

# Primary and Vocational School Pupils on their Educational and Vocational Futures

The economic, social and cultural transformation, which underpins the shaping of a different paradigm of career and success, focused essentially around its subjective dimension, indicated great winners and losers in terms of professional development. Their choices and actions become a warning or a model to emulate for young people when constructing their professional image, who build their educational and professional future in a changeable socio-economic reality that is also difficult to grasp, and which constitutes the context in which plans are constructed.

Planning educational paths and making educational and professional choices, which is a task every young person faces, is an extremely important issue, especially due to the fact that in the near future they will become active participants and creators of the situation on the labour market, also marking it with their expectations. Moreover, in today's reality, constructing one's professional life is not a free choice; it becomes a necessity, and issues related to the labour market and participation in it are no longer merely a problem for adults, trade unions, economists and politicians, but are increasingly becoming an aspect of life for the younger generation. What pupils direct their aspirations towards at primary school and in subsequent levels of education will, what strategy for constructing the future they will lean towards in their career endeavours (including those regarding the perception of work and professional success), may be a determinant of their sense of professional satisfaction and the sense of achieving professional success or lack thereof.

In the present publication, the researcher's attention focuses on two groups of respondents: primary school pupils (facing the choice of their next level of education) and secondary school students. The latter are moving from the period of youthful dependence to adult independence, through a double transition, i.e. on the one hand, within the biological, psychological and social dimension, and on the other hand, the educational and professional one. They have already made their first educational and professional choices and are studying in vocational schools and technical secondary schools. The empirical verification in this research is focused on discovering plans and educational-vocational aspirations and their determinants, and also includes the strategies that young people adopt when constructing their future characterised by individualized and subjective perception of work and professional success, as well as ways fostering vs. preventing its achievement. An important part of the study is the opinions and expectations concerning the process of school vocational guidance, whose aim, according to the author, in addition to creating space for learning about oneself and future careers, and the world of work (including educational paths prior to entering the labour market), is to undertake activities conducive to optimizing employment or/and achieving what is broadly understood as professional success in terms of individualized potential. The goals in designing the present research were primarily related to the following: describing the characteristics of aspirations and plans, as well as educational and professional choices made by primary and secondary school

pupils; these pupils' opinions on the category "success" (including professional success), together with their opinions on conditions and self-assessment in terms of the possibility of achieving it; the associations young people have with educational paths fostering vs. preventing the achievement of professional success (technical schools, vocational schools vs. general secondary schools) and prestigious vs. non-prestigious professions; pupils' opinions elicited through participant observation on the career guidance process and its desired form.

Considerations on educational and occupational choices of young people interested and not interested in education in the profession and as "professionals" and their transition to the labour market are described in the broad context of the vocational education system and the labour market, in relation to which primary and secondary school pupils construct their past and make their educational and occupational choices. Planning and further realisation of vocational plans is not, in fact, only the result of merely subjective intentions and desires, but also a combination of many factors, such as economic conditions, social, educational or cultural factors and the capacity to use them, respond to them or modify them. Another important element of the study was its attempt to present the image of contemporary youth, which was achieved by describing 'Generation Z', the object of this research, presented in the context of interdisciplinary discourse oscillating around the issues of personal development and professional career in the context of the transition from primary to secondary school and later to the labour market.

*Translated by Aleksandra Oszmiańska-Pagett*