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Motivation as a factor in educational and professional career planning of generation Z

Motywacja jako czynnik planowania karier edukacyjno-zawodowych pokolenia Z²

Introduction

Career planning concepts are widely discussed in the literature of the subject. Without a doubt, the approach to the issue of choice of professional career has changed throughout the years. Proposed by Parsons in 1909, the concept of matching an individual with a right profession is still present in modern concepts of career development and counseling (Lent & Brown, 2020). However, it should be pointed out that socio-economic and technological transformations we have been facing influence the labour market to a great extent and pose a challenge for those who are planning their career path

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(Lent & Brown, 2020). Increasing digitisation and robotisation, described in the literature as the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2016), has already been playing a significant role in individual professional experiences. The fourth industrial revolution involves combined technologies which blur the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. The unprecedented elements of this revolution include: rapidly introduced changes (exponential, not linear) which tend to accelerate both the scope and range of those changes, which translates into the transformation of the whole production and management systems (Schwab, 2016). Millions of people have access to high-power computing mobile devices, large amount of data and vast storage space, which gives them unlimited opportunities. Cutting-edge technologies in such areas as artificial intelligence, robotics, Internet of things, biotechnology, nanotechnology, quantum computations, energy storage etc. are the evidence of changes taking place in the labour market (Schwab, 2016). One of the effects of these changes is job polarisation resulting from the demand for highly-qualified professionals who have knowledge and skills in narrow specialisations in certain fields, replacing middle-skilled workers whose tasks can be automated, and a growing demand for lower-skilled service jobs (Hirschi, 2018). The consequences of changes in the workplace will also include elimination of many occupations and emergence of new, not yet known ones (Hirschi, 2018). Forms of employment have been changing too. We shift from full-time jobs performed in temporary positions to short-term project contracts. The gig economy is becoming more and more common (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017; Hirschi, 2018). An additional phenomenon which we experience more and more often are accidental events or crises that cause transformations in the labour market. The fourth industrial revolution and accidental events might be some of the key factors to affect career planning and development. The literature analysis indicates that publications in work psychology and career counseling ignore changes caused by the fourth industrial revolution (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017; Hirschi, 2018). It seems that education is not following the fourth industrial revolution either. In the professional setting, on the other hand, specific competencies are all that matters. The authors of the reports *Future of Skills. Employment in 2030* (2020) and *Future of Jobs Report 2020* (2020) identify the following key competencies: analytical thinking, critical thinking, creativity, active learning, strategic thinking, problem solving, flexibility, social competencies, leadership,

stress tolerance (resilience), self-management and other (Backshi et al., 2020). Transforming labor market requires highly-specialised knowledge and certain competencies from employees. Education, however, is still based on repetitive activities, memorising information which are not up-to-date with the state of the art. Challenges of the labour market and inadequate education become problematic for young adults who are about to choose their occupation. The question arises, therefore, what factors determine success in planning educational and professional career? Reference sources addressing professional career planning also mentions the idea of career resources (Sarżyńska-Mazurek, 2013). There are different resource classifications and for the purpose of this paper it was assumed that career resources can be external – connected with external factors related to an individual but independent thereof (e.g. socio-economic status); and internal, that is, personal like intelligence, personality, motivation, creativity, locus of control, self-assessment, interests etc. The literature analysis indicates that contemporary labor market places high demands on young adults who are still in education and those who begin their career. The article presents the results of a study into planning education and occupational career by young adults from generation Z. Their motivation to take on challenges and implement plans was analysed. The goal of the paper is to show the role of motivation in planning educational and professional career paths, and implications for educational practice.

Educational and professional career

Issues regarding planning educational and professional career are widely discussed in the literature (see: M. Piorunek 2004, 2009, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021; A. Cybal-Michalska, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021; E. Solarczyk-Ambrozik, 2016, 2020, K. Jagielska, 2022, J. Kozielska, 2020, 2021ab, L. Myszka-Strychalska, 2016). This paper focuses on the key aspects of career construction. Reflections will not be based on classification of the types of career theories, even though it is an important issue. The detailed analysis of this problem has been presented in the work by Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska, *Kariera – systematyzacja perspektyw i założeń teoretycznych [Career – a systemic analysis of theoretical perspectives and assumptions]* (2017). I will only refer to the classification created by Sonnenfeld and Kotter, which identifies four types of career theories: “sociological theories connected with conditions

of a social class and their implications for career (i.e. Blau Duncan, 1967, Chinoy, 1955), psychological theories focusing on personality differences and their professional implications (i.e. Holland, 1973), psychological-sociological theories concentrating on stages of career in the context of development (Crites, 1981; Dalton, Thompson 1986; Super 1957), psychological theories emphasising the wide context of human life, focused on the relation between career and other meaningful life activities (i.e. Levinson 1978, Vaillant 1977)” (after: Cybal-Michalska, 2017, p. 28). There are many more classifications. However, it is worth pointing out that the term ‘professional career’ is complex and multi-dimensional, and the numerous factors related to planning occupational paths contribute to limiting the empirical reflections to selected areas of individual functioning.

Reference sources defines educational and professional career as: “the implementation of the educational and professional plan set by an individual as the total of intentional educational and occupational activities formulated by this individual at certain stage of their professional career” (Parzęcki, 2003, p. 34). Educational and professional career is connected with the individual’s biography, choices made and completion of the goals set. In the case of planning a career in education, the issue of learning achievements must be mentioned. Contemporary school is based on tests evaluating students’ knowledge. The results obtained in external exams determine the choice of a secondary school, then a university program or, in general, a decision regarding further education. Thus, educational success is determined by the results/grades received during external examinations. The analysis of the literature shows that educational achievements are connected mainly with factors like personal qualities (intelligence, personality etc.), socio-economic and cultural status of one’s family (Karwowski, 2013, see: Jagielska, 2022). A model which presents comprehensively the conditions of school achievements is the model developed by Herbert J. Walberg (1981). According to its original version, there are 9 determinants of school success. Walberg listed them as follows: (1) individual factors, that is: (a) student’s predispositions and prior achievements, (b) motivation, (c) development described by age, (2) didactic factors, that is: (a) quantity of instruction (e.g. time spent learning), (b) quality of instruction, (3) social (environmental) factors, that is: (a) classroom environment, (b) home environment, (c) support from peers, (d) external influences, of media in the first place (Walberg, 1981, after: Karwowski, 2013). Educational

achievements which indirectly set the paths of professional development of individuals are determined not only by personality traits and social factors, but also by school atmosphere, the quality of teaching or teachers. Factors which shape learning achievements are strictly connected with one another. Certain personality characteristics are not enough to achieve success and choose the right career path. School, teachers and their roles as authorities (Jagielska, 2021, Łukasik, 2021), as well as family and groups a child functions in play an important role in its development. When reflecting upon planning educational and professional career, it is worth mentioning factors which are connected with the development of occupational careers. I will refer to the research by D. E. Super, who mentioned three groups of factors influencing the development of professional career: (1) occupational individual identity (“self” – further identification of oneself, which develops with age and creates a pattern of professional development, (2) personality factors (talents, interests, values, attitudes, activity, motivation), (3) environmental factors (economic, parents’ education, place of residence, number of children in the family, education system, labour market) (after: Myszka-Strychalska, 2016, p. 151). The career construction theory developed by Mark L. Savickas is a development and, at the same time, integration of the segments of professional development theory of D. E. Super. In his theory, Savickas included three classic segments of career theory: (1) “individual characteristic differences, (2) developmental tasks and coping strategies, and (3) motivation” (Patton, McMahan, 2006, p. 162 after: Cybal – Michalska, 2015, p. 59). According to the career construction theory, every individual is suitable to perform different occupations (Patton, McMahan, 2006, p. 63, after: Lenart, 2016, p. 115). The process of career construction involves individual self-improvement, participation in life projects and complex processes, growing in experience and the ability to act independently (Savickas, 2013, p. 148, after: Lenart, 2016, p. 115). Another researcher who has explored career development is Jacobus G. Maree. In his works on career development theory, he takes into account its individualised character and tries to identify possibly the most universal nature of mechanisms and assumptions that must be considered when investigating the quality of professional life. He mentions such elements as contextual possibilities, dynamic processes, non-linear progression, multiple perspectives and personal patterns (Maree, 2010, pp. 363–364, after: Cybal-Michalska, 2015, p. 61). In his career development model Hartung, like Savickas, emphasises the

role of developing four aspects of professional behaviors: (1) life structure (the assemblage of work and other roles that constitute a person's life), (2) career adaptability strategies (coping mechanisms used by individuals to negotiate developmental tasks and environmental changes that accumulate in the course of a lifetime), (3) thematic life stories (the motivations and driving forces that pattern lives), (d) personality style (personality traits such as abilities, needs, values, interests and other traits that represent a person's self-concept) (Maree, 2010, p. 363, after: Cybal-Michalska, 2015). The aim of this paper is not to analyse the professional career theories but to show that motivation is an important career planning factor in these theories. Motivation as a factor connected with professional career planning is mentioned in the theories of Super, Savickas (2013), Lent (2013, 2020), Lent & Brown (2013).

Motivation

Motivation is one of the factors connected with planning educational and professional careers. It is related with meeting goals set by individuals and the desired achievements. It is one of the driving forces behind human behaviours. In psychology, motivation theories are, among others, part of psychological concepts of human. In every approach, motivation is described as a set of mechanisms which trigger, direct, sustain and finish behaviours (Łukaszewski, 2000, p. 439).

Reference sources defines motivation as “the process of starting, directing and maintaining physical and psychological activities; includes mechanisms in preferences for one activity over another and the vigour and persistence of responses” (Zimbardo, Gerrig, 2012, p. 468). It is also defined as “the regulatory process which drives behaviour so it leads to a certain effect (goal)” (Encyklopedia PWN). Motivation, “by inspiring energy to act and directing it to a goal, orders single responses into an integrated pattern and sustain the subject's activity until the conditions which initiated it cease; the strength with which the goal is pursued (motivation strength) depends on both value perceived (attractiveness) of the goal and subjective probability (conviction about its attainability) of achieving it. The condition of launching the motivation process is the existence of motivation tension (motive) – an inner state of unfulfilment” or disturbance connected with the willingness to act and particular sensitivity to stimuli which can reduce this tension; the higher

the motivation tension, the greater the attractiveness of the stimuli and the strength of motivation connected with it” (Encyklopedia PWN). The analysis of the literature and different motivation concepts leads to the conclusions that motivation processes are almost always based on cognitive processes, both basic ones like perception, attention or memory, and complex ones connected with comparing and processing information. Individual motivation is connected with one’s tendency to sustain the sense of self-worth and obtain clear and diagnostic information about the dispositions and competencies possessed. People are also able to pursue goals in a long run, delay gratification and focus on self-development and self-actualisation (Łukaszewski, Doliński, 2000, p. 468). Motivation is always strongly connected with external conditions. It is a function of prior events. The key motivation determinants are: (1) direction (the right goal formulated based on past behaviors and experiences), (2) persistence (ability to focus on the given task, not yielding to distractions), (3) intensity of behaviours (tendency to engage and make efforts during the completion of a certain task) (Rheinberg, 2006, pp. 18–22, after: Bańka 2015). There are many publications about the application of motivation concepts and sources of motivation (e.g. Zimbardo, Gerrig, 2012; Łukaszewski, 2000; Łukaszewski, Doliński, 2000). For the purpose of this paper, the definitions included have been limited to three important terms: internal motivation, external motivation, and achievement motivation.

Internal motivation is a tendency to engage in and continue activity due to the activity itself. Most often, it results from the individual’s personal preferences – interests, predispositions, likes. In the case of internal motivation, there are no prospects of reward. The individual performs the tasks of their own, free will (Bańka, 2015). Internally motivated individuals initiate activities which are to help them achieve a certain goal. They do not need additional incentives or rewards. They feel an inner need to pursue and achieve the goals set. Internal motivation is a stronger determinant of success and gives more satisfaction (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995, 2001, after: Oleś, 2015, p. 325). External motivation occurs when “the activity is performed because of some external factors which are the consequence of its performance or successful completion” (Łukaszewski, Doliński, 2000, p. 457). In the case of external motivation, a decision is made depending on the costs of alternative action. An individual does not always make decisions according to their own beliefs but rather due to pressure from the outside (Wigfield, Eccles, 2000,

pp. 68-81, after: Bańka, 2015). In the case of external motivation, rewards determine whether the challenge (goal realisation) is accepted. As for students in school, a reward motivating to action can be a high grade (not necessarily the inner need to gain knowledge). External motivation is triggered by such goals as: wealth, possessions, popularity, attractiveness, prestige, whereas inner motivation by: self-improvement, self-acceptance, friendship, intimacy, caring about others and connecting with a wider community (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995, 2001, after: Oleś, 2015, p. 325). Another notion worth defining in the context of this article is achievement-based motivation. Every individual has a need for achievement, which should be understood as “differences in the value individuals assign to planning and efforts made towards achieving goals” (McClland, 1985). According to McClland, motivation to achieve is “an attempt to obtain the highest possible result from an activity, which is defined by an excellence standard and thus, performing this activity may end with a success or a failure” (McClland, 1985 after: Boski, 1980, p. 34). Motivation to achieve is, then, a tendency to achieve and outrun the excellence standards, connected with positive emotions in task-oriented situations perceived as a challenge (Łukaszewski, Doliński, 2000, p. 461). Atkinson (1958) states that the value of the goal set by an individual results from the pride the individual feels when achieving it. The harder the task, the greater the pride. Motivation to achieve goals “depends also on the intensity of the need for achievement. It is the product of the need, the subjective probability and gratification value. This theory indicates negative motivation (efforts made to avoid a certain counter-goal) and positive motivation (one’s endeavour to achieve the goal set)” (Bańka, 2015).

For the purpose of this article, it is assumed that motivation to achieve plays a significant role in planning the educational and professional careers by generation Z.

Theoretical assumptions of research

The research was conducted in a qualitative paradigm. The object of investigations were educational and professional careers of generation Z. The goal of the study was to recognise and identify factors motivating the choice and planning of educational and professional career by generation Z. The study was carried out from January to March 2022. It involved the analysis of 111

essays on *My educational path in the perspective of career construction*, written by students of universities in Krakow, Poland. As a result of the analysis, the following question was answered: What external and internal factors motivate students to engage in educational and professional career construction? Using the content analysis method, I had identified the dominating categories which allowed me to determine the most important internal and external factors motivating the respondents to develop in the context of planning the educational and professional careers by generation Z. Due to the qualitative character of the study, it should be emphasised that the results can be referred to the respondents only. This choice also obligates us to careful formulation of general conclusions. The results obtained cannot be referred to the whole generation Z population.

Results and discussion

Motivation is one of the determinants of educational, personal, professional successes as well as certain choices regarding education and occupation (see: Piorunek, 2004; Cybal-Michalska, 2013). The analysis of the essays allowed to identify internal and external resources which enable individuals' successes. It is worth pointing out that in the case of students of art universities, the chosen degree was in line with their interests (though these students have also graduated or are studying other programs). Interests are one of the factors influencing educational and professional decisions (see: Piorunek, 2004). The most important external and internal factors which motivate students' action are presented in Table 1. These factors are significantly related to planning educational and professional careers. The content analysis showed that there are both internal factors individuals have at their disposal and external motivators connected with achieving a set goal. In the case of educational and professional career planning, by motivation we mean a construct connected with motivation to achieve. As already mentioned, every individual has the need to achieve. It is connected with realisation of goals and the desire to obtain the highest possible results and successes. Motivation to achieve is an important element in both education and professional career construction.

Table 1 *External and internal factors motivating students to action*

Internal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for self-development • Achievement motivation • Values • Talent/creativity • Personality characteristics • Focus on meeting the goals set • Persistence • Ambition • Personality traits • Creativity • Leadership traits • Passions and interests • Internal motivation • Locus of control • Self-efficiency • Self-discipline • Flexibility • Persistence in pursuing goals, not getting discouraged by failures • Confidence in one's efficiency • Endurance • Regularity • Ability to plan, organisation of time • Independence • Self-awareness • Ability to cope with stress/difficulties • Independence • Openness to international career • Resilience
External factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Won competitions/professional successes/awards • Grades/learning results • Different forms of testing knowledge and skills: tests, exams • Scholarships • Competition in a group (family/school/academic/artistic environment) • Social media: positive reviews of works, artistic performances by social media users (motivation includes, i.e. the number of likes on YouTube or Facebook) • Promotion of music in social media and streaming channels • Chosen study program/degree • Remuneration • Work in the best teams/performing with the best artists

External factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes with renown professors – masters in the field studied • Family, teachers, friends, acquaintances • Changing world/pace of technological development and progress • Visible results of work • Audience approval after performances • Opportunity to build friend networks
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Source: Authors' own compilation

The analysis of the essays revealed that motivation of students of art universities is connected with internal factors. In the process of construction of educational and professional careers, traits such as: inner control, personality, self-discipline, flexibility, openness to career, the ability to cope with stress and other, are the factors which enable the realisation of the goals set. Passion, interests and desire to develop them are those personal traits which ensure educational and professional success. Motivation to achieve, resulting from internal factors, is driven by the will to improve, gain knowledge, achievements, face new challenges and curiosity of the world. Knowledge and skills are the base on which to build future career. Persistence, resilience, regularity, not getting discouraged with failures will guarantee a dream job in the future. Internal factors allow the respondents to meet the goals they set. In this case, they are the main determinants when choosing educational and professional career paths (see: Piorunek, 2004; Cybal-Michalska, 2013; Karwowski, 2013; Sarzyńska-Mazurek, 2016). On the other hand, there are many external factors like: competitions, tests, social media, concerts, work with world-class musicians, which motivate people to grow and look at future professional career from a wider perspective. On the one hand, studies they had chosen are in line with their passions and interests (it is worth mentioning that a great number of respondents already have other learned occupation) so they are internally motivated to improve; on the other hand, external factors which emphasise their artistic skills, such as audience reactions or likes in social media, are important motivators in professional development (see: Piorunek, 2004; Cybal-Michalska, 2013; Karwowski, 2013; Sarzyńska-Mazurek, 2016).

Summary and conclusions

Research analysis leads to conclusions that motivation plays an important role in planning educational and professional career. When deciding about their education and occupational future, young people face a great challenge of achieving educational successes which will allow them to move on to the next stages of education. It is important that the educational and professional path chosen is strictly connected with individual expectations and interests. It would be worth to implement the results of the study to educational practice, especially during classes dedicated to developing the students' potential and occupational counseling. Students, however, are very different. Aware of the factors which contribute to the realisation of goals, some relevant topics can be introduced to curricula, skills can be developed that will help students successfully pursue their educational and professional goals. Students of art schools are a unique group. They are goal-oriented individuals motivated to action, who have inner control and are persistent in their work. Thanks to these certain characteristics, they can achieve both educational and professional successes.

Abstract: Educational and professional career planning for Generation Z is the great challenge of the modern world. The dynamics of changes in the labour market caused by technological progress, digitisation and globalisation contribute to changes in the competence profile of the worker of the future. The changes taking place at an increasingly rapid pace have become the basis for thinking about the educational and professional career planning of Generation Z. This article will present the results of an empirical study conducted in 2022 at one of the art universities in Poland. The research was conducted in a qualitative paradigm. A content analysis of 111 essays on "My educational path in the perspective of career construction" was carried out. Within the framework of the analyses conducted, categories concerning internal and external resources related to educational and professional career planning of generation Z were identified. In this study, the presentation of the results was narrowed down to one of the factors, which is motivation. Based on the research, it can be concluded that motivation is a very important factor that determines educational success and the achievement of personal and professional goals.

Keywords: education career, careers, generation Z, fourth industrial revolution, motivation, competence, education

Streszczenie: Planowanie karier edukacyjno-zawodowych pokolenia Z jest wielkim wyzwaniem współczesnego świata. Dynamika zmian na rynku pracy wywoła na postępem technologicznym, cyfryzacją i globalizacją przyczynia się do zmian profilu kompetencyjnego pracownika przyszłości. Dokonujące się w coraz szybszym tempie zmiany stały się podstawą do namysłu nad planowaniem karier edukacyjno-zawodowych pokolenia Z. W artykule tym przedstawione zostaną wyniki badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych w 2022 roku na jednej z uczelni artystycznych w Polsce. Badania przeprowadzono w paradygmacie jakościowym. Dokonano analizy treści 111 esejów nt. *Moja droga edukacyjna w perspektywie konstruowania kariery zawodowej*. W ramach przeprowadzonych analiz wyłoniono kategorie dotyczące zasobów wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych powiązanych z planowaniem karier edukacyjno-zawodowych pokolenia Z. W niniejszym opracowaniu zawężono prezentację wyników do jednego z czynników, jakim jest motywacja. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań można stwierdzić, że motywacja jest bardzo ważnym czynnikiem warunkującym sukces edukacyjny i osiągnięcie celów osobistych i zawodowych.

Słowa kluczowe: kariera edukacyjna, kariera zawodowa, pokolenie Z, czwarta rewolucja przemysłowa, motywacja, kompetencje, edukacja

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