

## INTRODUCTION

Human life is associated with the activity that goes far beyond what is necessary for existence and survival. This activity takes many forms, among which, education and work are the dominant ones. Although they were always significant in the past, in the twenty-first century they play a special role in people's lives. Today also, as perhaps never before, there is a very close relationship between education and work, which penetrate each other, and are mutually dependent. Performing work requires the prior acquisition, systematic development and updating of competencies enabling a person to take and implement the work. Linearity of professional development, which used to be: general education – vocational education – an occupation, does not exist anymore. It is now substituted with the non-linear development, associated with the lifelong education in different situations and circumstances that are unique and of individual character. In the scientific approach to work, much attention is paid to company's organizational culture which expresses the specificity and uniqueness of that company. Human resources, which consist of all the workers employed in a company, and the importance of investing in this capital are the focus now. A worker is now perceived more as a human being. It is so, however, because the employer tries to obtain the best results from professional and economic point of view. A man is thus treated instrumentally, to achieve the greatest possible profit. The social pedagogy and pedagogy of work have still other approach to the work. It is different, as in fact it is focused on the person who performs the work, on his or her own experience and development. In a number of career development theories formulated on the basis of psychology and sociology, this homo-centralism can also be noticed, but mostly it was supposed to lead to a possible full match of a man and the working environment to use the employee's potential in the best possible way.

The articles included in this collection express the results of years of research, thoughts and considerations, which were aiming to support people in pursuing their professional careers at all stages of life.

The achievements of social pedagogy and pedagogy of work may be useful for the organization of work and used successfully in other areas, in particular in the

economic one. It is still relatively rare, even though it happens more and more often, that the results of the work of the pedagogy research, as well as the suggestions of how to apply this knowledge, are adapted by businesses and by other social and economic sciences researchers. Nevertheless, it turns out that the concern for employee's development and welfare and investing in worker, consequently, brings many beneficial results that cannot be measured in the economic terms only.

The following texts are aimed to highlight the importance of work in the life of a modern man and its impact on an individual's biography. The author demonstrates work's influence on life activity of an adult and its significance for the nature of this activity in different periods of life. The content also draws attention to the complexity and ambiguity of the experience obtained in various professional environments, as well as to the importance of the fate factor for work and non-work biographies. It also should inspire the reader's thoughts about the individual character and unpredictability of whole range of possible professional careers. This implies a need for the professional councillors to take this knowledge into account while helping in planning lifelong professional career, as this requires an individual and careful interpretation of each case. Particular attention should be turned to the long-term unemployed, as the complexity of their life situations and their individual characteristics contribute to the continuous decline and deterioration of their lives, which puts them in the position, from which it is very difficult to be brought back to professional activity.

A key challenge for today is decent life of individuals, consistent with their abilities and respectful to their aspirations and values, of course if those values do not endanger the public life. Living such a life is not easy in the postmodern world, because making choices and building one's own value system in a full of contradictions world of information chaos, a world with no true authorities or clear "road signs" is difficult and sometimes it's beyond human capabilities. The pedagogy can assist people by defining and interpreting various solutions, equipping individuals with the resources, which are necessary to make the right and prudent choices. This applies to every sphere of human life, including employment.

The economic situation greatly affects the conditions of human life. It is increasingly determined by global conditions, as evidenced by trends in global stock markets. The global economy responds quickly to the political or economic problems and difficulties or ecological disasters occurring at any point on the globe. This influences the situation of people around the world, as the world becomes more and more linked system, and the term "global village", which was introduced in the early sixties of the last century by McLuhan is now becoming more relevant and adequate. This applies to all aspects of life, like cultural infiltration, the modes of communication and ways we carry out our professional work. All the inhabitants of our globe are subjected to

instability and temporality which is experienced in all areas of human life. This is another factor influencing human biographies. Professional work is subjected to all these above-mentioned circumstances. The world is still looking for ways to organize work, so as to obtain the desired results in the most efficient way. The expected by many end of work is unreal. Human work is and always will be performed, because of its humane-formative nature, as John Paul II pointed out in his encyclical on work. Perhaps in the future, just a small number of people will work in the traditional sense, creating goods used to satisfy human needs, but, as an activity, work still seems to be indispensable. The question may arise how to share it fairly, so that all the people could have the opportunity to make use of its developmental advantages. Professional work with all its unquestioned advantages also carries several risks. This is the area of further challenge associated with finding the ways to protect people endangered by various forms of pathology of work. Education can help the current and would-be employees to acquire the competence in recognizing the risks of pathology of work, to prevent them and defend against them. There is still much to be done in this respect.

However, pursuing one's career appropriately involves primarily the activity of an individual and the culture of work represented by him or her. The work culture is of key importance for the work of every human being. It is therefore desirable to pay more attention to it and to put more effort into its formation to raise its level. This is the essential task of education in relation to professional work throughout life. Preparing for a professional career in early childhood is associated with building the image of work through communication in a deliberate and planned way, as well as through presenting the picture of work involuntarily by everyday work activity. This image of work becomes a kind of a pre-professional preparation. The positive image contributes to the interest in the occupation performed by parents, while the negative sometimes leads to strengthening the stereotype of the picture of professional work as an unpleasant activity associated with the sacrifices and even suffering. Thus it shapes the work motivation and attitudes towards work. The plans and choices of a professional career, and resignation or rejection takes place on that ground. The biography research shows that in the childhood recollection, the work of parents appears as an important and responsible duty, regardless of historical period and the parents' profession. Also today in those families where parents are employed, work is perceived as an important and needed human activity. The formal education during the regular school, including vocational training and academic education is a continuation of the process, which began at an earlier period in the family home environment. Later, when moving into the labour market people continue this process.

The following collection of texts can be divided into three sections. The first of these topics relates to the position of work in the activities of a modern man. In times when

all the world seems to talk about the end of work and about the necessity to regulate or even limit its scope, the question may arise, whether work is really necessary for a modern man, or whether it is possible to live and grow without it. Before the answers to those questions were found, another, seemingly opposing, problem appeared – what to do about the piling up of professional tasks requiring high competencies of their performers to make it possible for workers to meet those requirements. It involves the movement of workers round the global labour market, however, it is primarily a consequence of the fact that the population is getting older, in particular in Europe and other parts of the world. Therefore various options of future work need to be taken into account, especially those that are difficult to be clearly identified, anticipated or planned.

The second topic is associated with vocational education. Here it is also difficult to make decision about how to shape it. The hope that education will meet all the expectations of the labour market seems a bit unrealistic. Certainly there are relatively stable occupations in which the changes do not happen quickly, and it is possible to prepare the future workers and to equip them with the skills which may meet the needs of this particular profession. This may take place particularly in case of principal occupations, though now they may also need constant updating of professional competence. The attempts to solve this problem at the level of system have not yielded expected results, mainly due to the lack of consistency while implementing the reforms, but also because of constantly changing conditions and expectations of different professions. In this situation it is not the systemic, but the network approach to vocational education which seems to be the most sensible solution, as it enables to take into consideration the personal characteristics of an individual and the specific expectations of the continually changing world of work. The higher education plays important role in the educational network, which is supposed to intervene during the whole of human life. In Poland, it is growing rapidly, especially after 1989. This raises doubts in some environments, which question the need of a mass university education. It is worth noting however, that the experience of education at any stage or level causes a number of positive implications for those participating in the training. It is also important for the development of the environments where the educational institutions are located. It is difficult to overestimate the role of primary schools in rural communities, or secondary schools in the environments of small towns. The same, significant role is played by colleges, universities in major cities or renowned universities in large academic centres. The opinion, that universities produce a large number of unemployed people seems to be simplified. Of course, studies do not guarantee work for anyone, but the unemployed after graduation are far more likely

to find work than people who are less educated, and it happens very rarely that those better educated become long-term unemployed.

The third group of problems concerns unemployment as a problem of social pedagogy. It is difficult today to talk of work and omit the unemployment, which is the consequence of a market economy. It causes several negative consequences, both individual and social. The social pedagogy provides us with the knowledge about the subject and suggests some ways of supporting the unemployed. The vocational guidance, which is looked forward to by unemployed people, plays a special role in this case. Indeed, the unemployed often experience helplessness and loneliness in a collision with the labour market, which is often unfamiliar and hostile to them.

The book concludes with a brief essay devoted to technical education, which is still in a dynamic technological progress. After the period of fascination with the technique during the scientific and technical revolution the science became marginalized in terms of being the object of interest in the learning and teaching process. It can be assumed that this is a consequence of the end of the industrial age, which is mainly associated with the technique. Today, industrial production is becoming more automated and robotized, which means that the technique, which once contributed significantly to increasing the number of jobs is currently causing their reduction. The schools have clearly limited the elements of technical education which had previously been conducted on the basis of general education. The rule of technical education, which was introduced by Atutow, seems to be forgotten now and that causes general education schools' offer to deplete. Such a school does not prepare an individual to be able to live independently in the world flooded with technique, which on the one hand is a "benefactor", but on the other – a huge risk on both, global and local scale.

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The collection is certainly not perfect, but I think it represents, to some extent, my views on the matter of work which are important for the science and practice of

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