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Importance of family support in planning educational and professional careers by young adults from Generation Z

**Znaczenie wsparcia rodziny w procesie konstruowania karier
edukacyjno-zawodowych młodych dorosłych pokolenia Z**

Abstract: The construction of educational and professional careers is the subject of research in many scientific studies. The research carried out is based on very diverse scientific concepts. In a changing world, young people's construction of educational and professional careers is also changing. Recent literature points to new career models that correspond to the changes brought about by the fourth industrial revolution (Hirschi, 2018). The role of the family remains unchanged and important in career design. The support provided by parents is linked to both educational success and the construction of future careers. The following article will present the results of qualitative research conducted in 2022. As part of the research, 111 essays on the topic *My educational path in the perspective of career construction* were collected and analyzed for content. Within the framework of the conducted analyses, categories were identified for family support related to educational and professional career planning of Generation Z. The analyses conducted lead to the conclusion that the family provides support for young people as they design their educational and professional careers. Parents take various measures to not only help realize passions and interests, but also support their children in their education and pursuit of career plans.

Keywords: educational and professional careers, family support, Generation Z, educational achievement, career models.

Introduction

Reflections on educational and professional career development inevitably focus on the context of family in this process. In this day and age, discussion about career planning should be an important element of education. Today's world is dominated by change, uncertainty and randomness of events. In their preface to the book "The Chaos Theory of Careers: A New Perspective on Working in the Twenty-First Century", Robert Pryor and Jim Bright state that "life is uncertain. This is one of the greatest and perennial of 'inconvenient truths' in the field of career development" (Pryor and Bright, 2011, p. VIII). Uncertainty and unpredictability are, at the same time, some of the most predictable trends of the modern times. The world is less predictable than was thought. Career planning is a challenge because it is embedded in the "new realities" of work in the 21st century. These new realities include: speed of communication, reshaping of organizations, speed and extent of change, need for lifelong learning, globalization of both consumer markets and labor markets, transculturality, contractual nature of work (gig economy), technological innovation (Pryore and Bright, 2011; Hirschi, 2018). In the world of constant change, adequate education is not enough. What is necessary are the right competencies – those which are in demand in the labor market. The ability to create different opportunity scenarios for career development is also important. To live in the modern world means to change, to be flexible, to adapt to changes and, first of all, to keep up with them. Digitization and automation of work, described in the scientific literature as the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2016), is considered the most significant social and economic trend. This trend will transform fundamentally the nature of work, business and the society in the next decades (Hirschi, 2018). These changes may result in cancelling thousands of workplaces and disappearance or profound transformations of many existing professions. At the same time, new occupations, industries as well as completely new ways of doing work will emerge (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014). Other contemporary phenomena in the labor world are structural changes: polarization of employment (demand for highly and low qualified workers) and the growing role of gig economy (Hirschi, 2018). "The world of work has become fast paced, more diverse and less predictable for an increasing number of workers" (Lent, 2013, p. 2). Recently, we can also observe more and more frequent accidental events, Black Swans (Taleb, 2022), sudden crises (COVID-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine) which rapidly change the labor world and influence decisions regarding education and

career paths in Generation Z. The contemporary world requires adaptation to rapidly changing conditions of living. This is very challenging for individuals. Pryor and Bright notice that “Humans struggle with the reality that uncertainty is inevitable in all of our actions to a greater or lesser degree – we want control, and it disturbs us to think that total control is fundamentally unattainable” (Pryor and Bright, 2011, p. 4). These changes result in changes in the approach to career planning (Lent, 2018; Hirschi, 2018). Recent publications about professional careers point out to some new career models which fit the reality transformed by the fourth industrial revolution. They include protean career (Hall, 1996, 2004), a boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994, 2014; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), SCCT (Lent and Brown, 2013; Lent et al., 1994), CCTP – Career Construction Theory and Practice (Savickas, 2013), PWT – Psychology of Working Theory (Blustein, 2006; Duffy et al., 2016) (Hirschi, 2018; Sarzyńska-Mazurek, 2013; Piorunek, 2016). There are also other career models mentioned in the literature of the subject. Authors refer to: “zig-zag” career (Bateson, 1995), portfolio career (Cawsey, Deszca and Mazerolle, 1995), kaleidoscope career (Maniero & Sullivan, 2006), intelligent career (Arthur, Claman and Defillippi, 1995), mosaic, decentered career (M. Malewski, M. Piorunek) (Sarzyńska-Mazurek, 2013; Piorunek, 2016). Contemporary career models move away from linearity and predictability. A common feature of modern careers is “volatility, unpredictability and diversity of career experiences of individuals in the global socio-cultural reality” (Piorunek, 2016, p. 87). Modern career models focus on identity, subjectivity and autonomy of those who realize them (Sarzyńska-Mazurek, 2013, p. 27). Today, career can be pursued in many ways. Planning begins not when one enters the labor market but much earlier – during school education. There are many factors connected with planning educational and professional careers. They include both individual personality traits (individual predispositions, motivation) as well as factors connected with family (socio-cultural and economic capital) and school (quality of education, classroom relations, peer influence) environments. This paper focuses on the role of family in the context of planning educational and occupational careers by Generation Z. According to the subject matter literature, Generation Z are individuals born after 1990 or 1995 (Make Way for Generation Z... 2011). It is a generation whose representatives do not know the world without modern technologies which they use with great confidence. They easily acquire new digital competencies. Unfortunately, this generation also struggles with interpersonal communication and team building – a result of functioning in the virtual world. They also have problems with focus,

their attention is divided and their analyses and assessment of information are very superficial (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz and Chomątowska, 2014). This generation plans their educational and professional careers in the situation of extreme uncertainty, ambiguity and unpredictability. The choices they make do not guarantee professional success. The accelerating technological advancements result in an ongoing update of workplace competencies and choosing certain occupational path does not ensure successful career in the future. In the literature, Generation Z is called a generation of reduced chance of transition from education to the labor market. Of course, it is not only about professional training, choosing the right educational path, obtaining certain knowledge or competencies. It is mainly about the uncertainty and lack of guarantees regarding employment.

When analyzing both, changes in the labor market and the characteristics of Generation Z, it is worth to think how to prepare young people to enter the labor world. Planning educational and professional careers changes in the light of the recent transformations. A significant role will be played on only by the internal resources of each individual but also by external factors like family environment. The literature analysis shows that more and more occupational career researchers recognize the role of social relations, parent-child relationship in particular, in the development of professional careers of the young people (Pryor&Bright, 2011; Hirschi, 2018; Lent, 2018).

The goal of the paper is to present the role of family environment in developing educational and occupational careers of Generation Z.

Role of family in educational and professional career planning

Planning educational and professional careers is influenced by many factors. Educational career is connected with educational success which determines the choice of further educational and vocational paths. Factors related to learning and professional success are widely discussed in the literature. These factors include individual characteristics like age, gender, intelligence, personality traits, previous achievements, activity, social, cultural and economic status of the family etc. (Karwowski, 2013). In a model developed by Herbert J. Walberg, which consists of nine factors categorized into three levels: attitude, instruction and environment, the attitude sphere includes: student's abilities and their previous achievements, motivation and development (age); the teaching sphere includes: quantity and quality of learning; and the environment sphere includes: classroom environment, stimulation at home, peer influence and external influence (mainly mass media) (Walberg, 1981, as cited in: Karwowski, 2013). The literature analysis

indicates that family and its social, cultural and economic status is correlated with learning achievements of students (Karwowski, 2013; Karwowski and Dziedziewicz, 2012, see: Jagielska, 2022).

Individual decisions regarding career are influenced by large group of people and include choices in the area of education, trainings, work, career and retirement. Professional development is a process that begins already in childhood and in which family plays critical role. Variables like family structure, roles assumed by individual members, relationships between family members, value system and foundations of behaviors influence the choices and development of occupational career.

Contextual influences, such as family, peers, labor market and unplanned events are important factors related to career planning, however, they have been rarely studied in reference to professional career decisions (Patton and McMahon, 1999). People and environment change constantly, yet, traditional theories underestimate or ignore these transformations (Pryor and Bright, 2011). Professional decisions are not made in a vacuum and socio-cognitive variables, like the sense of agency, do not exist regardless of their social and physical context. Just like the modern world, this context is changing. It also includes incidents which also affect professional career planning. Thus, it is important to have a fresh look at career planning models (Pryor and Bright, 2011).

The analysis of career models also leads to the conclusion that family plays a vital role in developing professional careers. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown and Gail Hackett, takes into account not only personality-related factors but also those connected with the individual's environment, external indicators to career planning. In SCCT, two types of variables which influence professional development are considered: cognitive-personal (sense of agency, expectations, personal goals) and environmental-behavioral which influence the choice of certain behavior (physical, contextual conditions, experiences, i.e. gender, ethnic origin, social support and barriers etc.). These elements are correlated, they affect one another and are connected with the choice and shape of occupational career pursued by the individual. The strength of impact of the certain components on individual's choices depends not only on their objective meaning but also on the value given by the individual who is usually driven by their previous experiences (Myszka-Strychalska, 2017). According to this theory, the development of the sense of agency and expectations, implementation of goals and positive results occur in certain social context. This social context is crucial when it comes to occupation-related

choices in the early stages of career development. Subjective and social factors are the starting point to discovering and developing personal interests (Myszka-Strychalska, 2017). Another key element in career planning is time. According to the theory, “distal factors refer to experiences from the remote (past) time perspective, whereas proximal factors are related with the recent events and have a strong impact on individual decisions regarding career. It is worth mentioning that each of the stimuli can both promote and hinder one’s professional development” (Myszka-Strychalska, 2017).

In their new model, Lent and Brown point out to environmental factors among those that are connected with planning professional career. They refer to the traditional career planning models which consider factors related to individual characteristics. But they emphasize that in the modern, globalized and technology-based world, these theories do not take significant contextual changes into account. Models that match individuals with professions have some limitations as they do not include other factors which are important in career planning. They locate their concept in the integrated Content-Process-Context (CPC) framework to evaluate professional career choices (Lent and Brown, 2020). In this paper, only the most important factors related to career planning will be mentioned. Factors connected with the process evaluation (identifying barriers to the decision-making process) are, among others: fear of making decision/obligation, negative affectivity, interpersonal conflict, lack of diligence or planning, low effectiveness of making decisions. Factors connected with the evaluation of content (evaluation of basic aspects of professional personality, which may be used to identify potentially matching educational and occupational alternatives) are: interests, abilities, values, sense of personal agency, expectations towards results. Factors connected with the context evaluation (key environmental features which may help or disturb in making choice and pursue professional goals) include: cultural, family, institutional/structural and economic factors. Context evaluation may involve identification of distant barriers and supports (for example, the scope of professional patterns available during adolescence), proxemic factors which may influence decision-making in the present (e.g. parent pressure) and estimated contextual conditions which may affect realization of certain choices (e.g. biases and stereotypes regarding gender or race) (Lent and Brown, 2020, pp. 5-6). The author of the CPC concept focus on complementary goals of the content-process-context evaluation. As for traditional concepts of career choice (e.g. Parsons’ theory of vocational development), it should be emphasized that they focus mainly on an individual and less on the context of self-reflection, information gathering or decision-making

process. However, it should be noted that not many individuals experience accepting environment which is full of resources, completely neutral or supports their professional choices. People differ in terms of combinations of contextual supports and barriers, which accompany their decisions. Some are privileged and receive both emotional and financial support from their parents. Supportive parents help their children learn and encourage them to consider a wide variety of career options. They can also promote occupational decisions which may be seen as not traditional for a certain gender, ethnic origin or social class. Others will face social, economic or educational barriers of different degree, which will hinder realization of certain educational and professional plans. Thus, unlike previous career development models, modern approaches to career planning must avoid the tendency to limit the context. They should include relational, cultural and social elements which are connected with planning and development of vocational career (Lent & Brown, 2020, p. 3). And finally, an important assumption in the model is the fact that individual and environmental factors influence one another. They both shape social cognition of a person such as the sense of agency and expectations regarding the results, which are important determinants of interests and career choices (Lent and Brown, 2020, p. 3).

The authors of the Chaos Theory of Career (CTC) also point out to the necessity to include context in planning educational and professional careers. This model also takes the role of random events into account. In their research into the role of contextual factors and unplanned events in career planning, conducted among university students, Pryore and Bright stated that environmental factors (family, school, teachers) need to be considered in the career planning model. The contextual factors connected with career planning also include media and accidental events.

The study conducted by Andreas Hirschi and Damian Läge (2007) also confirms the role of family in career development. They pointed out to the role family plays in planning educational and vocational careers. The first step is realization of the need to make decision regarding career. Choosing certain career path, an individual makes a decision and then determines the scope of possible choices built on their awareness of own skills, interests and personal values. These alternatives are the consequence of both self-knowledge gained by a child and exploration of their social environment. Detailed exploration of these two dimensions (individual and environment) helps to narrow the alternatives and focus on that which is the most suitable for a given person. When the choice is justified, the decision becomes definite and is made. Then, one can move on to certain actions (Hirschi and Läge, 2007). The

study conducted by Ramona Palos and Loredan Drobot (2010) confirm the role of family in planning professional career. The decision-making process begins already in childhood and decisions made by children are modelled by family influence. The above mentioned researchers point out that, contrary to fathers, mothers are more engaged in their children's career plans, initiating certain actions and providing psycho-social support. Parents who are affectionate, tolerant, stimulating and result-oriented are more engaged in professional development of their children. In addition, children whose families are more engaged in education, are more open to counselling and searching for the right profession.

The above overview of just a few career planning models shows that family plays a role in planning educational and vocational career.

Methodological assumptions of research

The goal of the study was to investigate and identify the forms and types of family support in the process of planning educational and professional career by young adults from generation Z. For this purpose, the content of 111 essays was studied and analyzed. The theme of the essays was *My educational path in the perspective of professional career planning*. The study was performed in 2022, among students of art universities in Krakow. At the beginning of 2022, an Invitation to participate in the research for students of Arts has been sent. The essay was prepared by persons interested in participating in the study. Convenience sampling was applied. The research group consisted of students of music education, vocal and instrumental studies. The age of the respondents ranged from 20 to 27 years. Among the respondents, 60% were women and 40% were men.

The essays were analyzed to find the answers to the following question: What kind of support did parents provide in educational and professional career development? Due to the qualitative character of the study, it should be emphasized that the results can be referred to the respondents only. This choice also obligates to careful formulation of general conclusions. The results obtained cannot be referred to the whole generation Z population.

Results

The analysis of the essays enabled identification of several categories of support provided by parents (Table 1). The respondents mentioned the following types of support: emotional, financial, professional expertise, motivation and building certain value system. An important aspect of developing educational and vocational plans was parents' engagement in education of

their children. The respondents wrote that it was important for their parents to support them in their development. This included not only school education but also additional activities. The respondents' parents were supportive and spent time with them. Time with children was not only about helping with homework but also shared journeys, conversations, leisure time (trips to cinema, museums, theatre, opera, philharmonic etc.) and other joint activities (e.g. board games). Parents presented in the essays as people who take care of their children's widely understood development which includes participation in cultural events. Their approach to their children is subjective and full of trust. They were involved in the respondents' lives, present during important events, celebrations. They cheered them up and encouraged them. They believed in them. They also taught them how to manage their time, learn and be responsible. Mother was an important person, as she was an organizer and coordinator of school and additional activities. Fathers also supported children in pursuing certain educational paths. However, they were most often recalled as those who helped with homework, especially science-related. Mothers more often helped with humanities. Financial support also played an important role in planning educational and vocational careers. Buying musical instruments, paying for private tutoring, extra activities, participation in cultural events, travelling – parents bore all these costs to ensure the best possible education to their children.

It is also worth mentioning that parents spent much time, effort and engagement in coordinating school education and extra activities during pre-school and early school years. Of course, their help was not limited to early years but the respondents clearly emphasized how much their parents were involved in their development in that time. They not only drove children to additional classes or training (very often, it required a lot of effort and good time management) but they waited for them during these activities (some respondents emphasized large distance between their home and music school). Childhood was the time when parents focused on their children's development, they read books with them, taught them to read, write and helped them understand the world. The respondents declared that they had received as much support and attention as they needed. Only some statements indicated lack of support. Parents support was "accompanying" children in their development, education and realization of dreams.

Table 1. Types of support provided by parents

Parent support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional – believing in children's ability, presence during important events (competitions, presentations), encouraging, providing sense of security, acceptance, cheering up, love, trust • Financial – purchasing musical instruments, paying for additional classes, camps, trips, cultural events, workshops to develop skills, tutoring, private lessons • Sharing their expertise • Motivating to learning, development, realizing the goals set, developing interests • Building positive traits: self-discipline, motivation to development, pro-active attitude, diligence, independence, responsibility, inner-direction, ability to plan, time management, regularity
Spending time together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure time – going out to culture institutions, playing board games, travelling, reading books, cooking together, physical activity • Time spent on extra activities after school – mainly commuting to classes, waiting for children and picking them up afterwards, driving children to competitions, auditions etc. • Time spent on helping with learning – doing homework, preparation to tests, help with arts and crafts assignments • Active participation in children's life – presence during artistic performances and competitions, support, frequent conversations • Building positive family bonds – conversations with children, finding time to build relationships through talking, trips, holiday travels
Educational support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected with school education – helping with homework, preparing to competitions, discussing projects, helping with art and craft assignments, talking about career choices, presence in school meetings, showing interest in child's progress, setting high standards regarding learning achievements • Additional activities outside school – showing different additional options (theatre classes, ceramic workshops etc.) that develop different skills or physical activity: skiing, cycling, swimming, horse riding etc. • Activities developing passions and interests – music schools, music clubs, hobby clubs • Building positive habits – reading (buying and reading books in early childhood), ability to express own opinion, regularity

Source: Authors' own research.

From the perspective of career planning, not only wide support matters but also building positive habits. An interesting and noteworthy is also the fact of building family relationships and strengthening bonds. The respondents pointed out that not it was not only their parents who played a role in developing their learning and professional paths also other family members (siblings, grandparents).

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the role of family is connected with planning educational and professional career. It is confirmed by the study's theoretical assumptions. The role of the family in designing educational and professional careers is indicated by e.g. Tadeusz Lewowicki (1987), Ewa Sarzyńska-Mazurek (2018), Anna Paszkowska-Rogacz (2018), Zbigniew Chodkowski (2021). The work/publication by Paszkowska-Rogacz presents an analysis of the literature on the influence of the family on making decisions about planning educational and professional paths.

In the career models presented, the environmental factors, such as family, are connected with career planning. Individuals come from different backgrounds. Career planning process begins already in childhood. The family's socio-cultural and economic status is connected not only with individual learning achievements but also with occupational paths chosen by children. Families with higher social and financial status support their children, treat them more subjectively – discuss with them, explain rules, ask about opinions but also set higher expectations. The socio-economic status is also related with interest in classical music and art (Karwowski, 2013). In these families, parents are more supportive and show different possible educational and vocational career options. These tendencies have been noticed in the study results. The respondents' parents assisted them during learning. They sacrificed their time to support them in developing passions and interests. The respondents emphasized that thanks to good organization and engagement of their parents, they could attend two schools at the same time – regular and musical. Accompanying in education involved being present in important moments in children's life. Discussion and conversations facilitated making educational and professional choices. In addition to music, most of the respondents have another learned profession. They were able to do it thanks to the great support they had received from their parents. It is also worth mentioning that the study confirmed the tendencies regarding the role of mothers in career planning. Mother is a person who supports the child's activities, organizes time, additional activities and is present during important events. Mothers are more engaged in their children's career plans by initiating certain actions. They also help with homework (most often humanities). Mothers also provide emotional support (see: Hirschi and Lage, 2007; Karwowski, 2013; Palos and Drobot, 2010). In case of the respondents, fathers were also involved in raising children and providing support. They initiated different activities, helped with homework (mainly science), talked with children. The respondents' parents were empathetic and engaged, they

stimulated their children's development – which is also confirmed in other research (Palos and Drobot, 2010, p. 3411). The study presented herein confirms the role of parents in planning educational and professional career (see: Hirschi & Läge, 2007; Pryor and Bright, 2011; Lent and Brown, 2020).

To sum up: family plays an important role in planning educational and professional careers. This conclusion is important in the context of labor market challenges. The volatility, uncertainty, random events that characterize the modern world make it difficult to plan professional careers. It is not known which professions will remain on the labor market, which will change, and which will disappear. It is not known what types of professional careers will remain and how they will change. Certainly, in this changing world, the role of the family in determining career paths will remain unchanged. Parents will always play an important role in shaping their children's educational and professional careers. They will make the first choices of educational institutions for children. This conclusion has important application to pedagogical practice. Firstly, when educating future teachers, the role of parents in planning educational and professional careers should be emphasized and it should be pointed out that parents' support is significantly related to educational achievements. Well-planned school activities related to educating parents and supporting them in the education and upbringing of children can contribute to more effective school education. It is worth emphasizing the importance of the family in the education process and the creation of future educational and professional careers of young adults.

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