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The *Career Kaleidoscope* – a new methodological and diagnostic tool: How to use it to support young people in the changing world

In their daily work, career counsellors use a range of tools based on various theoretical foundations and rely on many psychological and pedagogical frameworks. Given that they were designed and developed in different historic, political and cultural circumstances, some of the tools are sooner or later bound to fail to respond to contemporary clients' needs and expectations. Changes in the world as such and, more specifically, in the job market call for modifying the ways counsellors work with clients, interventions they can offer them and the entire counselling process. Hence the need to draw on new theoretical concepts, to broaden the repertory of available tools and to develop instruments which will facilitate counselling interventions and, above all, serve not only to identify a client's personality traits but also to foster the mutual understanding of the counselling process participants. This is especially important in case of young people who have to make important educational and vocational decisions. It is impossible, however, to support them unless they realise what their abilities and vocational interests actually are.

These ideas guided the designers of a comprehensive tool called the *Career Kaleidoscope*, which was developed in 2014-2015 within the "Modern solutions in career guidance" project,¹ a joint enterprise of the Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe and heapmail Internet Solutions Ltd. Their collaboration was mediated by Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji [Centre for Education Development], which supported several similar projects across the country at the same time. The project invited a team of specialists to develop a methodological and diagnostic tool for assessing competencies and engaging students and adults in career planning. The tool was supposed to serve career counsellors and teachers providing career counselling for students aged 13 and older (therein students of adult schools) and students with mild intellectual disabilities.

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The authors discarded the traditional measurements and sought to enrich the career counsellor toolkit with “soft” tools informed by qualitative research building on *life design* theory (Savickas et al., 2009). Theory-wise, the *Career Kaleidoscope* was inspired by John Krumboltz’s social learning theory of career choice and happenstance learning theory (1981, 2009, 2014) and by Rick Jarow’s concept of career as vocation (1999). Because not only the context of social learning was important but also the biographical dimension of the process, the authors relied also on the biographical method described by Fritz Schütze (1983, 2012) and Peter Alheit (2002). The last inspiration was Carl Rogers’s client-centred counselling (1951, 2002).

The tool construction started from a few theoretical concepts which, though ostensibly contradictory, were tailored to the final objectives of the project. The concepts were derived from cognitive psychology, which emphasises learning in a particular environment, and interpretative (humanistic) social studies linking change and practical activity to self- and other-understanding. From the very start, the *Career Kaleidoscope* was supposed to include an array of solutions for educational and vocational planning by individuals aged 13 and older and to allow for the unpredictability of reality.

The authors’ intention was to design a tool for supporting a comprehensive and holistic identification of career-decision readiness by both the client and the counsellor. The tool should help integrate the process of successive vocational and non-vocational decision-making into the biography as its natural part. It is achieved by motivating self-analysis, strengthening self-esteem, fostering openness to new information, developing creativity, triggering reflection and encouraging pro-active attitudes, therein entrepreneurial activities. By design, the tool is “processual,” i.e. it should be embedded in the entire educational process and used in individual and group counselling interventions.

The *Career Kaleidoscope* consists of:

- ◆ instructions for conducting individual interviews;
- ◆ scenarios of group sessions plus self-diagnosis cards;
- ◆ 26 *JobBox* discussion cards;
- ◆ a multimedia game *Blocs of knowledge, skills and social competences*;
- ◆ series of 194 *Professional Professionals* films about particular occupations.

Just like in a kaleidoscope, all these “components” can be used together or, when required, each of them can be used separately as a methodological resource. At the same time, if one intends to use the tool for diagnostic purposes, it should be applied as a whole. Instructions for conducting interviews, scenarios of group sessions with self-diagnosis cards, *JobBox* cards, a multimedia game *Blocks of knowledge, skills and social competences* as well as information about the *Professional Professionals* film series about occupations (listed in the current Vocational Education Classification of Occupations) are included in two parts of the printed edition of *Poradnik metodyczny Kalejdoskop Kariery* [A Career Kaleidoscope methodological

handbook] (2016). The films about occupations and the game are available at the website of the Centre for Education Development. The handbook is also available in the electronic format (PDF).

Part One of the *Handbook* is comprised of four sets of questions and tasks to be used in individual interviews with clients (lower and upper secondary school students, students with mild intellectual disabilities and adult school students). Taking into account the clients' age differences will help monitor how their development progresses in time. Self-diagnoses performed by adult students in prior group activities can serve as a basis for compiling a curriculum vitae, a portfolio or a Euro-pass supplement in later individual meetings. The results of self-diagnosis during workshops and interviews add up to a report containing the assessment of students' competences, which should be discussed at the end of an individual meeting series.

Part Two of the *Handbook* contains methodological resources and self-diagnosis cards used in group educational and vocational counselling activities. It also includes four different sets of exercises for workshops, tailored to particular user groups, and 26 cards with a user manual. In this part of the *Handbook*, the authors propose exercises which draw on applied projective techniques, art techniques, case studies, critical thinking enhancement techniques as well as games (including the paper version of a game called *Like in a Kaleidoscope* and a multimedia game *Blocks of knowledge, skills and social competences*).

The goal of each scenario set used in group career counselling sessions (suitable for all kinds of clients) is not only to support self-diagnosis of one's resources but, above all, to develop skills. In the adopted theoretical perspective, these include reality perception and analysis skills, decision-making skills in a changing environment, organisational and creative skills as well as practical skills and entrepreneurial skills relevant to the current requirements of the job market. Importantly, both individual interviews and group scenarios are structured around the following areas:

- ◆ Area I – personal, family and environmental resources;
- ◆ Area II – educational and vocational paths;
- ◆ Area III – strategies of coping with change.

The choice of the areas addressed by the individual interview instructions and group exercises represents the importance of learning in a given community, temporal embeddedness of learning processes (as an aspect of biographicity) and the need to face up to challenges. Individual exercises, therefore, seek to identify the individual's resources, to work through biographical experiences or to give an insight into the individual's coping with an unexpected change.

The *JobBox* discussion cards are a set of 26 cards, 25 of which depict typical workers in 22 occupational groups (as listed in the Vocational Education Classification of Occupations). One additional card, a so-called Joker, serves to outline the profile of an imagined occupation that is not found in any card. The cards can be used by career counsellors/teachers during interviews, group activities or film

screenings. They contain explanations about how to employ them when working with students (a dozen or so possible uses of the cards have been proposed).

The multimedia game *Blocs of knowledge, skills and social competences* serves to help develop self-knowledge, identify predisposition, vocational interests and entrepreneurial talents, synthesise information about oneself and imagine oneself in vocational roles. The rules of the game require using competencies acquired not only in formal and non-formal education but also in informal learning settings (e.g. coping with unpredictable situations in life). The game has an electronic and paper versions included in the four scenarios of group activities for each type of school (*Handbook*, Part Two). The multimedia game has also instructions on how to use it in individual and group sessions.

The cycle of 194 short films *Professional Professionals* represents occupations listed in the current Vocational Education Classification of Occupations. A sample film lasts from 8 to 10 minutes and shows a character performing a job and the way to qualify for it, emphasising the importance of life experience, available resources and skill, and ways of using the knowledge, skills and social competencies essential to this job as defined in the National Qualifications Framework. The films present both typical and accidental pathways to jobs, taking into account such factors as random and unplanned events. The instructions provided explain how to use them at school.

The *Career Kaleidoscope* has already gone to many recipients. In spring 2015, training sessions for career counsellors were held across Poland to explain how to apply the tool. The introductory training events conducted by two authors Daria Zielińska-Pękał and Agnieszka Zembrzuska were attended by over 250 people. Another opportunity to present the tool was offered by two conferences on *New diagnostic tools and methodological materials to support identification of vocational interests and aptitudes in students* held by the Centre for the Development of Education in Warsaw and Poznan in autumn 2016. The discussions at those events suggested that counsellors were already using the tool. Given the typical school conditions (scant time for meetings with students), it is highly likely that only some of the tool's components are being actually used instead of a comprehensively implemented series of workshops followed by individual interviews, applying exercises, games, discussion cards and films. Despite these organisational obstacles, the feedback on the *Careers Kaleidoscope* is rather positive. The authors therefore hope that their work will support counsellors who support young people in the world replete with changes and challenges.

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