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Mark Savickas' theory as an inspiration for professional counselling aimed at adults enhanced with the application of Diagnostic and Simulation Games Method

Teoria Marka Savickasa jako inspiracja dla doradztwa zawodowego dorosłych na przykładzie metody gier diagnostyczno-symulacyjnych

Streszczenie: Proces doradztwa zawodowego, diagnozowania predyspozycji zawodowych lub wsparcia w konstruowaniu kariery zawodowej w przypadku uczniów dorosłych wymaga nierzadko wykorzystania metod i technik pracy innych niż ma to miejsce w przypadku uczniów młodszych. W niniejszym artykule autor prezentuje jak w ramach realizacji projektu *Od diagnozy do działania* wykorzystano teorię konstrukcji kariery i poradnictwa narracyjnego Marka Savickasa do wypracowania modelu innowacyjnego narzędzia diagnozującego kompetencje i predyspozycje zawodowe uczniów dorosłych – Metody Gier Diagnostyczno-Symulacyjnych. Stworzone na bazie teorii konstrukcji kariery zawodowej M. Savickasa gry diagnostyczno-symulacyjne są interaktywną i oryginalną metodą pracy, dzięki której każdy dorosły uczestnik zajęć może na kilka różnych sposobów uzyskać odpowiedzi na pytania: jaką karierę chce stworzyć?, w jaki sposób chce to osiągnąć?, co motywuje mnie do działania?

Słowa kluczowe: Mark Savickas, metoda gier diagnostyczno-symulacyjnych, kariera zawodowa.

Summary. In case of adult learners, the process of professional counselling, diagnosing of professional predispositions or providing support for learners in their professional career construction frequently requires the application of different methods and techniques than the ones applied in case of younger learners. In this article the author presents how Mark Savickas' career construction theory and narrative career counselling are applied in the project titled *From diagnosis to action* in order to work out the model of innovative tool for diagnosing competences and professional predispositions of adult learners – that is the Diagnostic and Simulation Games Method'. The diagnostic and simulation games, developed on the basis of

M. Savickas' career construction theory, are the interactive and original work methods owing to which each adult learner may obtain many various answers to such questions as: which career to construct?, how to accomplish it? and what motivates me to act?

Keywords: Mark Savickas, diagnostic and simulation games method, professional career.

A few years have passed since 2009, that is the time when Alina Matlakiewicz and Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec published the book *Adults learn in a different way*. Today we know that adults not only learn differently but they also differently plan and construct their professional careers. The idea of lifelong learning imposes on people more and more complex choices concerning both the educational path regarding the change of professional career and also the modification of the professional career path resulting from constant changes of trends on the labour market (Minta, 2012, p. 6).

There are a lot of concepts concerning vocational career planning and development starting from Edwin L. Herr and Stanley H. Cramer, through Donald E. Super, Duane Brown and Lindy Brooks, Samuel H. Osipow and Samuel T. Gladding to Mark Savickas' concept. However, it is the last concept which became an inspiration for the authors and the executors of the project *From diagnosis to action* which was completed on 30 June 2015. The project was carried out by Bydgoszcz Vocational Education Centre – Association of Career and Technical Education in a partnership with Personal Analysis and Counselling Services Agency – Psychological Solutions Group from 1 April 2014 to 30 June 2015. The project was financed from the European Social Fund within the Human Capital Operational Programme, priority III – High quality of the education system, Action 3.4 Education system openness in the context of lifelong learning, Sub-measure 3.4.3 Popularisation of lifelong learning. The intermediate body was the unit of the Ministry of National Education – Centre for Education Development.

The aim of the project was to raise the quality of the process of recognizing professional predispositions and professional interests, entrepreneurship skills and the choice of professional career paths of adults attending the schools for adult learners by providing them with a new form of educational and vocational counselling services, where the practical part, motivating the participants to act and supporting their development, is particularly emphasized. The effect of the work of the panel of experts is the innovative Diagnostic and Simulation Games Method (DSGM).

DSGM is a form used to recognize professional predispositions and vocational interests as well as entrepreneurship skills of students over the age

of 18 with the application of the specially designed social games. The mentioned above games combine the elements of diagnosis and simulation and owing to them they allow to most precisely determine various preferences and predispositions. The set of tools based on DSGM became a handbook consisting of 18 diagnostic and simulation games. Thanks to them the participant of the training session realized with the use of DSGM method is able to answer three key questions: what kind of career to create?, how to create it? and why to create the career?

Planning the professional career by adults carries a few fundamental aims such as: development of competences regarding decision making processes, understanding the mutual relations between various roles performed in life, understanding constant changes concerning perceiving the masculine and feminine roles and the development of competences related to career planning (Dołęga-Herzog, Rosalska, 2014, p. 29). These aims may be achieved by the application of the developed DSGM method.

The authors of the project and then the experts developing the method and tools for its realisation based their actions on Mark Savickas' career construction theory. However, the choice of the concept suggested by M. Savickas was not random but is was a consequence of the following premises: highlighting the significance of narration during the career construction process, which is coherent with the assumptions of the course of diagnostic and simulation games, emphasizing the importance of the past and presence for the course of the career construction process, compliance with the international standards and development trends in career counselling, creative integration of valuable assumptions and results of the previous research, distinctive emphasis on the developmental element, which highlights the significance of constant professional career construction at their different stages, which is particularly important in case of counselling directed at adults (Kozubska, Ziółkowski, 2015, p. 66).

Creators of DSGM decided to work with the application of games due to a few fundamental reasons: games highlight the experimental aspect, emphasize the narrative aspect of career construction; games take into account the aspect of individual differences; they are of holistic nature; they emphasize the significance of possibilities and resources deeply rooted in the environment and being significant for the construction of professional career; they refer to such postulates as: dynamic comprehension of professional career, non-linearity of professional development and multiplicity of perspective in shaping career development. The other premises which determined the application of M. Savickas' theory were: being of high rele-

vance while applying it to work with adults and the fact that games are an excellent idea for preparing an unusual lesson plan because their dynamic character prevents the participants of these training sessions from fatigue. Moreover, games facilitate communication with the learners who are afraid to start the cooperation and aim at participants' activation and interaction. They also allow participants to get to know themselves in an original way and are characterized by high flexibility – they can be played in various places and groups of different number of participants and needs. Undoubtedly, the argument in favour of the application of games was also the fact that the preparation to conduct classes with the use of games is relatively easy (Kozubska, Ziółkowski, 2015, p. 67–68).

As Edyta Łyszowska aptly notices, one of the essential elements of vocational counselling and planning of the professional career is the ability to accurately determine the stage of professional life where the candidate is (Łyszowska, 2010, p. 2009). It is also one of the elements of the so called biographical learning in adult education, the objective of which is to recognize the cognitive processes, revealing the chances and barriers of learning regarding adult learners (Matlakiewicz, Solarczyk-Szwec, 2005, p. 125). Therefore, the authors of the project prepared 18 standardized and checked for accuracy and reliability, original diagnostics tools, used for self-evaluation of own competences and vocational predispositions, owing to which each person taking advantage of DSGM will be able to determine own stage of professional career in a simple way.

During the project, the panel of experts also prepared 18 role-playing scenarios of diagnostics and simulation games and the materials to perform the games (boards, character sheets, worksheets, etc.). It is worth mentioning two essential elements here. Firstly, each game has the standardized role-playing scenario consisting of the following elements: short description of the game, the aim of the game, the description of the target group, theoretical assumptions, conditions for performing the game, indispensable materials which are necessary to play the game, the duration of the game, methods and forms of work, detailed game scenario, possible game modifications, practical tips for the trainer, game attachments, which significantly facilitates “navigating the game” by the person running classes with the application of DSGM. Secondly, 18 developed games were sensibly divided into three groups:

- the first group – ‘vision’ is a set of 6 games answering the question of which career I would like to create?

- the second group – ‘enforcement’ is a set of 6 games answering the question of how I would like to achieve it?
- the third group – ‘implementation’ is a set of 6 games answering the question of what is the thing which motivates me to act?

Project experts also prepared the teaching handbook dedicated to the theoretical assumptions of the DSGM games and the specificity of work with an adult learner, a student with special educational needs and a resistant student. The teaching handbook is a tool for people instructing others how to perform classes with the use of DSGM. The teaching guide was also prepared. It contains the detailed description of how to work during the training sessions with the use of DSGM and how to accurately choose the given games for particular groups of participants. It is the material designed for teachers, coaches and trainers who will be working during their classes with the use of DSGM on everyday basis. Both books as well as the set of 18 games (in form of an attachment to the handbook) were published in three volumes and in an online version on the Internet where they can be found at the project's website and accessed from the online libraries resources.

During the second stage of the project, all designed diagnostic tools and diagnostic and simulation games were tested in form of pilot project in four voivodeships. The tests were performed on the tested group of 240 adult learners, mainly from post-secondary schools. Each training session ended with the comprehensive evaluation during which all remarks concerning the developed tools, the course of the training sessions, the method itself and the presented games were collected. On the basis of the pilot experiment, the panel of experts and the trainers running the training sessions modified and slightly corrected the developed tools and games, making use of the remarks given by trainers and the participants of the pilot training sessions.

During the last stage of the project implementation, a series of trainings were organized which consisted in presenting DSGM and the developed games. In total, 68 trainings with the participation of almost 1000 people (about 15 participants in each training group) were organized all over the country. The recipients of the trainings were the employees of the Centre for Education Development, the employees of the Educational Research Institute and the people who should work with the use of DSGM in the future, that is these were the employees of the teacher training institutions, employees of the adult education institutions, employees of psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, post-secondary school teachers and career counsellors employed at secondary schools, the teachers of basics of entre-

preneurship and vocational subjects as well as school psychologists. Each training lasted 8 hours. During the trainings, the participants had an opportunity to play some of the games and immediately assess the new tool. Each participant received a package of three published handbooks with all the games attached.

At the end of the project, 8 conferences disseminating the knowledge were organized and held all over Poland. The conferences were organized in such places as: Bydgoszcz, Poznań, Kielce, Lublin, Chorzów, Opole, Gdańsk and Działdowo. About 200 participants took part in each of the conferences. During each of the conferences the results of project were presented, that is the developed games and the assumptions of DSGM were presented. There were also three expert lectures and the discussion panel during each of the conferences. The subject matter of the lectures concerned the subjects including the selected aspects of the role of competences in vocational career planning by adults, the possibilities and limitations of the use of diagnostic and simulation games in adult education, the characteristics of vocational counselling and constructing vocational career for people over the age of 18, the selected competences of the vocational counsellor, including coping with the resistance of the participants of the training sessions, legal aspects concerning vocational counselling for people over the age of 18, the specificity of educating adults and the significance of stimulating an enterprising attitude while planning the professional career.

In conclusion, the key question needs to be answered. Is the developed during the project Diagnostic and Simulation Games Method (DSGM) an innovation in terms of educating adult learners? Definitely yes since it contains a number of elements supporting its innovative character and these are: the possibility to diagnose with the immediate result, simulation in the arranged reality, participants interaction, accessibility, intuitiveness, flexibility and functionality. In the 21st century, learning does not stop when one graduates from university but it is a lifelong process and the teacher does not need to accompany the learner all the time. The ability to acquire knowledge by one's own effort is invaluable and we can gain such a skill owing to activating methods where DSGM can be included (Ziółkowski, 2014, p. 351). Undoubtedly, the great asset of the developed method is its simplicity and the possibility of its practical use in the unlimited space and in case of any social group. Playing games neither requires any specialist knowledge nor any sophisticated props or tools. Games can be also modified at one's own discretion and in accordance with the current needs and their authors included the examples of such modifications in the role-playing scenarios.

Assuming that the games developers intended to provide the “players” with many impressions, thoughts and feedback information indispensable while consciously constructing the vocational career, it can be stated that they definitely succeeded.

I would like to recommend the online website of the project to all people interested in practical application of diagnostic and simulation games method. Here, one can get access to all 18 game scenarios and the attachments. The website address is: www.metodagier.pl

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