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**Ewa Dębska, *Profile refleksyjności i typy karier.  
Perspektywa poradownicza (Reflexive Profiles  
and Career Types. Counselling Studies Perspective).***

**Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego  
(University of Warsaw Press), Warsaw 2020, pp. 370.**

The title of the book by Ewa Dębska published by University of Warsaw Press may suggest that the subject of the analyses are diversified careers of people involved in various professional activities. Meanwhile, as the reader learns in the introduction, the publication is a result of the qualitative research carried out by the Author in the group of career counsellors. The theme of the book follows the research trend present for a long time in the counselling studies, i.e. research concerning the counsellors, their condition and experience<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, the originality of the challenge

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<sup>1</sup> See: Holt J. (1981), O pomocy i specjalistach od pomagania (About Help and Specialists in Helping) [in:] Jankowski K., (ed.), *Psychologia w działaniu. Wybór tekstów (Psychology in Action. Selection of Texts)*, Warsaw: Czytelnik; Wojtasik B. (1993), *Doradca zawodu. Studium teoretyczne z zakresu poradownictwa (Career Counsellor. Theoretical Study in the Scope of Counselling Studies)*, Wrocław: Wyd. UWr; Wojtasik B., Kargulowa A.(ed.) (2003), *Doradca- profesja, pasja, powołanie? (Counsellor – a Profession, Passion, Calling?)*. Materiały ze Światowego Kongresu Poradnictwa Zawodowego (Materials from the World Career Counselling Congress), Warsaw 29-31 May 2002, Warsaw: SDSiZ RP; Kargulowa A., (2004), *O teorii i praktyce poradnictwa. Podręcznik akademicki (About Counselling Theory and Practice. Academic Textbook) (Chapter 8)*, Warsaw: Wyd. Naukowe PWN; Wojtasik B., (2007), *Doradca jako refleksyjny badacz (A Counsellor as a Reflective Researcher)*, [in:] Drabik-Podgórna V., (ed.), *Poradnictwo między etyką a techniką (Counselling between Ethics and Technique)*, Kraków: Impuls; Siarkiewicz E., Wojtasik B.(ed.) (2008), *Być doradcą! Doświadczenia i refleksje (To be a Counsellor! Experiences and Reflections)*, Wrocław: Wyd. Naukowe DSW; Mielczarek M., (2009), *Władza doradcy w relacjach z radzającym się (The Power of the Counsellor in Relations with the Counsellor Client)* [in:] Kargulowa A., (red.) *Poradownictwo – kontynuacja dyskursu. Podręcznik akademicki (Counselling Studies – Discourse Continuation. Academic Textbook)*, Warsaw: Wyd. Naukowe PWN; Świerkowska K., Zielińska-Pękał D., (2009), *Fryzjer jako nieprofesjonalny doradca (Hair Stylist as a Non-Professional Counsellor)* [in:] Zielińska-Pękał D. (ed.), *Refleksje o poradnictwie debiutujących doradców (Reflections on Counselling Provided by Beginner Counsellors)*. Zielona Góra: UZ; Czerkawska A. (2009), *Strefy cienia w pracy doradcy (Shadow Zones in the Counsellor's Work)*, [in:] *Dyskursy Młodych Andragogów (Discourses of*

the Author took makes it stand out among other publications. The scholar, specialising in adult education and career development, and a practitioner – a career counsellor herself, decided to take a closer look not only at the careers of the career counsellors, but also at their important (if not indispensable) skill – reflection on the construction of their own careers. Thus, one may assume that, to some extent, she decided to verify how much the counsellors' practice what they have been declaring for a long time.

Dębska's book is 370 page long and comprises six chapters. Furthermore, in her book the Author included an introduction, conclusion and the list of references to scholarly literature and Internet sources, an annex with the profiles of research participants, abstracts in Polish and English as well as a list of tables and figures and an index of names of authors quoted in the main text.

In the introduction, Dębska presents the general inspirations that made her start her inquiry, design the research and, subsequently, conduct it. She also makes an attempt to present relations between reflexivity and career and discusses the content of subsequent chapters. With that, she refers to the findings and views of multiple authors, including counselling scholars, educators, andragogy specialists, sociologists, psychologists, who pointed in their works to the role of reflection and reflexivity in social changes, in the understanding of human biography, career, learning, and pursuit of professional work. Currently, in Dębska's opinion, reflection and reflexivity of career counsellors are of key significance, becoming an indispensable competence (cf. p. 19), and the very reflexivity of the career counsellors, from the point of view of counselling studies concepts, not only in constructivist terms, is a competence that makes counselling possible. Reflexivity – as a cognitive competence – but probably also as a personal trait of the counsellor, seems to be a prerequisite for pursuit of this profession. It consists not only in consideration of the communication heard and seen in the relation with another person, but is also a condition and a stage of learning of all of their everyday experiences. Concurrently, the Author emphasises that, taking up this subject, she makes all effort to avoid evaluative judgement. She declares that she focuses on creation of a space for dialogue.

The Author considers various approaches to reflexivity to finally present her own definition. She understands reflexivity as processual consideration. Similarly,

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Young Andragogy Specialists), vol. 10; Bilon A., Kargul J., (2012), Społeczno-kulturowe konteksty definiowania roli doradcy (Socio-Cultural Contexts of Definition of the Counsellor's Role) [in:] *Studia Poradoznawcze/Journal of Counsellogy* Vol. 1); Siarkiewicz E., Trębińska-Szumigraj E., Zielińska-Pękał D., (2012), Rzecz o refleksyjnym praktyku-badaczu, czyli o niekonwencjonalnych sposobach kształcenia doradców (On a Reflective Practitioner-Researcher, i.e. on Unconventional Methods of Education of Counsellors), [in:] *Dyskursy Młodych Andragogów (Discourses of Young Andragogy Specialists)*, vol. 13; Szumigraj M., (2018), Experiences of Polish career counselors – reflections on the documentary method [in]: *Culture – Education – Professional work: Polish and Vietnamese Experiences*. Wołk Z., Cao Long Van, Nguyen Van Cuong, Ngo Dinh Phuong, Tran van Thuc (ed.), Zielona Góra

for the purposes of her study, she adopts the understanding of career (in its basic meaning) as the course of the educational and professional path of a person (cf. p. 20).

The research forming the basis for the analyses was carried out by Dębska in years 2016-2018. During that time, she gathered responses of career counsellors regarding the course of their own careers and she ordered them by types. In the next stage, she constructed their reflexive profiles and, subsequently, identified various reflexive profiles of the respondents (cf. p. 21).

The content of the first chapters of the book is definitely valuable in cognitive terms, presenting the erudition, knowledge and reflexivity of the Author – they are a successful attempt at creating the space for dialogue between various views regarding the basic terms of the study: reflexivity, reflection, career. In Chapter One, Dębska describes selected psychological, sociological as well as andragogical and counselling studies-related views regarding reflection and reflexivity, in order to make distinctions between these terms. She sees the basic differences in the dimension of feedback and end result. Thus, she concludes that reflection means creation of a specific product that is a result of consideration given to the personal experience in diversified socio-cultural contexts. She refers to this intellectual action, critical consideration, not deprived of emotions and, thus, one could say – this attitude to life – with the term of reflexivity. It is, however, difficult to agree with the Author that reflection encapsulates more isolated aspects of life experiences. In my opinion, it is rather its content that will be the conclusion of the various contexts of human life that are subject to reflexivity.

The content of Chapter Two of the examined work includes a review of findings presented by counselling scholars regarding reflection over the practical objectives of counselling, its role in the socio-political system, meanings assigned to it by the people using the counsellors' services. The Author provides an account of the orientations predominant in the contemporary counselling studies discourse: lifelong, critical, constructivist, indicating the roles of the counsellors in constructing identities of counselling recipients, and further stages of their work that require skilful consideration over the clients' narratives. Therefore, she justifies the significance of being reflexive – i.e. the competence upon which the pursuit of the counsellor's mission is conditional, regardless of the theoretical orientations adopted by the practitioners. Concurrently, the Author shows that the fundamental objective of counselling, the effect of the provided assistance is the reflection (result) or reflexivity (process) of the client over the issues reported by him or her to the counsellor. It must be noted that, presenting subsequent theoretical positions of various authors, Dębska presents their balanced criticism, providing a model of the methodology of a skilful scholar characterised with reflexivity.

In Chapter Three, the Author discusses selected concepts of careers, presenting their typology. The content of the chapter is an exquisite compendium of knowledge necessary to understand the evolution of thinking of the professional career

of a person over the last century. Her considerations focus on the description of homogeneous and heterogeneous careers, demonstrating a diversified approach to the understanding and integration of the course and professional development of contemporary people.

In the next chapter, Dębska proceeds to present the assumptions of her own studies of the methods of thinking applied by counsellors (their reflexivity) and their relations with the career of the counsellors themselves. She presented the research strategy adopted by her in detail, indicating her inspiration with reconstructive studies. Thus, she suggests that the research designed by her will aim at identification of specific social facts and how these facts are experienced by the persons examined. The chapter shows that the Author was initially interested in obtaining answers in three areas. Firstly, she was interested in investigating the careers of the counsellors – she focused on the course of their education and professional work as well as “the aspects of their life connected directly with the profession chosen by them” (p. 171). Secondly, she was interested in classifying the counsellors’ careers into types, and determining the objective and subjective dimensions of the professional development patterns and experiences of counselling practitioners. Thirdly, her goal was to identify the significance of the reflexive profiles of the counsellors for their careers. Nevertheless, probably during the process of collection of data, holding interviews and carrying out initial analyses, she put forward the total of six research questions. As she admitted openly, they changed, they are not a closed list of questions and the results of her search are not necessarily objective or generalisable. Further, the Author presented in detail the methodology of selection of the respondents, procedure of information collection, consecutive steps of analysis of the collected material, practical ways of establishing – together with her respondents – further constructs emerging from the content of obtained narratives. Due to the ethical requirements, one must appreciate the fact that she consulted her initial interpretation of the counsellors’ responses with them, which allows one to assume that the interpretation finally presented in the publication is, to some extent, made credible, close to the experiences of her interlocutors.

Chapter Five of the discussed publication is the original input of the Author in the counselling studies discourse. It is the most extensive chapter in terms of volume, in which she presents the effects of her research. It starts with the presentation of the technique that allowed her to reconstruct the key categories of the “career type” and “reflexive profile.” It results from her explanations that the criterion for recognizing the career types was the course of consecutive events and decisions – facts referring to education, and employment as well as identification of the prevailing motive or passage in the narrative of the investigated counsellor. The career typology proposed by her includes five types: cumulative career, balanced career, market-oriented career, adaptive career, and family-oriented career. She discusses the proposed variants one by one, trying to emphasise the differences between them.

The second but – as suggested by the book title – most important category, i.e. the “reflexive profile,” refers to the method that the counsellors use to think of their own life, thus, to reconstruct their experience, and the way they speak of consecutive facts comprising their career. The “reflexive profile” is a presentation of the way the career counsellors experience and understand their own professional biography. In its essence, it is, therefore, the reconstruction of what the effect of their reflexivity is; therefore, a reflection referring to their experience as career counsellors. The Author indicated that the “reflexive profiles” proposed by her were reconstructed as a result of the communicative and conjunctive interpretation of the counsellors’ narratives. Based on twelve criteria, which she called components, she identified five methods the counsellors use to give consideration to their own careers. She called them as follows: existential, intrapersonal, anticipative, rational and interpersonal. They refer to the contents found in the narratives of the counsellors, the way they present the narratives, the way they take into account the perspective of different entities and adopt time perspective in their narratives; the Author calls the latter the reflection component, which complicates the understanding of her presentation of types. Nevertheless, the presentation of those components and identified reflexive profiles in a table (p. 191) is cognitively valuable as it enables independent search and study of those categories in the quoted fragments of the interviews presented in the further part of the work. There, the Author puts together the main contents and needs pursued in the counsellors’ careers, which are an illustration of her findings. She also presents the basic facts comprising the course of those careers. Similarly, to the “career types,” Dębska presents the characteristics of the specific profiles, illustrating them with extracts of the counsellors’ narratives, making an attempt at a well-balanced interpretation of their experience, pointing to the essential features of each method of self-examination (reflexivity).

In the final part of Chapter Five, the Author poses a quite surprising question – both to herself and her readers – regarding the practical significance of her findings. This issue refers to the combination of reflexive profiles with the career types pursued by the counsellors. Dębska tries to answer the question by making the assumption that the career and reflexivity are mutually complementing planes of human functioning, in the mental sphere as well as the sphere of decisions made, actions taken and their consequences (p. 310). It would be difficult not to accept her claim as it is the determined reflexivity of the counsellors that allowed them to talk about their careers, and the researcher’s analysis of the obtained narratives enabled their further reconstruction presented in the book. The most important – in my opinion – questions seem to concern the possible contribution of the research conducted by the Author to the theory of counselling studies and the way it may inspire further studies of counselling scholars. In the summary, Dębska extends the roles of the counsellors compared to those described by Mark Savickas, Violeta Drabik-Podgórná and John Krumboltz, adding the categories identified by her, i.e. “Architect of his/her own life” and “Intrinsic authority.” The roles reconstructed by her

seem to confirm that reflexivity may be a method with which the people describing their careers justify their own choices, endowing them with meaning. Its function may be also to convince them that the previously made decisions were reasonable. Therefore, in-depth analysis of the significance of reflexivity in this process will result in the development of learning techniques for the counselees, and various methods of thinking of one's own decisions so as to be convinced of their reasonability, and may potentially contribute to an increase in effectiveness of provided counselling.

In general, Dębska's publication can be recommended as a study to be used during classes touching on issues related to career counselling as well as classes in methodologies of social studies, illustrating both the cognitive possibilities and limitations of the applied research techniques. The book is written in a user-friendly language, and the narrative of the Author, who carries on a reflexive dialogue with herself and the knowledge she reports on, encourages and leaves space for discussion with the presented contents.