

ADAPTATION TO CHANGES ON THE JOB MARKET - THE ROLE OF CAREER COUNSELING FOR STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Professional counseling for students plays an important role and support for students in the transition process from education to the labor market. However, in order to be effective, the content of consultancy services should be adapted to the real needs of students (often resulting from transformations in the education and work market). This study indicates selected challenges faced by contemporary students (future graduates) in the context of the dynamics of the labor market development but also adaptation to permanent changes in this market.*

Keywords: *career counseling, student, graduate, adaptation, job market.*

Introduction

Career counseling is a process whose purpose is to help a counseling individual to plan and then pursue a professional career. This assistance may include support in making choices, making educational and career decisions, setting objectives, further career development plans, or during adaptation and professional self-improvement (Lamb, 1993). Depending on who is the addressee, slightly different roles and tasks are assigned. In the case of students and graduates, the tasks carried out by the career counseling services can be considered very broadly. An important issue, however, is to adjust the content of these services to the real needs of future graduates. For the support to be effective, one should, first, be aware of the challenges facing young people - their dilemmas and the specific situation with which they are currently struggling. In this context, it is important to be aware of the changes currently taking place in the education and labour market - these changes often set new tasks and goals for students and graduates in the context of the transition to the labour market.

Nowadays, one also hear about career counseling, which is aimed at showing the possibilities of life and development (supporting people in programming different spheres of life in conditions of permanent change). Career as a way of life, a mosaic of episodes of life, where the goal of career

counseling is to plan and adapt the individual to undertake projects in an individual biography of choice. Career counseling is evolving towards helping people diversify the portfolio of investment into a career and deal with the negative effects of changes in personality. Because in the era of globalization, no career scenario guarantees success, the counseling task is focused on helping clients reduce the risk of functioning.

Adaptation to changes in the area of professional work

Specific challenges for future graduates arise from changes in the labour market. “An economic crisis characterized by a decrease in production (...), limited ability of the economy to absorb labour resources, entering the labour market of baby boomers, (...) discriminatory, recruitment practices of employers” (Pirog, 2013) are selected aspects affecting the current situation of young people on the labour market. It is worth mentioning that currently the competency requirements for candidates for work are changing (Budnikowski et al., 2012) (soft competences are increasingly valued), which students should be particularly aware of. In addition, in the aspect of the specific nature of the modern labour market, the particular challenge posed to young people is not so much the effective job search and efficient responding to the needs of the labour market, but creating them (in line with own capabilities, talents, predispositions, aspirations and needs). The above changes are not indifferent to the way of planning and managing a career by students in the contemporary realities of the education and labour market. Therefore, they should also be a kind of a challenge to professional counseling (Pukelis, 2014).

Modern labour market forces jobseekers to constantly improve their skills so that they can become a competition for others. The competition is so huge that today it is not enough to finish only one field of study. In the present reality, a person has to learn practically all his life, of course if he wants to get a job that is satisfactory for himself. That is why, in the modern labour market, it can be also noticed that more and more people get high qualifications, thus they are required to when applying for a job. And this leads to the fact that the value of qualifications in the labour market drops as more and more people get them. This situation means that professional competences are not so much a decisive factor in employment. Employers demand higher qualifications to take up the same position. Thus, the demand for higher qualifications increases, but this is not due to the fact that the same positions require more skills. This situation contributes to the fact that successive generations of young people need to acquire higher and higher qualifications to meet these requirements. F. Drucker also points this out by stating that “contemporary society must be a society of educated people in order to be able to develop, grow and even to exist”. It can be

concluded that the relationship between education and the labour market will be closer. Different forms of vocational education will gain in importance. Following the example of EU countries, more and more initiatives will be taken to encourage the prolongation and supplementation of education (promotion of lifelong learning).

Undoubtedly, situation in which future graduates find themselves now is not easy for them. The stigma of the economic crisis, uncertainty and instability in many industries mean that employers are more and more afraid to employ new (and what's more, young, inexperienced) employees based on an indefinite contract of employment. Young employees - students and graduates are more often employed on fixed-term contracts. From a rational point of view, it is hardly surprising for employers who usually prefer to first check the competences and skills of a new employee before offering him indefinite contract. However, it is also hard to be surprised by the fact that young people feel dissatisfaction about it, and sometimes they even emphasize that it is a kind of discrimination on the grounds of age. Especially that - as research shows - young people often expect job security and stable jobs from their work and future employers (Wziątek-Stasko, 2014). However, the sense of stability is not provided by temporary contracts - which may even favour the feeling of anxiety and frustration, and lead to various - sometimes irrational decisions (e.g. related to emigration, interruption or abandonment of education, or reckless professional retraining, not to mention the longer process of becoming self-reliant, delay in making decisions about starting a family, etc.).

At the moment, the unemployment rate among students is higher than in the case of other age groups (table 1)

Table1 Unemployment in Poland according by Central Statistical Office

Age group	Year	2016	2017
All respondents		8,3 % (1.324 thousand)	6,8 % (1.117 thousand)
under 24 years		18,0%	14,7%
25-34 years		6,4%	4,8%
35-44 years		4,5%	3,8%
45-54 years		4,1%	3,3%
More than 55 years		4,2%	3,3%

Źródło: own elaboration based on Central Statistical Office in Poland, Warsaw 24.11.2017

The high rate of youth unemployment (under 24 years of age) is also observed in Europe (Table 2).

Table 2 **Youth unemployment rate in selected EU Countries (as at 31.12.2016)**

Country	Youth unemployment rate (people under 24)
Greece	47,7
Spain	45,2
Italy	37,2
Croatia	32,2
Romania	20,5
Latvia	19,1
Average in the EU	19,1
Sweden	19,0
Ireland	18,2
Poland	18,0
Lithuania	16,6
Estonia	15,4
Bulgaria	15,2
Hungary	13,7
Malta	10,6
Germany	7,3

Źródło: own elaboration based on Eurostat and Central Statistical Office in Poland, 31.12.2016

It is also pointed out that young people have problems with finding employment, and more and more employers see difficulties in finding a suitable candidate for work (and in this context, one can point to a specific competence gap). It is extremely important to match educational and professional choices to the needs of the job market. These needs are subject to frequent changes, which result from the dynamics of the transformation of the economy and the labour market. It is therefore very important that young people have unlimited access to the latest and most reliable information about the labour market. This access should be provided by the career counseling system.

According to the *Youth in the labour market* report, the majority of surveyed students and graduates do not raise their competences, nor do they plan further education / training. Even when they are unemployed (Jelonek et al., 2015). Perhaps this is due to the fact that they do not have knowledge about the labour market demand (and thus they do not quite know which competences should particularly develop). Lack of proper knowledge about the labour market can effectively hinder adequate selection of content and forms of professional development. It is mainly on the basis of the expectations of the labour market, of own predispositions, aspirations, career goals as well as possible weaknesses as a future employee, students should define their needs and plans for professional development.

The labour law, the structure of employment are also changing, the expectations of employers towards employees are different. The demographic situation and the implementation of numerous economic reforms affect the size and quality of human capital, which is the basic creative spark in the market economy. All the above factors have an impact on the labour market, which largely determines the structure of the professions. The future is perceived not as a time of professional success and career, but as a time of uncertainty and social risks (Fitoussi, 2000). Only choosing a good career path can eliminate this uncertainty. Changes in the way companies are organized and operated, changes in the way goods are manufactured, changes in the behaviour of individuals have a significant impact on the professional decisions of the human being. This is no longer a one-off process, obvious and predictable. Each graduate must be prepared not only for an active search for employment, but also for the fact that it will not be a permanent place of work.

Career counseling in view of changes in the labour market and student problems

Constantly changing conditions and the multidimensionality of the reality in which we live, require constant adaptation of counseling to the requirements of both society and economy. Career counseling is currently not needed only at the stage of choosing a school or the direction of vocational education. It is a necessity to supplement qualifications, the need for constant learning, improvement, and very often complete retraining - these are the challenges facing the counselor and client who must adapt to a completely different life, to a job that requires full commitment and determination. It is not possible to predict changes taking place in the world of work and their impact on the individual's professional life. One should be ready for changes, fast in taking up new challenges and flexible in the labour market, unfortunately increasingly shrinking in many industries.

For many years in Poland the course of professional life was predictable. It was possible to plan the completion of school, studies, the acquisition of skills in a given industry, to take specialist or managerial positions in the next stage of career. The contemporary career is not so regular (Mrozek, 2009). What counts is the present, what is today, the possibility of planning is not so much impossible as even dangerous. Career counseling must tend to minimize distress related to the future. Showing alternatives, discovering potential in every unit makes it possible to ensure at least a minimal sense of security and durability. Life choices of advisors' clients are not choices for life, but they can become the beginning of something new, inspiration, a signpost. We cannot stop planning, but it must keep up with changes. Only then will it make sense. And it will be a

form of help and support for the individual, not another vision of failure. This is extremely difficult to achieve, especially if the advisor's relationship with the client is superficial. Only counseling based on the principle of subsidiarity and full confidence is able to help a person in need.

The development of career counseling should be connected with the emergence of prosperous societies, with a high, sustainable culture and civilization of educated people, and democratic societies. The complexity of the problem of unemployment in a market economy leads to socio-economic solutions, which to a large extent take into account the "human factor" as a superior value and this understanding of the market economy leads to its definition as a social market economy. Such economy, from the point of view of economic sciences, is like a part of the whole discipline called social economy, which means to perceive economics in such a way, that the market and its laws assume the existence of social needs that must be satisfied, sometimes contrary to the laws of the free market. Dorota Pienkowska points out that "*the concept of social economy is very broad and affects many spheres of social life.*" She considers an important feature of the social economy "*the primacy of action for people, maximizing profit*" (Pienkowska, 2009). Career counseling in this reality finds its place and justification. Particularly because the market economy carries with it numerous problems of great importance for individuals and entire communities. The factors that influence the increase in interest in consulting are, inter alia, the development of industry, technology and technologies and its consequences, such as the growth of the agglomeration urbanization, atomization of life, etc., the general increase in knowledge and public awareness, pluralism of views, attitudes, related to the development of social communication, increased dynamics and diversity of social life forms, and thus an increase in the number of difficult situations.

Not many companies notice the need to develop their employees' careers. It is also indicated that the demand for consultancy services is greater than their supply. Therefore, an effort is needed to promote consultancy with the use of modern telecommunication and information technologies in order to reach the risk groups with the offer of support. Attention is also paid to the need to improve systems supporting the quality of career counseling and the qualifications of the advisory staff.

Career counseling on the market overwhelmed by unemployment is needed and should be developed. This development seems to be inevitable as a trend resulting from the fact that modern societies operate in conditions where the demand for any counseling, for example marital, psychological, financial, and occupation, including employment, is growing and such professions of advisers undoubtedly have a future.

With regard to the dynamics of socio-economic processes shaping the image of the present day, the challenges - which face career counseling - can be characterized taking into account the criterion of goals and tasks, as A. Kławsiuć-Zduńczyk (2010). writes. These are, among others:

- supporting clients in acquiring the skills necessary to function effectively in a society of risk - among others, we talk about the ability to anticipate dangers and to shape adaptive abilities, to deal with threats,
- awareness of the risk situation - by pointing out to people who cope with certain threats resulting from social changes,
- informing clients about the latest tendencies – which include, for example, the need to constantly upgrade the qualifications and competences, lifelong learning, the ability to demonstrate flexibility, openness to changes,
- providing practical consulting advice - that is, providing clients with specific information on what opportunities they have to acquire the desired qualifications and competences, especially those that meet the needs of the modern labour market, without forgetting about those that satisfy the client's needs,
- indicating and shaping the client's competences necessary to manage their own professional and educational careers - by providing information on ways to acquire relevant knowledge. The task of a vocational counsellor is also to encourage clients to self-development, indicating what kind of meaning it plays and what benefits it can bring.

Career counseling is a requirement of time resulting from Poland's entry into the European Union, economic changes and rising unemployment. It is a process of helping people achieve a better understanding of themselves in relation to choosing the right school and proper professional adjustment. Its purpose is to familiarize the seeker with: its possibilities and interests; opportunities in relation to the labour market; economic conditions; contraindications and special requirements; types of job search; skills of contacting employers (Banka, 1995).

In the modern world, it is increasingly difficult to find stable employment and a regular professional career with numerous promotions, long years of service and access to certain benefits. Equal career times, and thus guaranteeing the same career to people with the same abilities - have gone forever. At present, even the professional career of climbing at particular levels of this career is not mentioned, because the path of modern man's life is too uncertain and does not accumulate merit or entitlements, but is constantly changing. Globalisation has led to a situation in which the labour market primarily appreciate the flexibility,

creativity and speed of switching to a new style of operation. The world is unpredictable and is perceived as a world of multiple crises: traditional systems of control and power, work and uncontrolled rise in unemployment, social life and family, loss of sense of identity (Janczak - Obst, 2002).

Career planning is a necessity that every young person faces. Work should be not only a source of income, but also professional satisfaction resulting from developing your passions, pursuing your interests and personal development. Making decisions about schooling at various levels and choosing a profession should be a decision-making process that lasts for a long time. Professional development covers the entire human life, and the current situation on the labour market makes it necessary to adapt own professional qualifications to existing job offers.

Planned and thoughtful approach to the period of study allows for multi-aspect development, for example, by gaining the necessary knowledge in own university and foreign trips as part of scholarship programs, enabling intercultural experience, learning about diversity in the approach to learning, information exchange. Studies are a period that also allow to gain experience within the framework of program and extracurricular practices and volunteering. Many young people acquire new skills during this period, raise their qualifications beyond formal education.

Activities towards the construction of individual career plans and defining the needs in the field of professional development should constitute an important area of career counseling offered to students and graduates. This assistance may consist in: supporting students and graduates in specifying career goals and plans; providing them with information on the needs of the labour market and information on the opportunities that they can use in relation to improving their competences, providing assistance in the selection of content and forms of professional development - so that they are adequate to the needs of the job market.

Conclusion

Changes related to the functioning of higher education, such as: its greater diversity, flexibility of educational offers, marketization of higher education, increase in enrolment rate, student migrations, greater access to trips (domestic and foreign) are only selected factors affecting the way of studying, making choices, shaping yourself as a future employee, planning your own educational and career. These changes properly used by students can significantly facilitate broadly understood professional development. Wide access to education, the diversity of educational fields, the multiplicity of possibilities and forms of educational development (such as participation in academic clubs, conferences

for students, foreign trips, etc.) mean that currently educational and vocational development can be planned in many different ways. On the other hand, this multiplicity of possibilities may cause some dilemmas, difficulties in choosing the most appropriate form of development. Information chaos, which accompanies, for example, the marketization of education, and thus the emergence of many different - often interesting, though mysteriously sounding specialties may cause difficulties in choosing the right educational direction. The one that will be consistent with both the predispositions of the individual and the demand of the labour market. In connection with the above, students more and more often may need support in planning their own educational and professional career or obtaining reliable professional information.

It is also worth emphasizing that in the aspect of the specific nature of the modern job market (resulting from a kind of stagnation of the economy), the particular challenge posed to young people is not so much an efficient job search and efficiently responding to the needs of the market, as creating them (in line with their own abilities, talents, predispositions, aspirations and needs). This approach to designing own career and self-creation of market opportunities by students and graduates can determine their advantage in the market and lead them to success. Therefore, it should also be a kind of a challenge to career counseling (Pukelis, 2014). The role of advisers should not only be informing and advising (e.g. in terms of opportunities for improvement or professional retraining if necessary), but also stimulating students and graduates to creatively develop their own careers and lifelong education.

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