQ&bvm=bv.55980276,d.Yms).

Regulation of the Minister for Labour and Social Policy from the 14th of September, 2010 is the standards and conditions of providing labour market services (Journal of Laws No. 177, item 1193) says in Section 36 that career counselling and information are provided through: advice or individual information, advice, group information, support offered to a national employer to select candidates for the position advertised in the national job offer, making career information resources available to those who are registered or unregistered.

A process of solving the career problem, called an “advisory process”, consists in providing help by a career counsellor in the forms mentioned above and using the appropriate tools (<http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20101771193>).

5 Tasks, objectives, rules and methods of career orientation and counselling

Educational and career counselling is a system of multi-stage pedagogical and psychological activities that accompany an individual during his/her career. These include all activities related to providing help both to students and adults in planning, creating and developing careers that give satisfaction and professional success. The primary purpose of career counselling is to stimulate professional development of young people and adults. It should enable them to choose their own career path actively and independently. This objective can be achieved by providing appropriate conditions and resources, as well as developing special programmes and methods. Differentiation based on age of people enables them to know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, to learn professions, the relaxing techniques, to cope with stress, to present themselves appropriately, to learn the principles of non-verbal communication, to write letters of applications and CVs (Lelińska, 2000).

In the current system of career counselling in Poland, the following two elements should be distinguished: career counselling for young people, career counselling for adults, the unemployed and job seekers. The former is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The latter - of the National Employment Office, reporting to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy.

Career orientation and counselling primarily involve: collecting and disseminating information on the labour market, jobs, training opportunities, providing with individual career advice, commissioning and conducting psychological, pedagogical and medical tests to determine career aptitude and career suitability; organizing and giving classes to job seekers, where they can acquire practical skills of a job search; offering assistance to companies to select candidates for the job especially for positions requiring special abilities, cooperating with institutions dealing with career counselling and orientation, doing research on unemployment in the local labour markets (Bańka, 1995, pp. 75-76).

The contemporary labour market causes the continuous development of the sphere of action, such as career orientation and counselling. Better counselling therefore means new counselling demands, namely: preventing career failures; preventing excluding processes in professional life; preventing layoffs of older workers; preventing accidental and inappropriate adaptation to the professional situation; learning to train in one's free time as a way of improving qualifications or preparing for a job, long-term career planning; decompensating effect of professional responsibilities (Waidner, Sturm and Bauer, 1996, pp. 7-8).

6 A career counsellor - requirements, role and models

The main duties of a career counsellor include offering advice to a client (student, adult) aiming to help in the following areas: recognizing the skills, competencies, interests, talents, gaining knowledge and skills in the field of self-knowledge, job search, interpersonal communication, professional and social roles, knowledge about professions, making rational education and career decisions, determining or supporting individual career and education paths, giving opinions about employment suitability on the basis of diagnosis and the opinion of specialists, interviews and document analysis.

Other duties include: collecting, compiling, disseminating information about jobs, ways of acquiring professional qualifications, the needs of the labour and education market, establishing relationships with partners and clients of career counselling services, participating in conferences, symposia, trade fairs in the sector of career counselling, employment intermediation, education, social welfare and rehabilitation of the disabled, preparing and organizing job fairs, education fairs and career days.

The most common methods of individual and group work used by a counsellor include: counselling conversation, interview and document analysis, observation, analysis of the medical tests results, specialist opinions, conducting psychological and pedagogical tests and their analysis - methods used in correlation with the career counsellor's education, group counselling: workshops, training courses, interpersonal courses, providing the group with information and conducting professional lessons.

In order to do a job of a career counsellor, it is necessary to have a university degree. It is essential to strengthen the expertise by completing postgraduate studies in the field of career counselling, excluding those who hold a diploma of an educator or psychologist specializing in career counselling. In order to perform tasks of a career counsellor, it is also necessary to have broad social competences, in addition to multifaceted knowledge.

Numerous models of career counsellor's activity include two of the most popular: directive and non-directive models within which a career counsellor can take four roles: expert, informer, consultant, and reliable guardian. The "expert" and the "informer" roles are the directive types. Their activities are based on the fundamental assumptions of the psychological concept of behaviourism. An "expert-counsellor" is the one who "knows" what is best for the advice seeker. He or she knows about the client's problematic situation, how it should be resolved. He or she is experienced, very knowledgeable, can evaluate cases very well (Wojtasik, 1993, p. 10). A counsellor may impose professional advice having regard to his/her own system of moral, ethical and cultural values (Wojtasik, p. 5).

An "informer" is less directive than the "expert". His/her role is mainly to provide information on specific jobs, education paths, the labour market needs

and opportunities for future employment. In general, it can be said that in directive counselling it seems to be more important to achieve the counsellor's goal rather than have a human contact with him or her (Wojtasik, 1993, pp. 10-12).

Non-directive counselling imposes a role of either a "reliable guardian" or a "laissez-faire" counsellor. In this model, a counsellor offers to an advice seeker unconditional acceptance, respect, understanding, tolerance and empathy. He or she leaves space for the development of the individual, but does not take responsibility for solving the problem of the advice seeker. This does not make him or her comply with his/her decisions. He or she does not claim to be a moral role model for advice seekers, but he or she accompanies in solving human dilemmas and making career decisions. 'Voluntary acceptance of help' is extremely important here. A man having freedom of choice can create his or her own destiny. A counsellor provides him or her only with mental support (Wojtasik, p. 9). In this model, the career counsellor's task is to help the advice seekers "regardless of the values they express" (Wegłowska-Rzepa, 1988, cited in Kargulowa and Jędrzejczak, 1988, p. 59).

Career counselling is gradually departing from the directive model in favour of the non-directive one. The idea is not to give advice-seekers ready-made recipes or solutions to their own problems, but to teach them how to solve them by themselves.

7 Examples of good practice

In Poland, there are many examples of good practice in the area of career counselling, both at schools and in external institutions. School Career Centres are popular at schools and they are established based on the belief that a process of human professional development starts in early childhood. It is a period when our attitudes to work develop alongside with our skills and abilities and the first educational decisions are made. School Career Centres are places where school career counsellors work with young people. This work can take many forms: lectures, talks, training, courses, group workshops, individual counselling and own work supervised by the school career counsellor. These resources for the constant presence of a school career counsellor enable young people of lower and upper secondary schools to have a chance to learn about the labour market and develop their vocational and non-vocational skills so successfully, that they can compete for a place in the working life with young people from other European Union countries.

Career guidance and counselling services are also provided by the Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP), which established Centers for Education and Labour employing counsellors. OHP is a state-governed unit whose main tasks include: to support the education system by making young people socially, professionally and economically active; to take steps to improve qualifications or retrain; to

support initiatives aimed at combating unemployment and educating in the work process. This is including organizing employment and international youth cooperation.

The purpose of the OHP's activity is to create conditions for the proper social and professional development of young people, including specific actions targeting disadvantaged young people. Voluntary Labour Corps, as an institution of the labour market, conducts comprehensive activities related to the labour market and addressed to young people between 15-25 years of age.

Within OHP, activities for the labour market are conducted by nearly 620 entities, which include: Youth Education and Job Centres, Mobile Vocational Information Centres, Youth Employment Centres and their branches, Youth Career Centres, Job Agencies, ESF Vocational Training Centres and Job Clubs.

In 2012, in Youth Employment Centres, more than 178 thousand young people looking for a job were registered, 175.000 jobs were acquired, more than 180 thousand people were offered a job, and 117 thousand of them took up a job. An important role is played by job exchanges and job fairs organized every year by all Youth Education and Job Centres throughout the country and by their subordinate units. In 2012, the OHP organized 204 job fairs and 1268 job fairs across the country, where young people had the opportunity to establish contact with employers and to have access to job offers and to familiarize with possibilities of obtaining support from the OHP in developing individual careers. More than 90 thousand places of employment were offered at job fairs and on job exchanges.

Career Development Offices operating at universities also play an important role.⁴ The main determinant of their activity is the difficult situation of graduates in the labour market, so the problem of finding a satisfactory job. There is also the problem of adjusting the qualifications and interpersonal skills to the needs of the labour market in the EU. In education, new challenges are emerging, which include: adapting study programmes to the requirements of the contemporary labour market, also increasing the level of education, making changes in the educational offer, defining key skills, establishing cooperation with other institutions, including those outside the field of education, using information and communication technology, as well as increasing the flexibility of different solutions (Szczepańska-Woszczyna, 2007, cited in Szczepańska-Woszczyna and Dacko-Pikiewicz, 2007, p. 7). In these areas, the career development office is an intermediary between university graduates, students and the labour market.

According to the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, Career Development Offices are units run by universities, which offer employment support to university students and graduates.

⁴ More about activities of career development offices: MADEJ, E. Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi. *Akademickie biura karier*, No 2, 2005, pp. 76-84.

8 Conclusion

Choosing the proper field of education can influence subsequent choices, including the educational ones. It is important to choose the educational path that develops creativity and teaches us how to make own decisions. A particularly important aspect is to draw attention to graduate employability and their ability to undertake economic activity (Połturzycki, 2005, p. 21).

Unfortunately, the first educational decisions are taken when people are too young, immature or with little independence, full of anxiety and in need for support. The first support is offered by the family, but this help is unprofessional, based on emotional ties and is often subjective.⁵ To make it more objective, a system of organized specialist and professional assistance based on rational principles is necessary.

Taking into account the changes in the world of work, employment, technology and social life, activities in the field of educational and career counselling must be modified and thereby extended so as to meet the requirements of the 21st century. Nowadays, the labour market is very diverse and dynamic. Employers demand more of workers, on the other hand the development of science and technology gives easier access to knowledge, etc., so employees are able to meet the increasing demand.

Educational and career counselling is no longer seen as a one-off help to a person who is looking for a new education and career path. It is a process in which a counsellor helps his or her clients achieve a better understanding of themselves in relation to the working environment, leading to making good choices of education, the nature of work and proper professional adjustment. It is necessary to offer such forms of assistance to those seeking new ways of personal development, experiencing failure and having a general sense of confusion. Therefore career development offices at universities play such an important role. Along with the increasing demands of the labour market, changing economic and social conditions, the goals of institutions conducting activities in educational and career counselling are also changing and expanding.

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⁵ More about a role of family in creating child's identity in: NIKITOROWICZ, J. *Kreowanie tożsamości dziecka. Wyzwania edukacji międzykulturowej*, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2005.

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