

Summary

Youth in times of uncertainty: Life plans of secondary school students

The book explores the issues of life plans among post-primary school young people functioning in conditions of modern uncertainty. The starting point for these reflections is the observation of dynamic social, cultural, technological, and economic transformations affecting the way young people perceive their own future, make decisions, and determine the direction of their lives. Uncertainty becomes a key feature of growing up, within which young people simultaneously shape their identity, define values, and make decisions regarding their education, work, relationships, and future lives.

The subject of the analyses was young people's life plans, approached from a multi-dimensional perspective, encompassing such aspects as self-assessment, life satisfaction, value systems, life goals, strategies for shaping the future, temporal perspective, life orientations, personal plans, self-efficacy, and an assessment of one's own situation and the surrounding reality. This approach allows life planning to be viewed not as a one-off process of setting goals but as a dynamic process linked to self-discovery, decision-making and shaping one's own future.

Research findings indicate that today's young people remain actively engaged in thinking about the future, despite experiencing uncertainty. Young people attempt to plan their own lives, but their plans are often flexible, conditional and open to change. They combine a pragmatic assessment of their actual possibilities with aspirations for self-fulfilment and personal development. Autonomy, freedom, independence and development occupy a significant place in their value system, whilst moral values and relationships with others are also important.

The way in which the future is constructed remains varied and is linked to the educational context, amongst other things. Different groups of young people differ in terms of the scope of their planning, the hierarchy of their goals and their sense of agency; however, irrespective of these differences, the future constitutes an important area of reflection for the respondents. Young people seek to reconcile their current opportunities with their long-term aspirations, and planning becomes a way of coping with a reality that cannot be fully predicted.

A key finding emerging from the analyses concerns the need to support young people in developing the competencies required to cope in conditions of change and uncertainty. A sense of agency, self-awareness, the ability to make reflective decisions, critical thinking, creativity, social skills and a willingness to adapt one's own plans are of particular

importance. Planning for the future should not, however, be understood as the need to create a single, immutable life scenario, but rather as a process of setting a direction, taking action, learning from experience and responding to changing circumstances.

In this context, the role of adults—parents, teachers and educators—takes on particular significance. Their task should not be to impose ready-made future scenarios on young people, but instead to create a space for them to discover themselves, set goals, make decisions and reflect on the consequences of those decisions. Support should strengthen young people's agency and autonomy, while simultaneously providing them with a sense of security and the opportunity to draw on the experience of adults.

This book forms part of pedagogical reflections on young people growing up in a world of dynamic change. Its aim is not to present a definitive portrait of today's youth, but to capture the ways in which young people, at a particular stage in their lives, seek to chart a course for their own future. The findings presented therefore contribute to a wider discussion on the conditions of growing up, identity formation and life planning in a reality where change and uncertainty have become permanent features.

Ultimately, the book portrays life planning as a dynamic process, requiring both an awareness of one's own capabilities and values, and a readiness to respond to a changing reality. In a world where the future cannot be fully predicted, what matters most is not so much having a ready-made plan as the ability to reflectively set a course, make decisions, adjust one's aims and maintain a sense of control over one's own life. Supporting young people in developing these skills represents one of the key challenges facing contemporary pedagogy.