

Lucyna Kopciewicz
University of Gdansk

A review of Michal Mielczarek's monograph *Polityka aktywizacji w powiatowym urzędzie pracy. Logika działania pola pomocowego* [The activation policy in a district job centre. The logic of the counselling scope]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW, Wrocław, 2020.

The year 2020 brought the publication of Michal Mielczarek's monograph titled *Polityka aktywizacji w powiatowym urzędzie pracy. Logika działania pola pomocowego* [The activation policy in a district job centre. The logic of the counselling scope]. It was released by the publishing house of The University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław.

The social function of job centres as advisory institutions supporting the unemployed is not often subject to scientific inquiry with the pedagogic lens. The body of research available in Poland chiefly deals with the operation of these institutions rather than understanding the very process of assistance, the emerging patterns and frameworks of educational support relations anchored in the job centre. Mielczarek's monograph can thus be named pioneering, as it opens a new frontier of pedagogical research, identifying problems and outlining directions of analysis. The monograph is also an apt example of applying Pierre Bourdieu's social theory to counselling studies. The theory of the French sociologist – one of the leading figures of twentieth century French scholarship – has virtually been forgotten and very rarely inspires empirical research in Poland. It is worth stressing that the author considers Bourdieu's theory to be particularly akin to his own perspective and thus its consistently appears in his publications (Mielczarek 2014, Mielczarek 2017).

The monograph comprises four chapters and the first stands out. The reader might expect a systematic application of available theory in the context of the planned research or interpretation of its results. In fact, the first chapter is an auto-ethnographic analysis dealing with the dimensions of social interaction, counselling relations and activation space, which together form an "activation habitus" of the job centre counsellor. The second chapter documents the adopted methodological perspective, assumptions, concepts and specific solutions applied in the process of planning and completing empirical research. The third chapter is a detailed

analysis of the job activation policy, which the author understands as a unique scope of power, where the forces of economy, politics and culture meet and interact. Mielczarek's aim is to reconstruct the origin of the activation policy as a special form of control over the counselling relation and its protagonists. The fourth chapter is devoted to the analysis of the activating games taking place in the job centres as specific power scopes. The author, analysing the verbal communication of the job centre staff and of their clients, attempts to identify the practical logic of this social scope, its appropriate order of things, in other words "the practical mastery," which governs the counselling relations forming within this scope.

It is worth noting that the monograph has been written as if by two personas: the author, who is a job centre counsellor (internal perspective), and the external observer, who tries to assess this part of social reality with a neutral eye (external perspective). This dual "viewpoint construct" emerged thanks to the author's – very apt – intuition that a great deal more happens in a job centre counselling relation than that between the counsellor and counsellee. What works in this relation above all and on top of individual dispositions is the counselling system understood as a scope of actions, interactions and supervision, and the specificity of the social area in which this relation is embedded. Bourdieu's social theory allows for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the specificity of the social scope and the set of practices taking place within it.

The monograph of Michal Mielczarek gradually uncovers the working of the counselling scope and does so starting with the actions of the career counsellor. The analysis seeks to establish the author's original perspective to capture the counselling practice as a tangle of the individualistic/subjective action and reflection, and objective factors as an emanation of the scope. As this is not an easy task, the author's effort deserves appreciation. Its effect is the systematized theorising that begins with the "career counsellor's viewpoint" and end with the "governmental viewpoint" – that of the counselling system entangled in the contradictions of the global neoliberal origin.

Mielczarek's work presents a well ordered and coherent theoretical area marked with the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, and it has the added value of bringing the work of the French sociologist back to light.

Mielczarek's monograph markedly broadens the counselling reflection to include aspects related to the "infrastructure" of global neoliberalism. That infrastructure permeates the sphere of local solutions, institutional practice and personal judgments in specific counselling relations. The author is wary of the fact that the function of the job centre counselling scope is under constant change in synchrony with the state of the "social power games" taking place in fields of politics and economy: the new social programmes and social challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreak can shift the state of activation games at job centres. I consider these gaps that the author points out as prospects for further research.

Mielczarek's monograph encourages readers to reflect on how the social understanding of work changes in modern societies and what can become of activation policy in the context of the forecasted "end of work." I am sure that this monograph will invite many commentators and will inspire those interested in counselling studies, social pedagogy, career counselling, sociology and political science.

Translated: Remek Zajęc

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