

Borbély-Pecze T. : Uncertainty, career decision factors

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UNCERTAINTY, CAREER DECISION FACTORS AND THE WELL-BEING OF CAREER PRACTITIONERS IN HUNGARY

[BIZONYTALANSÁG, PÁLYADÖNTÉSI FAKTOROK MÉRÉSE ÉS A MAGYARORSZÁGI PÁLYATANÁCSADÓK JÓLLÉTE]

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Abstract. The coronavirus, the Ukrainian-Russian war, the Brexit, the green transition and the rise of inflation are all macro processes that individuals and families cannot influence on their own, but these macro trends do influence their life course. This review looks at the practice of career guidance in Hungary. It shows the methods used to increase the career resilience of individuals and small communities, as well as the individual psychological and pedagogical outcomes of career guidance, the literature on career guidance and how it has been researched in Hungary over the past decade.

Keywords: individual psychological and pedagogical outcomes of career counselling, literature review, Hungary

Rationale

Global trends local resonances

Fukuyama (1992) declared the end of history, just a year after the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). The article version was published in 1989. He argued that history is an evolutionary process so after the downfall of the USSR only Western liberal democracy as a model will remain. In his peace theory he debated that mature democracies rarely or never go to war with one another. The Euro-Atlantic integration has suffered unprecedented damage with the Brexit. The United Kingdom left the European Union on 31 January 2020. This is the first precedent since the "EU" integration has started in 1957 by establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom). This linear progression approach was heavily criticized by many. As Mark Twain said: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme." Since the collapse of the USSR, during the last 30 years a number of significant events have taken place that disproves the linearity of history. These megatrends have been shaping and reshaping the global landscape as well as local realities. Just name a few out of these; Climate Change, the rise of China as the second superpower, "9-11" 2001 terrorist attack in the USA, in 2009 Lisbon Treaty entered into force and reformed many aspects of the EU, finally the "24th of February" (2022) event are also have been influencing our life at local levels. Even

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globalisation has no linear trend line as it stood 15.1 percent of the Global GDP in 2015, right before the COVID-19 pandemic and was 19.7 percent before the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (Chandy et al., 2016). More recently the global shortage of shipping containers, primarily caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, has led to drastic inflation in shipping and container prices and increased delay times for companies.¹ This had direct implications on regional and national labour markets. Not only geopolitics and environment but human technology has been changing our livelihood. A global Internet network contains billions of personal data, nowadays referred as the “Big Data” revolution. Since the late 1980’s VUCA as an acronym has become a key phrase for strategic management as it stands for uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of general conditions and situations.

Impact on Careers

Super-complex career information

The traditional description of occupations is now being challenged by super-complexity (Barnett, 2000) – where even our frames of understanding are unstable – and a rapidly changing labour market (Borbély-Pecze, 2020). The challenge of shifting from a static matching approach to a more dynamic match has led to many new taxonomies and approaches. Career information provision for a well-informed career decision making has become a challenge for most career support development agencies as well as a soft spot for career practitioners. Citizens/users as well as professionals have been overloaded with career information but information may come through echo chambers or impartiality is not certified.

Multiple career transitions

Career transition is one of the most recurring concepts in the literature on modern labour markets. It relates to the changing nature of work and the new shape of the labour market. The Bureau of Labour Statistics counted 12 job/career changes during the lifespan of the average USA worker in 2017 (BLS, 2017). EU figures have been catching up. In the United Kingdom an average worker experiences six different job roles throughout their working life. Career paths are becoming more fluid. The traditional three-stage model of education, employment and retirement is dead and now we live in a multi-stage model with several transitions. (OECD, 2020).

Hungary

The definition of career decision making went through a fundamental change during the last three decades in Hungary. During the years of Communism career was more

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about fitness for work and occupations and did not based on individual needs (Borbély-Pecze et al., 2022). As a contradiction with this in the 1990's career had a negative connotation, as somebody is "careerist, pusher or trouble-maker". By the 2020's this perception had been changed again and the term is now much closer to the original meaning. Still, it is often debated that everybody has a career or career means something extraordinary (such as be an elite athlete or be a scientist, politician, company director etc.) Even those in the Hungarian literature of career guidance were reached by modern career theories. For example the most widely used Hungarian definition puts the emphasis on the individual decision and the role of meaningful working life as "the individual in the existing situation chooses an occupation independently, according to the opportunities available to them, activity which enables him/her to create value for society and/or for himself or for him/herself" (Szilágyi, 2000). Still in 2019 in a large sample career education survey (n=9264) most of the 8 grade students (65%) identified their parents as proper career decision makers and information providers (Kenderfi, 2019).

Career decisions and uncertainty

Career decision making uncertainty is a well-documented field of research in Hungary. In this short overview a few recently published research papers are covered (Kiss, 2009; Lukács, 2012a; Török, 2017; Tudlik, 2021; Oltenau, 2022). We may not able to identify the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic or the Ukraine-Russian War as direct reasons for higher level of career uncertainty even not with the most recent research of Oltenau (2022) and Tudlik (2021). More-more the end of the traditional three-stage model of career is present in these researches. The extension of individual life stages (e.g. exploration may not stop at age 25 as Super (1980) originally pointed it out. Secondly modern career is full of temporary jobs which may hinder the fulfilment of other life roles also suggested by Super. The Poorly Integrated New Entrants (PINEs) issue (Bell et al., 2012) can be observed in Hungary as well. The following quotations as a literature review are coming from the authors.

In higher education and secondary education

Kiss (2009) based on two samples from the Hungarian higher education further developed the original self-efficacy model (Bandura, 1993). He used the 523 paper-based test results and addition 1870 online answers. The construct of life competence and general self-efficacy by several authors previously examined by several authors, in that it examines in a system the perceived effectiveness of a person in relation to different life management tasks of the person's experience of life's tasks. It captures a pattern between

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the skills that are critical for life skills, and the related experience of self-efficacy (Kiss, 2009).

The aim of Lukács (2012a) studies was to reveal the cognitive and emotional factors of career indecision, as well as to define types considering the characteristics of career indecision among samples of high school and university students.

683 secondary school students took part in the first study. 219 female university students answered the inventories in the second study. Based on her research, Lukács (2012b) identified the following categories:

- The path seeker type can be characterized by a high level of identity, balanced time orientation, high school motivation, good results at school and high self-esteem.
- The members of the ready to decide group have better results in terms of identity, time orientation and self-esteem than the choice anxious and the chronic indecisive, at the same time they fall behind in their achievement and school motivation compared to the path seeker group, the reason for which is yet to be found out by further studies.
- The type of the choice anxious constitutes a relatively small proportion of the entire high school student sample. The individuals belonging to the group score low on the commitment, the exploration and the ruminative exploration scales, as well as on both possible outcomes of identity crisis (identity synthesis and identity confusion).
- The members of the chronic indecisive type constitute more than one quarter of the sample (N=190, 29.73%). The individuals are characterized by a low level of commitment and high ruminative exploration.

In secondary education

Török (2017) used Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale based on the sample of special education secondary school students in Hungary. The research sample comprises students of typical development and secondary school students with a sound mind who qualify as students of special educational needs based on the opinion of the expert and Rehabilitation Committee. The author found a moderate degree of positive significant correlation between career decision self-efficacy and self-esteem on both samples.

A recently published PhD thesis Oltenau (2022) used the adaptation of the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire, CDDQ (see: Gati, et al., 1996) alongside with Career Factors Inventory, CFI (Chartrand et al., 1990) The research compares the results of the examination of questionnaires filled out by 544 grammar school and secondary school students who study in institutions of public education. 507 students took part in the questionnaire-based research, while 37 students participated in the pilot training that was designed to promote career decision-making.



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The sample serving as the basis of the questionnaire analysis includes 507 high school and secondary school students, who are between 15 and 19 years-old. The gender rate in the sample is: 56.8% female (n=292), 42.4% male (n=215). The results of secondary school students show that both questionnaires suggest moderate level career decision-making difficulties. Among these results, the following factors have a considerable impact: general indecisiveness, general uncertainty, harmful misconceptions and the need for more information about careers. 16-year-olds struggle with serious career decision-making difficulties on the wide scale of examined variables that have been based on the research results of questionnaires. The need for concrete forms of career decision-making support appears in the age groups of 17- and 18-year-olds. The age group of 17-year-olds is faced with the pressure of the need for the choice in career decision-making.

Tudlik (2021) original field research was taken in a Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (North-East part of Hungary). She covered 490 grammar school students in 2020. Her main research question was to map the relation between career decision making uncertainty and the available career services. Her key findings were:

- at grade ten (age 16) is the strongest need for the development of self-awareness,
- students usually gain 3-4 types of career education activities, open career school days are the most popular,
- there was no correlation between the number of career services taken and level of career decision making uncertainty,
- however individual absorption the level of career information is linked with the level of self-awareness and negative career anxiety therefore this can be used as an indicator.

Coping with stress and career practitioners

It is almost impossible addressing uncertainty, stress management in the career services as well as describing the well-being of individual counsellor and not to mention the pandemic. Based on a recent research (Tajtiné et al., 2020) it is clear that the Hungarian guidance professionals lost many of their client during the lockdown period and were pushed by the circumstances "to be creative" and resolve their own client management. DIY (Do-It-Yourself) was a well know buzzword during the lockdown period. The quarantine of institutions, the rapid depopulation of schools, universities, chambers, and most workplaces due to the coronavirus has also put the Hungarian career guidance and counselling profession in an extraordinary situation. Although the country has several strategies adopted and under implementation in public services and human services (education, training, employment), but some of the career counsellors have been left alone during the COVID-19 closures.

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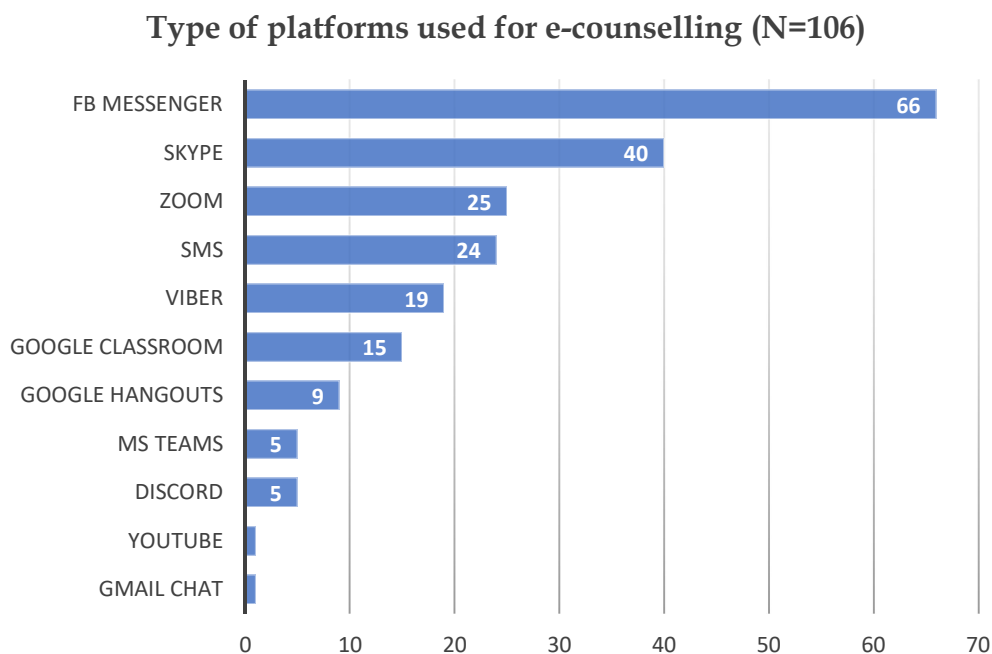
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1. Figure: Platforms used for online advice and counselling [Online tanácsadásra és konzultációra használt platformok]



Source: Tajtiné Lesó, 2020

The lack of data protection was mentioned as a problem by many when using the platforms (mixing up personal and professional identities of the counsellors), which is an important element because counsellors have to comply not only with the GDPR but also with their own institutional data privacy policies. Respondents were unanimous in their lack of a centrally operated and continuously updated career information platform that would cover all types of training.

Similarly, to public education, vocational training and the employment services, career guidance and counselling are essentially based on personal presence although they have been digitally prepared for decades. Our main findings were in line with the key outcomes of the international reports, as a Russian guidance researcher explained; 'All attempts to do what they did before, only remotely, look home-grown and artisanal.' (Cedefop, European Commission, ETF, ICCDPP, ILO, OECD, UNESCO, 2020 p. 39.)

Conclusions

The contemporary Hungarian literature review suggests that the relation between self-esteem and self-efficacy is important. Modern career development tools and techniques

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are available in Hungary, and even more importantly as Hungarian is a small language, are available in Hungarian.

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Absztrakt. A koronavírus, az ukrán-orosz háború, a Brexit, a zöld átállás és az infláció elszállása, mind olyan makro-folyamatok, amelyekre az egyén és a család önmagukban nem képesek hatást gyakorolni, ezek a folyamatok azonban hatást gyakorolnak életpályájukra. Ez a cikk a magyarországi pályatanácsadás gyakorlatát tekinti át bemutatva, hogy milyen módszerekkel erősíthető az egyének, kisközösségek karrier ellenálló-képessége és ezeket milyen módszerekkel kutatták Magyarországon az elmúlt évtizedben.

APPENDIX

ⁱ <https://www.ship-technology.com/analysis/global-shipping-container-shortage-the-story-so-far/>