

Joanna Minta, *Od aktora do autora. Wspieranie młodzieży w konstruowaniu własnej kariery* (From actor to author: Supporting the youth in constructing their careers), Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej (National Centre For Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education), Warsaw 2012, pp. 116

Joanna Minta's book *Od aktora do autora. Wspieranie młodzieży w konstruowaniu własnej kariery* was published by the National Centre For Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education in the Euroguidance series.

The author is Adjunct Professor at the University of Lower Silesia, a co-founder of its Careers Office, an experienced professional development trainer, a member of Stowarzyszenie Doradców Szkolnych i Zawodowych RP [The Polish Association of School and Vocational Counsellors], and a co-founder of Naukowe Towarzystwo Poradownicze [The Counsellological Association] as well as the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counselling. The publishing series, the publisher and the title indicate that the publication is a methodological manual addressed mainly to career counsellors working with the youth. In her book, the author seeks not only to outline the current developments in career counselling – a movement within broader professional development practices supported also by the Polish researchers associated, mainly, with the Wrocław School of Counselling – but also to translate the theoretical assumptions into proposals of specific counselling interventions to be applied in everyday work with both young and adult clients. The book's layout is also visually attractive. It contains diagrams, involves the reader in a dialogue, poses thought-provoking questions, all of which, many a time, facilitate absorbing the subsequently discussed matters.

The book consists of three parts. In the first part, the author briefly and clearly presents the current theories which inform and inspire career counselling practice. They include concepts formulated by the America-based psychologists Mark Savickas, Vance Peavy, John Krumboltz and his co-workers (Alan Lewin, Kathleen

Mitchell), which though referenced in some publications in Polish,¹ are largely unknown to many specialists. This single reason would suffice to appreciate the book by Joanna Minta – a member of Naukowe Towarzystwo Poradownicze [The Counselling Association] – as important and useful: it effectively popularises contemporary theoretical and methodological trends. Providing an account of the basic tenets underlying them, the author focuses also on the practical recommendations developed by theoreticians for the counsellor-client conversations in which “life theme” is elicited and a contemporary individual’s career/life is deconstructed, reconstructed and co-constructed (as J. Minta put it). This terminology, although formulated by M. Savickas for the purposes of his theory, seems to be central to all approaches inscribed in the scientific movement referred to mostly as *life-design counselling*, (*vocational design and career counselling*). The “life theme” can be understood as a dominant motif of a narrative (told individually or with participation of others – the counsellor or members of the meeting group), the substance of the subject’s daily existence. What the the subject gives an account of is nothing else but his/her career. In this framework, the term career denotes not only the roles played by the subject, but also the life style integrating them. In my opinion, the author does not synthesise sufficiently the concepts she cites as central to the life-design framework rooted in such understanding of career/life. This seems particularly important since the narrative approach, increasingly popular in Poland in recent years, has not been precisely defined yet, which thwarts developments in counselling practice that could contribute to qualitative changes in career counselling in our country. Other shortcomings include not fully comprehensible explanations of the title role categories (actor, autonomously acting subject and author) adopted from M. Savickas, or introduction of poorly formulated terms, such as, for example, co-construction standing for constructing career by the counsellor and the client together. By no means discrediting the book’s merit, these remarks are rather suggestions for the author to consider in her further reflection and research.

In the second part of the book, J. Minta describes examples of methodological solutions applied by the authors of the discussed theoretical concepts as well as European (Italian and French) biographical counselling practices. She presents the assumptions behind and stages of M. Savickas’s narrative interview, the general characteristics of Laura Nota, Lea Ferrari and Salvatore Soresi’s workshops for the youth and parents, the objectives and basic advantages of educational workshops and counselling dialogue as proposed by Jean Guichard, the mapping technique used by V. Peavy and the narration game developed by Urszula Tokarska. This part of the work seems to be particularly important for the target reader – a counselling

¹ E.g.: Guichard J., Huteau M., (2005), *Psychologia orientacji i poradnictwa zawodowego* [Psychology of orientation and career counselling]. Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls: Kraków; Krumboltz J., Lewin Al., (2009), *Szczęście to nie przypadek* [Luck is no Accident: Making the Most of Happenstance in Your Life and Career], GWP: Gdańsk; Szumigraj M., (2011), *Poradnictwo kariery. Systemy i sieci* [Career Counselling. Systems and networks], Łośgraf: Warsaw.

practitioner – since it not only illustrates applications of theoretical concepts, but, first and foremost, offers (as intended by the author) an inspiration for development of individual narrative-oriented counselling intervention methods. Simultaneously, the described solutions show the ways in which counselling clients learn key skills conducive to the achievement of life/professional satisfaction in the contemporary circumstances. These include, among others, reflexivity, hopefulness, sense of harmony, continuity, and cooperation with others. In the last, third part of the book, J. Minta describes her own working methods inspired by the previously discussed authors. She presents several dozens of scenarios of group activities addressed to secondary school students which can be easily adapted for other age groups. For many counsellors, they can certainly be a ready-made class-plan, and the most attractive asset of the entire publication.

In my opinion, J. Minta's book is thought-provoking in one more respect: it thematises the viability of and space for biographical (narrative) counselling in Polish school. The perspective of reflexivity and individualisation of experiences it postulates runs counter to the mechanical reproduction of patterns, a conformism currently rewarded in the education system. The popularity of narrative approach in career counselling depends on the manner in which the counsellors working with the youth in educational facilities will deal with this challenge.

Marcin Szumigraj

(Translated from Polish by Marcin Szumigraj)