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Vocational Counselling for People Aged 50 and Over: Changes and Challenges in the Labour Market. International Conference, Czestochowa, 8-9 May, 2014

During a two-day international conference held at Jan Długosz University in Czestochowa, vocational counselling for people aged 50 and over was discussed.

The conference was held under the auspices of the President of the City of Czestochowa, the Chancellor of Jan Długosz University, the University of Applied Labour Studies of the Federal Employment Agency in Mannheim and the Narodowe Forum Doradztwa Kariery (the National Forum for Lifelong Guidance Policy) of Poland. The conference was dedicated to Professor Bernd Joachim Ertelt on his 25th anniversary on staff at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Jan Długosz University and his 45 years of teaching and research.

Prof. Bernd Joachim Ertelt¹ is not only a world-renowned specialist in the field of career counselling but also an erudite and a truly great man. In the

¹ Prof. B.-J. Ertelt is a member of many international associations, including: AIOSP/IVBBB – Internationale Vereinigung für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung; DvD – Deutscher Verband für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung; HLB – Hochschullehrerbund Deutschland; SDSiZ– Stowarzyszenie Doradców Szkolnych i Zawodowych RP (The Polish Association of School and Vocational Counsellors); ESVDC.org – European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling; NICE II – Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe, Member of Steering Committee; Co-editor of *Bildung, Arbeit, Beruf und Beratung*, Verlag: Empirische Pädagogik, Landau/Deutschland; Conseil Scientific International of J. “OSP” (INETOP, Paris); the Editorial Board of *Career Designing: Research and Counselling* (Kaunas/Lithuania); Naukowe Towarzystwo Poradownicze (The Counselling Association) (Poland); Scientific Board of *Studia Poradownicze/Journal of Counselling* (Wroclaw/Poland); NFB – Nationales Forum Beratung in Bildung, Beruf und Beschäftigung, Deutschland/BMW; Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung; Arbeitsgruppe 1: Qualitätsmerkmale/Standards für die Beratung und Kompetenzen der Beratungsfachkräfte; AVOPP – Applied Vocational Psychology and Policy Research Unit, Luxemburg; Heinrich-Vetter-Forschungsinstitut (HVFI), Mannheim; DTI – Deutsch-Türkisches Institut für Arbeit und Bildung e.V. c/O Hochschule der Wirtschaft für Management, University of Applied Management Studies, Mannheim; NFDK – Narodowe Forum Doradztwa Kariery (National Forum for Lifelong Guidance Policy), Cracow, Poland. In 2012, Prof. Ertelt was awarded the Medal of the National Education Commission.

1980s, he provided help on both substantive and organisational matters at the Higher Teacher Education School (now Jan Długosz University); he helped draw up programmes and curricula in vocational counselling, a new degree in Poland at that time. Since 1994, he has lectured regularly on this subject to students and employees of the Institute of Social Pedagogy, now called the Department of Vocational Counselling. In the academic year of 1995 /1996, the collaboration between the University of Mannheim and the Higher Teacher Education School in Czestochowa resulted in the launching of a 3-year undergraduate degree in vocational counselling and employment facilitation. At the end of 1990, a youth exchange programme was added thanks to Prof. Ertelt. This gave students in the programme at Jan Długosz University an opportunity to learn about the same programme at the University of Mannheim, to attend classes and workshops and to meet the teaching staff. (They have used the opportunity ever since.) All these things became possible because of the personal involvement of Prof. Ertelt, who helped students arrange the trip and find affordable accommodation in Mannheim and took care of them during their stay. In 1999, Prof. Ertelt obtained consent from the German authorities to accept an appointment as Professor at the University in Czestochowa, where he has worked to this day.

The conference was organised by the Department of Vocational Counselling in cooperation with the University of the Third Age based at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Jan Długosz University.

Professor Grażyna Rygal, the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Jan Długosz University, was the head of the Scientific Committee and gave the eulogy. Professor Zygmunt Bak, the Chancellor of Jan Długosz University, gave the opening address and also congratulated Prof. Ertelt in recognition of his long-term commitment to education in Czestochowa and international cooperation. Prof. Ertelt was awarded the Medal Merentibus by the President of Czestochowa and the City Council. Notably, in 2012, Prof. Ertelt was also awarded the National Education Medal of Poland.

A Festschrift to honour Prof. Ertelt, titled *Vocational Counselling: Changes and Challenges in the Labour Market*, was issued on the anniversary. The volume, edited by Joanna Górna and Daniel Kukła, contains articles written by friends and colleagues of Prof. Ertelt from around the world. Among the authors from Poland are Prof. Augustyn Bańka, Prof. Adam Biela, Prof. Alicja Kargulowa and Prof. Romuald Derbis; and among the contributors from other countries are Prof. Jean-Pierre Dauwalder (Switzerland), Prof. Luis M. Sobrado Fernández (Spain), Dr Laura Gressnerová (Slovakia), Prof. Kestutis Pukelis (Latvia), Jean-Jacques Ruppert (Luxembourg), Prof. Michael Scharpf (Germany), Prof. Wiliam Schulz (Canada) and Prof. András Zakar (Hungary).

After the ceremony in honour of Prof. Ertelt, the conference was opened by Professor Heinrich Alt, Vice-President of Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Germany's Federal Labour Agency) with his inaugural lecture on "Social Responsibility and Labour Market Needs Regarding Older Employees." He addressed job

market issues arising out of demographic changes (i.e. the aging of the population) and showed what has been done in Germany to increase the occupational activity of older people. Professor Andreas Zakar from the University of Szeged talked about vocational counselling for seniors in Hungary. An international point of view on vocational counselling for older people was given by Professor Michael Scharp from Mannheim. Dr Andrew Piers described support programmes for seniors in Canada. Professor Alicja Kargulowa spoke about challenges to contemporary counselling, and Dr Dorota Rynkowska and Dr Tomasz Sobierajski spoke about the importance of social activity of seniors.

Professor Józef Kargul and Dr Beata Jakimiuk gave an interesting lecture on planning and supporting careers of older people. Also raised at the conference was the issue of competencies both older and younger workers need for successful job market navigation. This was researched and presented by Professor Andreas Frey from Mannheim. Competencies of career counsellors in the context of European job market challenges were discussed by Dr Laura Gressnerova from Bratislava. Professor Ewa Rzechowska from the Catholic University of Lublin and Dr Czeslaw Noworol from the National Forum for Lifelong Guidance Policy of Poland talked about the occupational and educational activity of people over 50 years of age. Dr Robert Parol, Dr Mariola Mirowska and Dr Grzegorz Kida spoke about the advantages of employing 50-plussers and the ways of supporting them. Professor Vely Liubkiny gave a lecture on the educational system in Latvia and also spoke about the education of seniors.

The conference participants also had a chance to see how the University of the Third Age at Jan Długosz University operates in practice. Drawing on selected theories of career development, Prof. B.J. Ertelt shared his view on vocational counselling for the clients in what is referred to as “third age.”

It is impossible here to report all the issues raised at the conference and to list all the participants. The success of the conference and the great interest in the subject matter prove that there has been significant progress in the research into vocational counselling and show, at the same time, how much more needs to be done in this field.

Emphatically, demographic changes in Europe have an important influence on the job market and the development of the European economy. Vocational counselling is also subject to change as its constantly expands to include all age- and social groups in an ever-changing economic, technological and demographic modern world. In an era of increasing globalisation and a longer working life, a person is required to constantly adapt skills and competencies so as to prepare for foreseeable and inevitable changes. Ultimately and more importantly, vocational counselling enables the individual to develop and, thus, to contribute to the development of society. The conference was certainly an excellent forum for exchange of experiences and research.

The presentations that were not included in the Festschrift in honour of Prof. Bernd Joachim Ertelt will be released in the conference proceedings to be published in 2014. We, at Jan Długosz University, sincerely hope that the international and intergenerational discussion on vocational counselling will progress in the years to come. These hopes are now more feasible thanks to Prof. Ertelt's initiatives and international connections.

In the years 2007-2010 the staff and students of the Department of Vocational Counselling under the supervision of Prof Ertelt participated (and still participate) in several European projects, e.g.:

“Brain Drain – Brain Gain,” Qualification Modules for Counsellors (LLP Leonardo da Vinci). This publication, covering educational modules for post-graduate vocational counselling studies, was issued in five languages as the result of the project;

Qualifizierung von Berufsbildungspersonal hinsichtlich Identifikation der & Beratung von Auszubildenden mit hohem Abbruchsrisiko (PraeLAB) (Qualification of vocational training professionals for the identification and counselling of trainees with a high dropout risk).

Between 2010 and 2013, Jan Długosz University participated in the Lifelong Learning Erasmus Programme **Development and Implementation of Common Bachelor's Degree Programme in the European Context – DICBDPEC (LLP Erasmus)**. The project yielded educational programmes (in modules) for bachelor and master vocational counselling studies and the publication of a multinational terminological dictionary.

Erasmus Academic Network – NICE: Network for Innovation in Career Guidance & Counselling in Europe. The project was carried out in the years 2009-2012 under the Lifelong Learning Erasmus Programme. Prof. Bernd-Joachim Ertelt was the initiator and a member of the committee carrying out this project. It is by far the largest European project in this field in terms of the number of countries and institutions involved. Because of the necessity to validate its assumptions and further expand European cooperation, the project will continue for many years.

Thanks to the initiatives taken by Prof. Ertelt, the following four bilateral projects are currently being carried out: Vocational counselling for older people, Introducing dual educational system in Poland, Double diploma in social studies and Maintaining students exchange.

It is our hope that the jubilee conference *Vocational Counselling for People Aged 50 and Over: Changes and Challenges in the Labour Market* has inspired and motivated the participants to broaden and deepen their research on the international and local levels.

Translated from Polish by Andrew Piers