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**Peter J. Robertson, Tristram Hooley, Phil McCash
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The Oxford Handbook of Career Development with a short preface by Tony Watts was written by three eminent professors from renowned universities in Scotland, England and Norway – Peter J. Robertson, Tristram Hooley and Phil McCash – who are both career counselling researchers and practitioners. As the editors report in their Introduction: *Rethinking Career Development*, the book was “*invented and assembled*” during [...] lectures, research, conference travel and all other [...] personal and professional life situations¹ (p. 9). Researchers from 14 different countries were asked to co-create it by presenting all the achievements and determinants of career development, whilst illuminating signposts for the future – in a multidisciplinary, multicultural, multi-contextual and critical way. It is worth emphasizing that the textbook also aspires to present the most modern points of reference in the field of career development, defined as the individual experience of given people gained in the course of their career development through learning (*in our understanding, people have only one career, within which they engage in a wide range of activities, situations and roles throughout life* – p. 11). The book also presents the types of assistance provided in the process of career planning and its modification. All work – understood as an international dialogue of researchers and practitioners – is divided into three sections: *contexts, concepts and practice*. The first section discusses careers in the context of economic, educational and social policy. The second relates to the wealth of theoretical foundations of career development (concepts focusing on identity, environment, learning, and psychological resources). The practical part, in turn, refers to the forms of supporting individuals and groups in their professional development. The structure of the work has been examined thoroughly, so as to create an interesting story that begins in antiquity, and aims for the unforeseeable future. In this review, I will try to guide the readers through the subsequent

¹ All quotes own translation.

chapters of this valuable study, taking into account individual sections and referring to the achievements in the above-mentioned areas, published in "Journal of Counsollogy", which I have prepared this review for.

Contexts

This part of the book introduces the reader to various views on the contemporary reality in which people's everyday life takes place, work is done and the conditions for career development are shaped. The critical image presented in it is confronted with the struggles of individuals and organizers of social life in search of good practices to assist career development. After an enthusiastic presentation of the work to date on defining the term "career development", the latest interactionist and intra-action benchmark in career studies, substantive contexts of the research and the developed strategies of the editors of the book, when reading the next chapter (*The Decline of Decent Work in the Twenty-First Century: Implications for Career Development*) we find ourselves in a situation of great surprise and uncertainty. As Ellen R. Gutowski, David L. Blustein, Maureen E. Kenny and Whitney Erby write, the changing world generates many unfavourable phenomena that invalidate the existing solutions, such as the systematic decline in the number of high-quality jobs available, poverty of the growing number of employees, job insecurity, career development instability, and as a result, significantly limited access to the so-called decent work, which is a basic condition for a dignified life.

This sad mood is somewhat relieved by the authors of the next chapter (*The Economic Outcomes of Career Development Programs*), Christian Percy and Vanessa Dodd, who suggest that societies can and must learn to live in these difficult times, trying to find ways for their further development. One such way is to invest in career advancement. This development is to be ensured by activities undertaken by the individuals throughout their life – at the stage of school education, higher education and in adulthood. The authors emphasize that specialized services, which should be appropriately subsidized by the state governments in view of future economic benefits, play a significant role in this lifelong learning process.

However, the economic promise does not always come true and the profit is not always directly proportional to the financial investment as Tristram Hooley, the author of the next chapter (*Career Development and Human Capital Theory: Preaching the "Education Gospel"*) warns referring to the views of critics of the theory of human capital. He recalls that due to its economic frame of reference, human capital theory sees the process of human development as the production of human capital through the process of investment in education and training (p. 54). Its adversaries though, observe that sending more people to university does not necessarily lead to employing all of them since there are simply not enough jobs. Just as the increase of citizens' education does not act as a magnet enlarging job market, it does

not guarantee the increase in the number of suitable contractors. Publicizing such views may surely discourage people from investing in their self-development by e.g. studying at university. As a counterbalance to the suggestion, other specialists (e.g. Rose, 1990; Hodgkinson, 2008; Roberts, 2009) advise people not to get deterred by any of this, but to look at their lives and their careers, and take personal responsibility for it, ignoring wider social or political factors – *if you want a better life, you must make better investments* – they advise (p. 59).

Continuing this thought, Christian Percy and Elnaz Kashefpakdel in the *Linking Educators and Employers: Taxonomies, Rationales, and Barriers* chapter, point out that the difficulties of many people in the labour market may be caused by the lack of education only to some extent, but mostly by the growing distance between education (especially school education) and the expectations of employers. This distance generates underdevelopment of graduates' professional competences, unsatisfactory work efficiency, underemployment and high unemployment rate among young people. The authors mentioned above describe various mechanisms implemented in European countries in order to reduce it.

One of them, signalled by Ronald G. Sultana (*Authentic Education for Meaningful Work: Beyond "Career Management Skills"*) and by many educational and economic environments, is the need to deconceptualize the current professional education, so that it contributes to the *flourishing and well-being of an individual*, while the existing formal and informal education programs – as the author claims – are still inherent in the “Fordist mentality” – which is difficult to disagree with.

John McCarthy and Tibor Bors Borbély-Peczé in the chapter entitled *Career Guidance: Living on the Edge of Public Policy* also focus on education and point out that the role of career guidance is marginalized in school curricula. They emphasize that although various institutions and international organizations show considerable interest in the role of counselling in education and employment policy, by adopting various recommendations or financing numerous undertakings related to this, there is no evaluation of their implementation at the national level.

Referring to this issue, Peter J. Robertson considers the comprehensive assessment of these projects (*The Aims of Career Development Policy: Towards a Comprehensive Framework*) and concludes that working on career development and supporting this process is difficult to assess. Counselling has never been a purely economic instrument, but was mainly motivated by social concern.

The undeniable advantage of this part of the book is surpassing psychological analyses and treating career development as a resultant of many personal and impersonal factors embedded in broad contexts. It is important to notice their ambiguous aspects, so far often overlooked in analyses of individual case studies. Although such a position is not unknown to Polish researchers of career counselling, who have co-created a new discipline, i.e. counselling studies (e.g. Bilon, 2016; Drabik-Podgórna, 2005; Kargulowa, 2016; Minta, 2016; Szumigraj, 2011; Wojtasik, 1993 and others) and presented it on the pages of “Journal of Counsollogy”

(Guichard, 2016, 2018a, 2018c; Kargulowa, 2012; Kola, 2020; Lenart, 2020), but the facts and arguments presented here significantly expand this knowledge.

Theory

It should be noted that over the years, significant theoretical foundation for career development has been built. A certain classification of the achievements in this area, adopting a pragmatic position, was undertaken by Julia Yates in chapter 9 of the book (*Career Development Theory: An Integrated Analysis*) which, in her own words, *aims to present an integrated overview of career theory, interpreting it in terms of topics, not chronology* (p. 132). The 40 theories included here, developed over the past seven decades with the participation of various scientific disciplines, have been grouped according to the following themes: identity, environment, psychological resources and career learning. The development of views on these topics, from structuralism to constructivism, was shown. What is more, the author stressed the complexity of this phenomenon and the need for interdisciplinary research in the field. The strength of the study surely is the author's synthetic approach to present a comprehensive picture of research on career development. A similar problem was addressed by Anna Bilon (2013) in the second issue of "Journal of Counsollogy"....

In the book reviewed, Kate Mackenzie Davey, in the chapter *Organizational Career Development Theory: Weaving Individuals, Organizations, and Social Structures*, underlines that when observing the processes of career development, researchers take a unanimous position that at the beginning of the 1990s the importance of the organization began to decrease, in favour of individual efforts, individual choice and responsibility. Career began to be seen as an individual project, or career without borders. These ideas became the rule leading to the division of the workforce, with a choice available only to certain categories of workers, though. The author characterizes various strategies and approaches defining the participation of organizations in the development of employees' careers, as well as discusses the basic challenges related to the development of multiple (substantively diversified) theories of career development in an organization.

The issue of the development of organizational and managerial careers occupies a separate section in the reviewed book, the description of which is based on a wide range of concepts and content, derived from various fields of knowledge, starting from sociology to developmental psychology. It is indicated that the study of these careers nowadays should take into account the perspectives of "being" in space and time. Hugh Gunz and Wolfgang Mayrhofer in the chapter *Organisational and Managerial Careers: A Coevolutionary View* discuss career development in a broader perspective, illustrating how the career of individual actors is changing and how others can influence its course, emphasizing the importance of mentoring.

Similarly, Jérôme Rossier, Paulo Miguel Cardoso and Maria Eduarda Duarte (*The Narrative Turn in Career Development Theories: An Integrative Perspective*) point out to the importance of career development of the “other”, here the “other” being career advisers, by proposing the use of narration in an interventional approach in career counselling. They believe that the narrative turn expressed in the term “career development” *encourages career interventions to focus more on the meaning of experiences, reflection processes, and contextual aspects of career paths such as life design interventions* (p. 169). They are inspired by the dialogical T theory or the life story model. They emphasize that the use of narrative techniques in counselling allows individuals to position themselves in the social space, strengthens their subjectivity, reflectiveness and intentionality. The authors present various narrative approaches, defining them as a certain framework that integrates and complements other counselling activities. In our “Journal” the attention to these issues has been drawn repeatedly. (Cohen-Scali, 2019; Czerkawska, 2018; Guichard, 2018b; Duarte, 2014; Podgórný & Drabik-Podgórná, 2015; Zielińska-Pękał, 2012).

Another look at career development, this time from the perspective of socio-cultural and political problems, more specifically from the social justice theory, is proposed by Barrie A. Irving in *The Positioning of Social Justice: Critical Challenges for Career Development*. As he synthetically puts it, *this chapter examines the controversial nature of social justice, outlines competing definitions, and examines the ways in which critical social justice brings a transformational dimension to career development* (p. 182). This important topic also appeared in “Journal of Counsollogy” (Casanova et al., 2020; Collins et al. 2013).

The author of the next chapter entitled, *Cultural Learning Theory and Career Development*, Phil McCash, focuses on the theory of cultural learning and its importance in career development. The author explains that we participate in it throughout our lives, whether we just walk down the street or work in an organization – we are always immersed in cultural learning. Cultural learning theory, as McCash points out, helps to answer five related questions: *Who are we learning with? What are we learning? How do we learn? Where are we learning? Why are we learning?* (p. 193). Our answers to these questions will allow us, in turn, to plan and take action, and to consciously set goals and take roles, that is, to navigate our career development.

Continuing this discussion, in Chapter 15 (*The Cultural Preparedness Perspective of Career Development*), Gideon Arulmani, Sachin Kumar, Sunita Shrestha, Maribon Viray and Sajma Aravind describe a model of the process of cultural preparation that allows us to understand how the cultural environment influences the way individuals are involved in their careers. According to these researchers, work and its manifestations are culturally coded constructs. There is a need to decode these in order to effectively support the development of individuals, which is certainly a new challenge for researchers of various disciplines. In “Journal of Counsollogy” the issue of intercultural and transcultural counseling was the subject

of articles by Polish (Bańka, 2017; Misiejuk, 2017; Słowik, 2012, 2017, 2020) and foreign authors (Kassan et al, 2017; Naraghi et al., 2020).

Marcelo Afonso Ribeiro draws attention to the diversity of the cultural context in which individuals grow and develop. Adopting a global perspective the author emphasizes that the cultural context of the Global North (Canada, USA) significantly differs from the Global South (Latin America, Africa and developing countries) and believes that it requires the use of separate career development theories, also taking into account socio-economic contexts (*Career Development Theories from the Global South*). The theories, most of which arose in the North, must undergo a contextualization process in the conditions of intercultural dialogue in order to be applied in the South. The author notes that the Global South has also developed its own theories that can be used as an alternative or contribution leading to the optimization and further development of the mainstream, and gives examples of theories from the Global South. All of them take into account the social and cultural context of career development and try to reconstruct the foundations of the practice. He concludes that *group interventions and community strategies are more frequent in Latin American proposals, whereas family and spiritual dimensions are more frequent in Asian proposals* (p. 235). A similar attempt of intercultural comparisons in the field of counselling from different countries was made on the pages of "Journal ...", referring to the results of research on cultural differences by Gret Hofstede (Bilon & Kargul, 2012)

Probing even deeper into the theories of career development, the researchers Graham B. Stead and Ashley E. Poklar, the authors of the chapter *Cross-Cultural Career Psychology from a Critical Psychology Perspective*, when analysing the theories critically from a psychological perspective, look at terminology, methodological assumptions and all constructs and strategies mentioned in cross-cultural career psychology. Owing to the development of cultural psychology, the "exemplary" intercultural career path is contrasted with reality to highlight its imperfections that require optimization. Relevant current research topics such as work / family, immigrants and refugees and their difficulties are also taken into consideration. New directions for the development of this field are outlined.

Bearing in mind the whole theory section, it is not difficult to agree with Julia Yates that career theories are created in order to help to understand the entire spectrum of career development, but due to its complexity, researchers most often focus on the analysis of only one or two aspects. Therefore, *the challenges of integrating theories with each other, as well as integrating them into professional practice, are to say the least, considerable* (p. 131), and although the attempts here are very successful, full integration requires further efforts. It can be noticed that the emergence of new trends in culture (pop culture), psychology (neuropsychology), politics (post-neoliberalism), in educational practice (pandemic forced remote and hybrid learning) is a source of searching for new theories, giving a chance to a generalized theory of chaos (Szumigraj, 2011).

Practice

Subsequent articles of the reviewed book present various practical solutions enhancing careers. They focus on issues related to the professionalization of certain jobs, the role of school education, the importance of gathering and transferring information and using technology, and the need to evaluate the results of undertaken procedures and work tools used by service providers.

Accordingly, Chapter 18 (*The Career Development Profession: Professionalization, Professionalism, and Professional Identity*) discusses the professionalization of certain services in countries around the world. Authors John Gough and Siobhan Neary address and critically analyse both the strengths and the weaknesses of the services provided. They outline key strategies to accelerate their professionalization, which must be implemented at the individual, organizational and substantive level. They argue that what is an important issue in this respect is the establishment and legal sanction of a separate profession related to career development services and regret that this has not been achieved so far despite efforts by researchers and professionals from various countries, including Great Britain.

The next chapter, of the title *Transformative Career Education in Schools and Colleges* by Anthony Barnes expresses concerns for the quality of vocational education in schools and universities, which currently does not give children and young people the opportunity to develop their real potential. He stresses that there is an urgent need to implement career development theories into vocational education in order to contribute to the well-being of young people, the environment and the planet as a whole. The main task in this respect is the appropriate modification of vocational education and embedding it in new curricula so as to eliminate such unfavourable phenomena as young people's low aspirations, their lack of commitment to learning, stereotypical thinking, and thus allowing young people to properly manage their own careers. Leonidas Gomatos (2015), Maria Mendel (2016) and Małgorzata Rosalska (2018) also wondered about this problem in "Journal of Counsollogy".

Additionally, Jenny Bimrose in the chapter called *Labour Market Information for Career Development: Pivotal or Peripheral?* points out that well-prepared career information is an important conceptual framework and guideline for career development. Information about the labour market is – in her opinion – a key element in the process of career development and interventions in this area. The author justifies that the high quality of professional information and the professionalism of advisers are the main methods of improving the quality and effectiveness of any counselling, especially taking into account the fact that despite the development of technology, direct contact with the advisor still has the greatest impact on clients.

Contemplating recent developments in technology, Tristram Hooley and Tom Staunton believe that modern careers must develop in close cooperation with digital technologies that change the whole context of being-in-the-world and enable

the search for new forms of work, studying and life, and for *specialists in career development, the choice is to use them to provide information, automate interactions or communication* (p. 297). On the one hand, technologies open up new possibilities for people, but on the other hand, they close others. We can read about it in the chapter *The Role of Digital Technology in Career Development*, whose authors describe the changes in career development observed by researchers since the beginning of the 20th century, emphasizing the role of the interaction of digital technologies with society.

In a sense, the best career assessor in the 21st century is the labour market itself, which places high demands on employees and jobseekers. Its volatility and instability make it difficult for many people to plan their own careers and achieve job satisfaction. Peter McIlveen, Harsha N. Perera, Jason Brown, Michael Healy and Sara Hammer in the chapter entitled *Career Assessment* show how challenging this is for both education systems and advisory institutions committed to assisting in assessing an individual's potential. They provide examples of the use of qualitative and quantitative career assessment methods and point to some limitations that may result from improper career assessment. It is worth mentioning here that Annamaria di Fabio (2014) published an original proposal for the evaluation of consulting activities, also in the field of career development, in "Journal of Counsollogy".

The atmosphere in which professional counselling is conducted is described by Barbara Bassot in the chapter *Client-Centred Career Development Practice: A Critical Review*. The author criticizes the concept of client-centricity, which sets the framework for current counselling interventions. She points to the disadvantages and limitations that are thus imposed on counselling practice and the resulting ethical dilemmas. The author indicates the need to take into account the conditions and outlines a theoretical model (p. 331) that captures the change in the concept of customer orientation, preferring the way in which the client's culture, factors influencing his life and the context of the labour market in which clients make career decisions are recognized.

Furthermore, researchers and practitioners try to explore the determinants of the effectiveness of career guidance. The penultimate chapter of the book *Career Counselling Effectiveness and Contributing Factors* presents both older and newer analyses of the factors that have a significant impact on career guidance effectiveness or, on the contrary, may cause various adverse effects. Its author, Susan C. Whiston, emphasizes the need for systematic research into the most effective methods of career counselling. She presents two significant proofs that the support from individuals is essential. One indicates that the advisers themselves can play an important role here; the second is that the counsellor helps the client to identify other people who will support them in their career development. As the world of work becomes more and more complicated, the author believes that scientists cannot avoid the responsibility of identifying and pointing out the best methods of helping people find a satisfying job.

Peter J. Robertson, while pondering upon the possible methods increasing the effectiveness of counselling (*Evidence-Based Practice for Career Development*), advocates a wider use of the so-called “evidence”, as is the case in medicine. As he reports, the term “evidence-based practice” was introduced at the end of the 20th century into medical staff training, in response to the perceived gap between treatment and science, which resulted in the use of ineffective and outdated procedures in medicine. The analysis of evidence has also been adopted in other areas, such as education, management, assistance in choosing a profession. The chapter provides empirical examples of evidence that practitioners can use to improve the effectiveness of working with people experiencing career difficulties. In addition, the author presents the results of other studies on the effectiveness of career counselling and identifies specific factors that can make it more effective.

In summary, *The Oxford Handbook of Career Development* collects a wealth of achievements in the field of career development and career counselling organized with / for reflective, active people striving to develop their life potential in a non-transparent reality. Based on the historical knowledge in this field, it shows various theoretical and practical trends in a multidisciplinary and multicultural perspective. The participation of scholars (two of whom, namely Maria Eduardo Duarte [2014, 2019] and Marcelo Alfonso Riberio [2016] published articles in “*Journal of Counselology*”), coming from different cultural backgrounds and cultivating different research traditions, provided a multifaceted view of the phenomenon of career development. The authors of individual chapters freely present their views and, in truth, do not engage in polemics, but they also do not have to submit to any one ideology, which altogether only broadens the perspectives of viewing and adds a certain “colour” to the book. Its content confirms the fears that the development of an integrated career development theory seems to be hampered not only by the character of times we live in, the complexity of the phenomenon of career development, but also by the problems posed by the triangulation of positions on this issue, which has also been noticed. The book will play an important role in the era of accelerated civilization changes, since it is both taking up a discussion on the complex yet real problems of individuals functioning in the contemporary labour market, as well as problems related to the scientific research of their lives and career development. An important advantage of the presented work is therefore the fact that the authors try to both formulate emerging questions and provide answers to them, equipping researchers and practitioners with important empirical and theoretical guidelines. For this reason, the book will certainly be an interesting and substantively enriching read for researchers of career counselling and career development, students of psychology, pedagogy and sociology alike, as well as for all reflective practitioners-advisers looking for new methods of working with clients. The high quality of the book is also determined by its clear and orderly structure, distinguishing three main thematic parts, the titles of which accurately signal the author’s vision of the complicated nature of the phenomenon of career development. Despite the fact that

it is a scientific study, it was written in an understandable and lively language, with internal dynamics, which allows for both engaging and inspirational read.

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