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Decent Work, Equity and Inclusion. Passwords for the present and the future. Report on the international conference, Padua, Italy, October 5–7, 2017

The academic meetings at the University of Padua have been part of an important discussion that has been going on around career counseling and counsellogy. This year, the international congress focused on researchers dealing with the economic and social dimensions of vocational guidance and education, vocational guidance and career guidance practitioners as well as policy makers from different countries. It was organized by institutions and entities that are involved in creating an academic career guidance environment in an innovative and involved way. The organizers were: the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE), the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counselling (ESVDC), the Italian Society of Vocational Guidance (SIO), Laboratory for Research and Intervention in Vocational Designing and Career Counselling (LA.R.I.O.S), the International Network of Social Economy (Res-int), the Padua University Network for Counselling and the University Centre for Disability and Inclusion. Reaching for the experience of such a wide spectrum of involved entities gave the opportunity to combine various institutional forces and perspectives in defining joint activities. The aim of this year's conference was to attempt to develop strategies for improving access to decent work. The implementation of this objective was to enable an international, multi- and interdisciplinary debate on theoretical and methodological approaches; on the resources, instruments, applications and professional communities that should be included in the development of new support strategies. The organizers also stressed the need to identify limiting conditions in this debate, working on ways to eradicate significant inequalities and barriers to full integration.

The conference focused on three main issues: decent work, equity and inclusion, which, according to the organizers, should guide the current and future careers of people and the development of human resources. Therefore, the schedule

of the conference was proposed by thematic symposia, in which the speakers' attention was focused on analyzing three interdependent approaches to finding solutions. One of them assumed the need to study the changes taking place in the modern world of work, as well as their consequences for the functioning of educational, economic and social systems. The second concerned proposals for organizing a more ethical social economy and enabling access to decent work for all. The third one was focused on identifying innovative and interdisciplinary strategies for designing, implementing and evaluating individual and large-scale solutions that would enhance the potential of professionals and organizations, thus providing high quality services in the field of career development and development of the workforce.

As in previous years, the conference was hosted by Prof. Laura Nora and Prof. Salvatore Soresi – researchers at the University of Padua. They opened the three-day deliberations, welcoming the participants and explaining the role and significance of the three key concepts of the conference from the point of view of the future of modern societies. The invited guests included, among others, Prof. Maria Duarte from the University of Lisbon, Prof. Jacques Pouyad from the University of Bourdeaux and Prof. David L. Bluestein from Boston College.

Three morning plenary sessions took place, the first of which served as an introduction to the wide thematic range proposed by the hosts. On the first day, professors from Padua, Rome, Tel Aviv, Hong Kong and Dakota invited the participants of the congress to seek answers to questions about the feasibility of carrying out activities combining the foundations of decent work, justice and integration. The participants listened to presentations on such topics as: “Moving the world to a sustainable path: utopia or necessity?”; “Balancing future life roles and decent work: intercultural perspectives”; “The future perception of women and men in the US: Culture, gender and decent work”. On the second day, the plenary session concerned more narrowly focused issues of career counseling. The speakers proposed combining various approaches and paradigms in career counseling. They asked questions about how it can promote a decent life and decent work, and what role the personal resources of guidance users play in this. They also drew attention to the importance of the so-called geographical skills (geo skills) in creating a network between diverse communities and ecosystems. The third plenary session took place on the last day of the conference and thus constituted its summary and conclusion. Finally, a ceremony was held during which prizes were awarded for promoting integrative activities. One of the prizes was presented to the Greek Association for Psycho-social Rehabilitation and Work Integration (PEPSAEE) by Prof. Maria Duarte, Chair of the Counseling Section (section 16) of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP).

In addition to the plenary sessions, afternoon sessions took place in 80 groups, some of them in English and some in Italian. All of them were devoted to the above-mentioned general conference issues, trying to place them in the perspective

of social, cultural, political and economic changes in the modern world. On the one hand, the sessions were designed to further the understanding of these phenomena, and on the other to work out solutions for the future that would take into account the interests and needs of various entities participating in the world of work.

The voice of the Polish Scientific Counseling Association sounded twice at the conference, for the first time as a speech by Joanna Minta, Agnieszka Zembrzuska and Daria Zielińska-Pękał titled “The Career Kaleidoscope tool in the search of qualitative methods of career counseling”. It was devoted to the methodological implications of a tool co-authored by the speakers (along with Monika Siurdyban and Anna Szczepińska). This tool, based on the learning Krumboltz’s concept of (happy) coincidences, Rick Jarov’s concept of anti-scandal and the biographical approach of Alheit and Schutz, is a proposal for individual and group counseling. The choice of such theoretical concepts points, on the one hand, to the multiplicity of possible solutions in planning the future of education and profession of people aged 13+, and on the other hand, it gives meaning to the unpredictable aspects of reality¹. The presentation was given during one of the afternoon thematic sessions under the slogan “Framework and tools for career guidance”, moderated by Prof. Mark Watson from Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. The second Polish contribution was the paper presented by Anna Bilon and Joanna Minta, “Career guidance as an instrument of lifelong learning policy – a critical perspective”. It concerned a critical analysis of relationships between career counseling and learning and the European Lifelong Learning (LLL) policy. Assuming that counseling is an element of LLL policy, the researchers pointed to its instrumental role in this policy. At the same time, they emphasized that counseling, as a complex social practice, is sometimes subject to a “triple bind” – in the aforementioned LLL policy, the expectations of people using it, and neo-liberal space-time, instrumentalizing almost all practices and bringing them to economic issues. The result of this triple bind is often a rather narrow approach to career counseling, which limits it to the role of career counseling, with very narrowly defined goals and tasks, closely related to supporting LLL policy, regardless of the sector / branch in which it is offered, and rarely taking into account the needs of the individual client. The paper was part of the session entitled “Vocational guidance, counseling and learning in European projects”, moderated by Prof. Reid Hazel from the University of Canterbury in Great Britain.

The conference was also accompanied by thematic meetings, for example the seminar of the NICE network on “Innovation in career guidance and counseling in Europe”, gathering around 50 partners from 30 European countries. Most of them are higher education institutions offering study programs in vocational guidance

¹ For more information on building and using this tool see: Zembrzuska, A. (2016), Nowe narzędzie metodyczno-diagnostyczne *Kalejdoskop Kariery* – zastosowanie w procesie wspierania osób młodych w świecie naznaczonym zmianami/ *Career Kaleidoscope* – a new methodical and diagnostic tool. How to use it in the process of supporting young people in the changing world. *Studia Poradawcze/Journal of Counselology*. vol. 5, pp. 165–170/327–331.

and counseling or engaging in research. Representatives of the universities and organizations forming the NICE network was related to the formal establishment of the NICE Foundation. During the seminar, the current founders developed the Foundation's framework for the next three years and elected the first Board of Directors of the Foundation by appointing the Election Commission and Ethics Committee. One of the first important events implemented by the newly established foundation will be a NICE conference entitled *Fostering the Dialogue Between Science and Practice in Career Guidance and Counselling*, which will take place in Krakow on 5–8 September 2018.

Another event was the presentation of a collection of statements by authors from many countries, edited by Laura Nota and Salvaore Soresi, titled "... *For a Manifesto in Favor of Inclusion. Concerns, Ideas, Intensions, and Passwords for Inclusion*". The contributors share their thoughts on the subject of social inclusion and ways of reaching this goal.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the plenary sessions of the conference took place in the beautiful scenery of the Botanical Garden in Padua, parallel sessions in university buildings, while the ceremonial ending took place in the historic sixteenth-century Palazzo del Bo, in the representative Aula Magna. The latter houses the portraits of famous Polish graduates of the University of Padua, including Nicholas Copernicus and Jan Kochanowski.

Translated from Polish by Daria Ferens, Dominika Ferens