

Book Review:

P. Hlaďo, *Profesní orientace adolescentů: poznatky z teorií a výzkumů* (Career orientation of adolescents: findings from theories and research). Brno: Konvoj, 2012. 140 s.

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The monograph *Career orientation of adolescents: findings from theories and research* (*Profesní orientace adolescentů: poznatky z teorií a výzkumů*) is the outcome of the work of PhDr. Petr Hlaďo, Ph.D., assistant professor at the Institute of Lifelong Learning at Mendel University in Brno. He is a renowned author who has long been committed to researching career choice of primary and secondary school students, career maturity of students, career counselling, career education and other topics related to the subject-matter of the publication reviewed.

The aim of the monograph is to provide a summarizing overview of theories and studies in the area of decision-making of lower secondary school students in the transition between the lower and upper secondary education, and to acquaint the reader with a longitudinal research survey aimed at finding out how students and their parents currently experience and resolve the career choice at the end of lower secondary school. The goal has to be evaluated very positively since it deals with the transition period when students think about their course of education and their career orientation for the first time. As the author himself aptly adds, “the choice of a profession that students have to make at the end of lower secondary education is not an irreversible act, any revision or change in the original decision is associated with considerable effort”. Psychological studies have shown that the population of lower secondary school students is not yet sufficiently mature for this important decision, which results in the fact that students are not able to rationally assess their qualifications, compare them with the objective requirements of the education system and the world of work and find a reasonable compromise among them.

Career choice is therefore quite a difficult problem for many students and they have to be systematically prepared for it. Effective preparation should have several levels: leading students to career choices within the formal curriculum, providing information and counselling services at schools and school counselling facilities, preparation in the families, informing through mass media of communication, etc. Findings about the career choices of students at the end of compulsory schooling are therefore necessary for the educational and counselling-psychological practice, where the target group of readers of the publication is primarily teachers and counselling staff. The findings presented in the publication may also be used by parents of students who are facing the first career choice, or makers of educational and school policy. It has to be added that on the Czech and Slovak book market there are few recent professional (not popularization) publications dedicated to this subject. The important ones include publications by Š. Vendel (*Kariérní poradenství (Career Counselling)*, Grada 2008; *Výskum školskej a profesijnej orientácie žiakov (Research on educational and career orientation of students)*, State Pedagogical Institute 2007), E. Walterová et al. (*Přechod žáků ze základní na střední školu: pohledy z výzkumů (Transition of students from lower secondary to upper secondary school: views from research)*, Paido 2009), J. Balcar et al. (*Zvolil jsem si techniku. Proč? Faktory výběru studijního oboru a střední školy (I have chosen technical sciences. Why? Factors of the choice of subject and secondary school)*, Mendel University in Brno 2011), a part of publication by E. Gajdošová and G. Herényiová (*Rozvíjení emoční inteligence žáků (Developing emotional intelligence in students)*, Portal 2006) and some others.

The strong point of the monograph *Career orientation of adolescents: findings from theories and research* is its comprehensive approach to the subject of career choice, which is not viewed from a purely educational or pedagogical-psychological or counselling point of view, but it attempts to capture the decision-making process in a broader social context. This is also reflected in the balanced structure of the publication.

The introductory part (numbered as the first chapter) aptly acquaints readers with the issue of career choice of lower secondary school students, problems in this area, exigency of career decision-making and the importance of systematic preparation of students for this decision-making process. Besides, the content of the publication and the target group of readers are outlined.

In the second chapter, the basic conceptual apparatus used in the text is defined. This chapter is important for the orientation of the reader as there is no consensus in the specialized literature as to the use of terms such as career choice, first career choice, first direction selection, secondary school choice, choice of further course of education, career (or professional) orientation, career counselling, professional

counselling, vocational counselling, career choice counselling; career education, education for career choice, education towards profession, etc. The concepts are defined precisely in the manuscript, the definitions are based on both the theoretical knowledge of the author and the relevant specialized literature. The author accompanies the basic concepts with a relatively new term “course of education and career management skills”, which has begun to appear in specialized texts, but it is not yet well known in educational and psychological practice.

The third chapter gives an excursion into the theory of career choice. It presents major career development theories, or approaches to career development theories, which are divided into content and process ones. Elaboration of this chapter can be evaluated very positively. It contains a precise characterization and specification of the concept of a person's career development by the world's leading authors such as F. Parsons, E. Ginzberg, D.E. Super, J.L. Holland, A. Roe, etc. A pitfall, however, is the fact that the chapter maps the career theories mainly in the Anglo-American area. Its content could be expanded to include findings from the Czech-Slovak environment (they were developed mainly between the 60s and 90s of the previous century), because it is a territory somewhat different as to the specifics of the education and counselling system as well as historical development, culture, tradition, etc. In spite of this observation, the chapter can overall be evaluated as balanced and elaborated with expertise.

Inclusion of the fourth chapter, “Evaluation of ontogenetic characteristics and career readiness of adolescents,” is appropriate for the understanding of the problems students face and the impact of developmental particularities of adolescents on the career choice. Discussed are the effects of social development, development of perspective orientation on career decision-making. The career readiness of students is briefly evaluated and obstacles occurring in career choice are outlined. Out of many taxonomies of obstacles, whether these are theoretical models or empirically validated taxonomies, published in the foreign literature, the author describes a taxonomy of obstacles to career choice in the population of U.S. adolescents designed and empirically validated by I. Gati, M. Krausz and S. H. Osipow in 1996. Although this taxonomy is not recent, its importance is testified by the fact that it is still quoted. The chapter is concluded by the assessment of risks of Czech students' career choice, which include little knowledge about the world of work and various occupations, ignorance of the education system, insufficient level of self-knowledge, short-term perspective orientation and vague ideas about one's future. Overall, it can be said that the career readiness (maturity) of students in our country receives little empirical attention. This opens considerable space mainly for psychologically oriented research.

Career counselling for students and its institutional support are the topic of the fifth chapter. This chapter helps understand the rather confused system of support for pupils and parents provided at schools (in school counselling offices), school counselling facilities, but also in other institutions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Czech studies (including the research presented in the fifth chapter) confirm the long-term low utilization of counselling services. The causes of this trend are low awareness among parents and students about the information and counselling possibilities the two institutions offer (here I see the importance of the chapter), little or negative experience with their use and poor accessibility.

The sixth chapter acquaints the reader with the preparation of primary and secondary school students for career choice within the formal curriculum (thematic area World of work at primary schools and cross-sectional topic Man and the world of work at secondary vocational schools). The information may be used by parents to orient themselves in preparation as well as by counselling staff and teachers themselves.

The seventh chapter provides an overview of current research results in the Czech Republic and abroad concerning actors that co-influence students' career choice and career orientation. It focuses on the influences of family, peers, teachers and counselling staff. Discussed is the topic of students' autonomy in the process, decision-making and strategies of parents aimed at influencing students' aspirations and decision-making depending on the socio-economic status of the family. The chapter is a rewrite of a study that was published by the author in the *Pedagogická orientace* journal in 2010 (vol. 20, issue 3) and extended by findings from new research studies.

The greatest benefit of the monograph lies in the eighth chapter, in which Peter Hlado presents a concluded qualitatively oriented empirical survey (using the design of a case study) on the decision-making of lower secondary school students and their parents in the transition from lower to upper secondary school. It evaluates the views of students and parents on the role of actors in the career choice, describes strategies applied by parents in career choice and sub-stages of decision-making in students. The author does not limit himself to the level of empirical findings. The results of the analysis and synthesis of available theoretical materials, curricular documents and his own research conclusions is a longitudinal program of career orientation. Due to the high selectivity of the Czech education system, it is logical that this chapter includes information about the admission procedures, which is a key criterion for students in their career choice. The author introduces the strategies of students and their emotions in the period before and after admission procedures to upper secondary schools.

The conclusion summarizes the major findings and makes suggestions for changes in both the educational and counselling areas. The summary is concise, clear and understandable.

I believe that the monograph "*Career orientation of adolescents: findings from theories and research*" by Petr Hlad̨o is a valuable monograph, which provides a cross-section through theories and findings of studies on career choice. I am convinced that thanks to its clarity its readers will recruit not only from the narrowly defined group of experts-researchers, but also from a broader range of so-called caring professions. These include educational counsellors, school and counselling psychologists and social pedagogues. The presented text could also serve as a recommended study material in preparation of future teachers at primary and secondary schools.