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Solid Foundations – Professional Actions. 31st
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The annual conference of the Association of Educational and Vocational Counselors of the Republic of Poland was organized in September 2021. This year's conference was of a special nature, as it commemorated the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the oldest Polish association of educational and career advisors. It was officially opened by Tomasz Magnowski – the Chairman of the Board, who then read a letter from one of the members, Anna Wierzchowska-Szymanek, in which she pointed out how important the participation in the Association was in her life. These historical recollections were continued by Jagoda Kropidłowska – an active member of the Association from its very beginning. She talked about Professor Wanda Rachalska, the founder of the Association, and she summarized the activities of the successive Chairmen of the Board and their achievements, outlining the development of the Association's activity. Her recollections evoked a lot of emotions. The community character of the association was emphasized by Ewa Dębska, who reported on the activities undertaken as part of the National Careers Week (OTK). Its aim is to popularize interesting initiatives in the field of educational and career counselling by organizing (in the third week of October) various types of meetings, talks, lectures, games, simulations, etc. by educational institutions of all levels (kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, universities) and institutions dealing with educational and career counselling. Organizations often combine their activities, creating platforms promoting advisory activities throughout Poland. This year the winners of the 12th OTK had an opportunity to share their consulting undertakings in public, which they genuinely appreciated. The speaker concluded the speech with the announcement of the title of the 13th OTK: *3C's: Competences, Career, Creativity*.

Bożena Wojtasik's lecture *Life Design Counselling – reflections of a counselling studies expert* was the introduction to the main topic of the conference. At the beginning the speaker systematised the concepts, stating that counselling on the construction of life is an integral part of career counselling. She considered ways to support the people seeking advice in times of uncertainty and unpredictability in the changing contexts of professional work, personal life and changes in interpersonal relationships. In turbulent reality, the recipient of advice also changes, the counselee becoming *homo consultans*. The current methods and techniques of working with the counselee, in the opinion of the speaker, should be changed and therefore she proposed adopting the Life Design Counselling perspective. She also shared her views on the concept of narrative interview proposed by Mark Savickas. In the final reflection she stated that new theories are useful because they enable us to understand the reality around us and to live in a world full of contradictions.

Then Anna Paszkowska Rogacz discussed the results of the research project entitled *What do children know about work?* First she characterized the cognitive-developmental approach, recalled Donald Super's and Linda Gottfredson's theories as a justification for early exploration of career choice, and then presented contemporary considerations on children's understanding of career choice. The speaker presented the results of her own research, the aim of which was, among others, to answer two questions: 1) Does children's knowledge about the mechanisms of making professional choices and designing their own careers change with their age?, and 2) Does children's gender influence the level of knowledge about professions and professional dreams or aspirations of the children participating in the study in the context of the views of Kimberly A.S. Howard and Mary E. Walsh? The speaker concluded her speech with the following recommendations for counselling practice: 1) it is important to convey knowledge on the nature of professions and the tasks involved, 2) it is worth making a diagnosis of interests, values, goals and needs, and 3) the socio-economic context of work should be analysed. Finally, the speaker indicated plans for further research.

Małgorzata Rosalska talked about theory and practice complementing each other. She believes that everyone needs theoretical resources of knowledge when setting goals and constructing their life. The speaker listed organizations which plan professional development and discussed some principles which should be followed when planning that. She described the main challenges for advisors, such as identifying the actual competences of career counsellors at schools, conducting in-service courses that bring the counsellors' knowledge up to date, and promoting good practices. The speaker ended her speech with a presentation of inspiring readings for conference participants.

Monika Mazur-Mitrowska took the conference participants into the world of the philosophical premises of modern career counselling, arguing that the first advisors were the sages of ancient Greece, and their thoughts expressed advice for life that is valid up to our times. She introduced the views of the sophists and, inter alia,

Socrates, concluding that the career counsellor / coach accompanies the counselee in getting to know themselves by skilfully asking questions, noticing those aspects of the person's life that they do not pay attention to. The speaker focused on the goals of getting to know oneself and the sources of self-knowledge. She also noted that the current philosophical dispute between the supporters of determinism and indeterminism remains unresolved, and that the "Butterfly Effect" and "Black Swans" are still present in our lives. Finally, she discussed the role of random events in the reflections of researchers and the importance of change in the present times. As a message for advisors she mentioned a "wide-angle" view, the use of dialogue and narrative building and accompanying the client in building self-knowledge, as well as building a support network among advisors themselves, aimed at professional development.

Iwona Zaborowska from the Białystok Foundation for Professional Development delivered a lecture entitled *Professional counselling in the demand model*. This model is an element of external support for schools in the area of advisory activities. It takes into account the competences necessary for a specific job and relates them to demand on the labour market. On the one hand, it can be used to study the needs of employers, and on the other hand, to explore the contents of students' dreams and their predispositions. It is promoted by means of educational marketing.

Aneta Nowakowska argued that every human being has talent, and even 34 talents. The speaker focused on Don Clifton's approach and characterized the main assumptions of the Gallup test, and encouraged the conference participants to complete it in order to diagnose their own talents. Knowing them allows one to better understand oneself, perform in-depth self-characterization, understand one's own educational and professional choices. Knowing the client's talents enables the advisor to understand the client's actions and support them in their decisions.

Tomasz Waleczko focused on post-pandemic challenges in teaching. He characterized the alpha generation, emphasized the importance of radicalization of values among young people, and also referred to the lack of values and frequent sense of a lack of purpose in life as well as less persistence in pursuing goals and unstable self-esteem. He stressed the need to teach young people social skills. The speaker argued that one should take into account the differences between people and therefore make individual diagnostics. The BrainCore instrumentation can be used for this purpose, as it is based on the individuality of each brain. The use of these tools requires participatory work, jointly looking for potential, strengths and talents of the client.

Anna Sowińska spoke about the Pattern Therapy. Dysfunctional personal patterns appear as a result of difficult situations that the person experiences. They define the way the individual thinks and interprets reality. This approach distinguishes patterns and modes. The speaker discussed the interdependence between the client's mode and the counsellor's mode, and the influence of these modes on

the relations between them. The speaker often referred to specific examples from her own counselling practice, which allowed the participants to notice the mutual relations between the theory and its application in real professional situations.

In the next speech Paweł Wolski shared his knowledge concerning career counselling for students with diverse educational needs. He showed the causes of diverse educational needs, i.e. the physical, mental and social factors. He also characterized students with diverse educational needs, e.g. those who are socially maladjusted, experiencing a difficult situation, struggling to adapt, suffering neglect, disabled etc. On the basis of the example of various successful people, famous inventors, politicians and athletes, he argued that a limitation may become a resource. With this assumption, both students and counsellors gain a new perspective that can be used in constructing a successful career. Finally, the speaker noted that while planning one's future one should take into account three issues: one's goals, needs and resources.

In the subsequent part of the conference the floor was given to foreign guests. Kobus Maree from the University of Pretoria (South Africa) in his paper *Postmodernising career counselling in (South) Africa to enhance 'best practice': At the coalface while 'tradition' dictates* presented the main approaches to career counselling in the Global South, focusing on South Africa. The current counselling trends in this area comprise the emphasis on the role of counselling in setting the right life goals, promotion of the counselling of hope, taking into account the assumptions of social justice and ethical behaviour, as well as combining human needs with the skills of robots. Due to changes taking place in the world, counselling should also change. Therefore, the speaker presented his own model of the Integrative Approach, which links the mission and career of an individual with their history and sequence of events. He also stated that solid theoretical foundations create an opportunity to view reality from many perspectives. This enables giving conscious subjective advice concerning the counselee's individual story.

Elena Zaglaridou, from the Education Future Skills Development Lead of Microsoft Central Eastern Europe in Greece, began her speech from the statement that many young people do not sufficiently use the opportunities offered by studying and do not use the services of careers offices when constructing their own educational and professional path. In response to this issue the speaker presented *CareerCoach*, a Microsoft Teams application powered by LinkedIn. This application, when used by students, may enhance self-knowledge and may facilitate planning a career path and building a network of contacts. There is also the possibility, as the speaker said, of merging Microsoft and LinkedIn, which also gives the opportunity to other institutions to learn about the resources, capabilities and preferences of students, whom they will be able to hire in the future.

Norman Amundson and Andrea Fruhling from Canada presented the theoretical assumptions of the Hope-Action Theory, shared their experience of the practical application of this approach in interventions with clients, and then invited

participants to an exercise in which they emphasized the importance of using each element of the approach they had presented. In this way, the participants took an active part in the counselling, the aim of which was to increase the sense of hope; they worked both individually and in groups. At the end, the speakers emphasized the importance of movement in advisory work and of being aware of what the client and adviser learn during advisory meetings.

The activities of the second day of the conference were planned as practical workshops. The first meeting, conducted by Anna Paszkowska-Rogacz, was entitled *An outline of Mark Savickas's career construction theory in micro-narratives*. First there was a presentation of the theory based on the understanding of career from three temporal perspectives, as a subjective construction of the events which one has experienced and which are embedded in one's memory, and to which the individual assigns meaning, as well as experiences of present and future expectations. The person uses them to build the so-called life theme in relation to professional activity. Then the main premises of the narrative interview were discussed in the context of the roles of the client: Actor, Agent, and the particularly important role of the Author, as well as of the career structure from their point of view. The second part of the workshop was the opportunity to practically refer to the questions of the narrative interview, prompting self-diagnosis and reflection on one's own life events, in relation to the interaction with the interviewer. The participants also had the opportunity to do a case study in groups, which was an important exercise from the point of view of improving their counselling skills.

As a way of enriching the counsellor's visual toolbox, Agata Kowalik-Zydek from Inspiratornia conducted a workshop on the use of projection and creative methods in working with the client. Tools stimulating imagination, opening the person to new career paths and challenges, are extremely valuable in the counselling process as they complement the dialogue, help one to come up with new ideas, arouse cognitive curiosity and stimulate action. The speaker presented a number of ideas for stimulus materials that can be used during sessions with the client, including: working with an illustration, picture, icon, cards, but also with a metaphor, drawing, visual thinking in practical exercises both in remote work applications and in traditional meetings. The workshop was an opportunity to exchange ideas and good practices, but also to generate new ideas on how to use different tools to facilitate counselling work.

The next workshop was conducted by Renata Dankowska and Agnieszka Ciereszko from Akademia Webinaru. Its main goal was to enrich the career counsellor's skills to include an idea for group work with elements of gamification and storytelling. The participants took part in the online game of *Nowa Ziemia (New Earth)*, using "Karty wyboru PROFESKI" (*Career Selection Cards*) – the tool for career counsellors. The trainers presented the principles of using the game in the face-to-face environment as well as the possibility of adapting the tool to the remote work. The plot of the story served as the starting point for gamification activities

in teams, and as a result the participants gained knowledge of their own characteristics that are important from the point of view of professional choices, which included, among others, skills and values in the context of the world of professions and specialties. It was an interesting workshop, containing a number of inspirations and tips for those working in the field of educational and career counselling.

Q-sort techniques and other techniques of working on beliefs during group work in career counselling classes was the title of the workshop conducted by Małgorzata Rosalska. During the meeting the speaker discussed the principles of using the Q-sort technique and indicated the possibilities of using Q-sets in counselling work with primary and secondary school students. The workshops provided an opportunity to practice some techniques used in working on beliefs and enabled the participants to exchange good practices, enriching the skills set of each participant.

In line with the title of the conference, all the speakers, both the invited scholars and researchers and the practitioners, took into account two key issues: a solid theoretical foundation and professional practice. The conference participants had a chance to deepen their knowledge, connect it with the current trends in thinking about counselling both in Poland and in other countries, and expand their skills sets. They could view advisory activities from the Polish, Greek, Danish, Canadian and African perspectives, which contributed to sensitizing them to the need for intercultural dialogue, both theoretical and practical, in the form of sharing ideas and tools to promote the development of advisory practice for the benefit of all people interested in counselling.