

# **THE PROCESS OF STRENGTHENING THE POTENTIAL OF A POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY INDIVIDUAL - ABOUT THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CAREER COUNSELLING PROCESS**

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***Abstract.** The study is an analysis of the literature on the subject in the area of society's expectations towards the process of career counselling. At present, it seems very important to make adequate educational and vocational choices in the era when knowledge and information becomes more and more important and quickly becomes outdated. It is important to prepare a unit in the counselling process to deal with a permanently and dynamically changing world.*

*The effect of the analyses is to indicate the challenges and needs of the professional counselling process towards the modern society in the current socio-economic realities.*

***Keywords:** career counselling, professional career, post-industrial society.*

## **Introduction**

The times are changing, the reality that surrounds us is changing, but most of all people are changing. It is the man who shapes the place where he lives, his choices, his values, and determine the reality. There is no doubt that man feels more and more lost in the world around him. The family ties are loosening, which is caused by the increasing globalization and human mobility. We expect more and more from life, we want to satisfy our needs and we set newer and newer goals.

Above all, however, nowadays people must constantly make choices. It is not easy, because often we do not see opportunities and threats that bring further decisions. Man is no longer able to choose, he is afraid of consequences, he needs security. Therefore, broadly understood counselling has become an indispensable part of our lives. People are no longer satisfied with the help of family, friends, reading guidebooks. They expect the intervention of a professional, an adviser who will show them the right way, help them overcome

obstacles. There is an increasing demand for life counselling, for experts who ease the stigmatizing difficulties.

More and more attention is given not only to the fact of having a job, but to its character, to the opportunities it gives, to the satisfaction that can be derived from it. Man wants to develop professionally, achieve new goals, gain experience in various positions and still needs support in the implementation of individual challenges. Professional counsellors have more work and clients are less likely to experience disappointments.

### **Post-industrial society**

The attempt to characterize clients that career counsellors currently work is a very complex thing. Let us not hide the fact that post-industrial societies differ greatly depending on the geographical region. This is due to economic, material and probably cultural conditions. We see, however, many similarities, both in the hierarchy of values and in the consumption way of life.

The current image of society brings to mind one word - a journey to find knowledge and information. It can be seen both in a literal and figurative sense. Man now has the opportunity to choose a place where he wants to stay for some time. Nothing limits him, in fact, all geographical and demographic boundaries are slowly becoming blurred. Searching for own piece of space in the world is something completely normal and accepted. Mobility in life, professional mobility - these are the concepts that perfectly characterize the society of our time. Man needs constant changes, new stimuli provided by other people as well as new surroundings. The number of divorces is increasing, we change our life partners more and more often, we change our job several times, and even profession. Long-term life plans are becoming rare, they are dangerous and not very rational.

No one, after all, is able to guarantee professional and life stability. Durability and solidity are the departing structures, because, as Zygmunt Bauman says: *“The spirit of uncertainty of a new kind is rising above the world today: resulting not so much from lack of confidence in your ingenuity and cunning, how much about the future shape of the world, tomorrow's imaginations about a sensible life, the future measures of the rightness of life decisions”* (Bauman, 2000).

The reality provides the individual with numerous crises, breakdowns not only of the business cycle, problems concerning itself and the whole community. Man is even forced to change his system of values, moral norms and adapt to progress, the future of which he cannot foresee.

The reality is fearful, it is unstable and ambiguous (Gerlach, 2008), it can give a lot to a man and at the same time can take it away from him. The

individual feels lost, tries to find his own identity. The increased activity certainly helps in many spheres of life. The acquisition of new qualifications, competences and experience allows to meet the requirements of modern times. More and more life goals, non-closure in a specific spatial framework gives the opportunity to choose. It is the choice that is most important for a man, and its lack only means apparent stability.

The participants are aware of instability and constant changes (Panasewicz, 2008). Every person's life consists of individual events, and the life course diagram constituting a component of culture and being a social institution undergoes - along with social, political and economic changes - constant changes. It is inevitable, and the basic task of the individual becomes adaptation to reality. Temporality does not allow us to "grow roots" in one place, which in time causes loss and frustration. Despite the man's striving to pursue more and more goals, he needs support and help to be able to find his place in an unoccupied world. An important feature of post-modernity, strongly affecting the individual, is the fact that staying in a place for a long time does not guarantee rooting in it.

An individual increasingly does not see the logic that should govern reality. Divisions, social hierarchy, certain permanent values that created social order, are now arranged into an incomprehensible whole, in which the ability to control own destiny becomes almost impossible. More and more often we are forced to make other difficult choices and often the individual is unable to decide for himself. The need to safeguard one's own decision is born. We need someone who will give us support, advice and sometimes simply approve our decision positively.

Individual, personal problems require objective solutions that only specialists can provide. Any physical or spiritual discomfort is usually a state of repair. Man is in a way obliged to look for a way out of unclear and difficult situations (Halawa & Wróbel, 2008), and more and more often he is looking for help from advisers.

Post-modern society gets accustomed to the idea that every problem is another task for an expert. More often, we need psychologists, therapists, career counsellors, discussions about our dilemmas. The uncertainty of times, ambivalence are transferred to the behaviour of a modern man who is not sure of anything anymore, not even his own decisions.

A characteristic feature of modern man is the pursuit of individuality and uniqueness. We do not like to be like others, both in what we do and in what we have. People want to feel their "otherness", and being only one of the elements of society is not enough for us. However, new needs and preferences are quickly met by products and services. So a new idea is born for uniqueness, because what was something individual yesterday, today belongs to the broadly

understood mass culture. Being different, outstanding is more and more difficult, because sooner or later a person is assigned to a certain group and becomes again a member of the community, not an outstanding individual.

The post-industrial era man wants to be responsible for the lifestyle he adopts. He makes choices, determines his identity and more rarely asks for help from family and friends. At the same time, he is aware of the availability of not only cultural goods, mass media, but above all specialists professionally advising in many aspects of life. Searching for identity, giving direction to life, more and more often people use the help of professionals to reduce uncertainty, to feel safe. It should be noted that despite the progressive isolation of the individual, the loosening of family ties, changes in the system of values, the need for security is even indispensable to normal existence. Marriage, the other man who will protect us, are no longer medications for fear. It is a good job, material and housing conditions that are satisfying.

The era in which we live allows us to make choices, to freedom, but the price we have to pay for it is, above all, the frustration and constant search. The possibility of deciding on the shape of own life path does not bring satisfaction to contemporary people. In addition to the sense of freedom which a person has in imparting an individual face to at least some dimensions of his human existence, he also experiences anger when he gets the impression that in the past he has not used his options or the conviction that he made wrong decisions.

### **Social expectations towards career counselling**

Rapid changes in almost all spheres of human life are deeply felt also in the sphere of consulting services. The clients of career counsellors are not only unemployed people and youth expecting advice on the choice of profession or path of education. Man must adapt quickly to changes and make difficult decisions more and more often. He needs help, professional advice that a specialist is able to give him.

One of the fastest growing areas is career counselling. It is no longer associated only with services provided by jobcenters. A vocational counsellor becomes a human companion in planning a professional career. He is present not only at the beginning, when the client makes the first decisions regarding his career, but also helps him adapt to the changes that are constantly occurring on the labour market. The central role in the life of an individual is more often occupied by persons providing advice, both in professional and personal life. Modern man is aware that only professional help is able to protect him from wrong decisions. Nobody is ashamed to go to family therapists or psychologists, far less to a career counsellor. Conversations with friends, family members, are no longer sufficient for the individual, because the unpredictability of the next

day paralyzes the man, and the advice of a professional is more credible to him. It is the reality that surrounds us in part forces the search for more and more new solutions with the help of specialists, because even wrong decisions are then not just mistakes of a given individual. It is easier in such a situation to justify and look for a new way.

More often we are talking about lifelong guidance, about supporting people at all stages of development, (Bańka, 2003) about taking care of the client while making professional decisions, but also monitoring its progress and possible help during the crisis. Only a few years ago, the vocational counsellor's profession was unnecessary for the average person. Few people expected advice when choosing a profession, an education path, and a reorientation.

Poland's entry into the structures of the European Union is associated with specific responsibilities, including the field of career guidance. This is an area that has only recently begun to develop in our country and which has received special attention. Society cannot be left alone in the labour market. Individuals should be helped not only to find suitable employment, but above all to prepare for the real possibility of frequent changes in their careers. Career counselling cannot be just a one-time advice, it must be organised in a continuous and consistent manner. The most important challenge, and at the same time the main expectation of society, is that citizens, regardless of their place of residence or social situation, should be guaranteed equal access to consultancy services of the same quality. The age of the client, his education, professional experience is not important, each of us can meet with dismissal from work, and the current reality does not facilitate a quick return to professional life. From the advisers and the entire system of vocational counselling in Poland, citizens expect first of all help to take on new civilization challenges. Challenges posed by work, family life, the other person. Overcoming fear, uncertainty, bold and accurate decisions lead people to find their own identity, not only the professional one. The examples of other countries show that a well-informed society, aware of its own limitations and capabilities, is able to better control the reality and above all to create it according to own needs. Career counselling plays an important role in satisfying various human needs, and its importance in the near future will increase even more.

The advisory system, in order to meet social needs should be based on the following assumptions:

- the society is informed about services and how to use them,
- the possibilities of using the services are defined and understood,
- clients receive support in discovering opportunities and making choices,
- consulting services are planned and well organised,

- the competences of the personnel providing the services are sufficient.

There is no doubt that modern society needs support from career counsellors. However, the main problem, especially in small towns and villages, is the availability of consultancy services. Not all people are accurately informed about the form and the fee for this type of advice. They expect it, they need it, but they do not always know where to find it.

The social expectations regarding the quality of consultancy services, especially for career advisors are growing. In addition to the vast knowledge of many scientific fields, numerous competences, such as communication, interpersonal skills, involvement, relationship skills, creativity, a vocational counsellor must support and mobilize his client, be close to him during these difficult moments, accompany almost all his life.

Obtaining simple professional or educational information is now possible thanks to the broad accessibility of the Internet and the media. When going to a career counsellor, an individual must feel subjective (Kukla, 2008), as a partner in conversation who has a lot to say, self-determines about himself and his future.

The world sets people more new tasks, which start much earlier than a few years ago. On the day of birth, the parents are already planning where their child will go to kindergarten and which high school is the best. More and more opportunities also give us the feeling that we have to constantly choose and we are not always convinced and the rightness of the path we follow.

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 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. The adviser should have full knowledge about the educational and professional opportunities of individual clients,

- 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 (Kławsiuć-Zduńczyk, 2010).

The tasks of career counselling arise from contemporary social and educational transformations, and are to help to understand and objectively assess the situation in which the counsellor is found, and to motivate to take actions contributing to development.

The contemporary world and the labour market place many challenges and requirements towards a career counsellor. But the task can be easier if the adviser's work is taken into account as a man accompanying people in finding their own way, making their dreams come true. It happens through: raising awareness of one's own abilities, learning about own passions and dreams, constructing a plan for their implementation, creating a plan of life and finding ways to put it into action, as well as supporting that implementation by freeing oneself from limitations and drawing a vision (Szumigraj, 2003). If a future adviser goes through this path, then it can be assumed that he will meet the challenges of reality and he will realize his life plan.

A man lives in eternal fear, that *by some unintentional move he will close the path to better moves in the future and will not be able to grasp the new, unimaginable possibilities that the future brings* (Halawa & Wróbel, 2008). Today, thorough education and qualifications are not enough. The job market requires skilful management of own professional career. The Polish society is just beginning to learn this and begins to appreciate the role of specialists in assisting in the planning of a professional career path. Difficulties in locating own place have not only people subject to the process of professional reorientation, but also young individuals entering the professional world, who does not like making mistakes.

“How to live?”, “Where to go?”, “What do I want and what is expected of me?” – these are further questions posed by man. The search for appropriate solutions is much easier when someone accompanies us, supports us and sometimes indicates mistakes. Coping with an unstable reality is much more difficult than planning a career path. The individual more and more often feels that life runs own path, and one cannot stray from it. It is vocational counsellors who should make people aware of the possibilities, which number constantly increase but a man simply do not see them. Man has to get used to instability,

like it and stop being tormented by the lack of stabilization for the next dozen or so years. Every moment of our life gives something new, sometimes something beautiful, sometimes disappointing, but the changes are good because they show what is really important.

Contemporary society needs counsellors, but it still needs faith in another person and in ourselves. The system of values, the labour market, the whole reality are changing. It is worth to have something permanent, some point of reference, maybe love or faith, because without it the human life loses human dimension.

## **Conclusion**

The social expectations towards many professions and people who perform them are growing. One of them is a vocational counsellor, who no longer serves only as a specialist in career planning. Career counselling today is above all accompanying the client throughout their lives. Instability, permanent fear and uncertainty require taking appropriate advisory and supportive actions. You cannot ignore the needs of individuals who cannot cope with making decisions. There is a social demand for consultancy services. It is worth thinking about the greater availability of career counselling for the society. The existing system intervenes when the problem already arises. Effective counselling prevents problems and not cures.

In the present world, the advisory process accompanies people “from the beginning”, the moment of choosing a school, a profession up to a “professional end”. Today, there is also talk about career counselling, 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 counselling is to plan and adapt the individual to undertake projects in an individual biography of choice. Career counselling 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 globalisation, no career scenario guarantees success, the counselling task is focused on helping clients reduce the risk of functioning.

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