



THE ROLE OF AGE AND GENDER IN CULTURAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS IN THEIR CURRENT WORKPLACE

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Abstract. The employee's professional development is now recognized as an important factor in the self-realization of a human being and as a market success of an employing organization. This fact is noticed today not only by scientists but also by employees and employers.

Aim of the research: The study aimed to identify what, in the opinion of employees of cultural institutions, are the conditions of professional development in the current workplace and to diagnose the role of age and gender in shaping their perception by the respondents.

Materials and methods: The study was conducted using the questionnaire technique on 106 employees of public cultural institutions in the Lubelskie and Mazowieckie voivodships.

Results: The research shows that age differentiates the opinions of the respondents only in relation to some conditions of professional development, in such a way that the older the respondents were, the less importance they attached to the lack of scruples in achieving benefits, favouring, protection, connection, happiness, chance and a good social climate at work. Gender only affects the perception of the current position as professional achievement and the importance of the distinctions obtained. Cultural institutions are perceived by employees as providing good career opportunities for ambitious, reliable persons who want to develop professionally, but who are not disturbed by low chances of earning high earnings and taking up a managerial position. However, the obtained answers may suggest the existence of such negative phenomena as nepotism, cronyism, or clientelism in Polish public cultural institutions.

ROLA WIEKU I PŁCI W POSTRZEGANIU WARUNKÓW ROZWOJU ZAWODOWEGO PRZEZ PRACOWNIKÓW INSTYTUCJI KULTURY W ICH OBECNYM MIEJSCU PRACY

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój zawodowy, pracownik, instytucja kultury, praca, wiek, płeć

Streszczenie. Rozwój zawodowy pracownika jest obecnie uznawany za istotny czynnik samorealizacji jednostki ludzkiej oraz rynkowego sukcesu zatrudniającej ją organizacji. Fakt ten dostrzegają dzisiaj nie tylko naukowcy, ale również pracownicy i pracodawcy. Celem pracy było rozpoznanie, jakie w opiniach pracowników instytucji kultury są warunki rozwoju zawodowego w obecnym miejscu pracy oraz zdiagnozowanie roli wieku i płci w kształtowaniu ich postrzegania przez badane osoby. Badanie zostało przeprowadzone techniką ankiety za pomocą autorskiego kwestionariusza na 106 pracownikach publicznych instytucji kultury województw lubelskiego i mazowieckiego. Z przeprowadzonych badań wynika, że wiek różnicuje opinie badanych jedynie w stosunku do niektórych warunków rozwoju zawodowego, w ten sposób, że im starsze były badane osoby, tym mniejszą wagę przywiązywały do braku skrupułów w osiąganiu korzyści, faworyzowania, protekcji, posiadania koneksji, szczęścia, przypadku oraz dobrego klimatu społecznego w pracy. Natomiast płeć ma wpływ jedynie na postrzeganie zajmowanego obecnie stanowiska jako osiągnięcia zawodowego oraz wagę znaczenia uzyskiwanych wyróżnień. Instytucje kultury postrzegane są przez pracowników jako stwarzające dobre możliwości rozwoju zawodowego dla osób ambitnych, rzetelnych, pragnących rozwijać się zawodowo, którym jednak nie przeszkadzają małe szanse na uzyskanie wysokich zarobków oraz objęcie stanowiska kierowniczego. Uzyskane odpowiedzi mogą jednak sugerować istnienie w publicznych instytucjach kultury takich negatywnych zjawisk, jak nepotyzm, kronizm czy klientelizm.

Introduction

Professional development is now seen as an intrinsic aspect of human work. A post-modern economy undergoing constant, often surprising transformations forces all its participants to be flexible in adapting to new conditions and to be constantly ready for unexpected change. On the one hand, therefore, in order to survive in this “fluid reality”, organisations are forced to undergo constant transformations, and therefore need staff capable of rapid learning, creativity, and efficient mastering of new working methods and tools. On the other hand, readiness for constant development is today, in a way, a necessary condition not only for strengthening the position of an employee within a specific organisation but also for obtaining and maintaining the scarce good, i.e. work,

in the conditions of a competitive and metamorphic market. One may wonder, following Zygmunt Bauman (e.g. 2004), whether this unlimited “development at all cost” imposed on all players has been properly defined; it is an undeniable feature of contemporary reality, though. Even the institutions the most relevant objectives of which are not directly related to profit generation have not been excluded from it. Also, the entities entrusted with the role of institutional organisation of cultural life have to cope with market competition, constantly redefined by the emergence of new offers and opportunities. This means that for them, too, market flexibility, the ability to transform, and therefore, among other things, having employees with similar characteristics, is crucial for effective functioning.

It seems important, therefore, to identify what – in the opinions of employees of cultural institutions – the conditions for professional development in the current workplace are, and to diagnose the role of age and gender in shaping their perception by the people surveyed. This will constitute the aim of the present study.

Professional development

In order to tackle the task outlined in this way, it is necessary to first clarify some of the most relevant concepts such as work, occupation and especially professional development.

Work in the general sense is defined in the Dictionary of Polish Language as “a conscious, purposeful human activity aiming at the production of a specific material or cultural goods, being the basis and condition for the existence and development of society” (SJP, vol. 2, p. 904). Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1965), Jan Szczepański (1961), Tadeusz Pszczołowski (1966), Czesław Bartnik (1977), Czesław Strzeszewski (1978, 2003), Józef Tischner (1991), Józef Majka (1980), Ryszard Stachowski (1984) or Tadeusz Nowacki (2004) have proposed definitions of work which are similar in spirit, and also seen in a broader perspective.

In a narrower sense, occupational (economic) work can be defined as “a process of complex physical and mental human activity, the purpose of which is to transform natural resources into goods satisfying human needs; one of the factors of production (next to land and capital [...])” (PWN Encyclopaedia, vol. 3, p. 41).

Kazimierz Czarnecki (2016, p. 92) defines professional human labour as a set of learned activities, constantly repeated, constituting the basis for supporting oneself and one’s family and producing a socially useful product.

Ryszard Bera, on the other hand, understands professional work as “a conscious, planned, well-organised human activity leading to socially valuable

(material or spiritual) results” (Bera, 2008, p. 16), requiring competence supported by qualifications, professional attitudes, work motivation, as well as a high level of responsibility and professional culture.

Such an approach to professional work makes it possible to consider it as an internally coherent system of activities, directed towards the production of specific goods, based on specific knowledge, performed systematically and permanently, surrounded by external conditions, such as the organisational framework, social environment, material benefits, prestige, job security or opportunities for professional advancement, and refers directly to the concept of profession understood as a system of activities separated in the work process, “requiring from an employee the qualifications acquired in the school or non-school system, causing the development of professional personality and the need for constant further education and improvement” (Nowacki, 2004, p. 81). For the sake of order, however, it should be added that from the position of various scientific fields (as well as within them), this concept is defined very differently (e.g. Tomaszewski, 1962; Wiatrowski, 2005; Olechnicki, Załęcki 2000).

Yet, Tadeusz Nowacki’s definition seems sufficient for the purposes of this article and useful insofar as it assumes, *a priori*, the existence of the phenomenon of professional development. This in turn, like the previously discussed categories, is defined by many authors in many different ways and in the light of at least partly “competing” theories.

However, based on the analysis of the literature, it can be assumed that from a pedagogical point of view, it is a socially desirable process, taking place under specific conditions, of a relational and growth, quantitative and qualitative nature, related to the professional activity of an individual, covering his/her whole life, divided into specific stages taking place before, during and after the professional activity. It is a process consisting in the conscious construction and realisation by the individual of his/her professional roles by improving himself/herself both in the labour dimension and in general, thus acquiring new skills, competencies and knowledge, enabling him/her to solve more and more complex tasks aimed at a socially useful and individually valuable transformation of the environment.

Thus, the category of professional development so understood consists of not only the process of professional development but also the conditions of professional development and the results of professional development (Czarnecki, Kraus, 2008, p. 15). The conditions of professional development can be generally divided, following Maria Przetacznikowa (1967, p. 39) into genetic and

ecological conditions of development – factors, and the individual's own activity and upbringing – determinants, or following Kazimierz M. Czarnecki (2007, p. 39) into object-oriented conditions (factors and determinants); subject-oriented conditions; and relational (subject-object) conditions.

For the purposes of this article, the latter typology will be adopted. Particularly noteworthy is the relational character of the process in question. This is because its recognition emphasises the subjectivity of the individual in its creation and accentuates the causal power of one's own activity in contact with the surrounding world as the main driving force behind professional and personal development, as well as the responsible freedom to choose those conditions which the individual considers subjectively most important (see Czarnecki, Kraus, 2008; Włodarski, Hankała, 2004; Morawski, 2009). Moreover, it creates the possibility of considering professional development as a field of partnership co-responsibility between the employee and the employing organisation, which can even be understood as a kind of mutually beneficial “contract”, according to which the employee, in the name of the success of the organisation trying to “survive” in the changing, and therefore constantly evolving, environment, undertakes to continually improve his or her qualifications, while the organisation, seeing the benefits of having an employee who is able to quickly acquire new skills, on the one hand, and familiar with its structures, on the other, “promises” to support him or her in this effort. Such views seem to be close to a growing number of not only theorists and researchers, but also employees and, most importantly, employers (Król, 2006; Juchnowicz, 2010; Kopertyńska, 2009; Sienkiewicz, 2010).

Among the conditions of professional development in question, we can distinguish after K. Czarnecki (2007, p. 39): historical, political, economic, technical, pedagogical, cultural and social conditions. In turn, he divides subjective conditions into biological conditions (genetic features of the organism, basic metabolism, type of nervous system, type of temperament, anthropological and constitutional type, mental and physical health, gender and age) and psychological conditions (experience, activity in a specific field; interests and passions, abilities and talents, plans and aspirations, motivation, knowledge, features of character, temperament and personality, level of individual and social awareness; worldview and beliefs, cherished values).

Given the subject matter of the article, gender and age are worth discussing as well. Gender undoubtedly has a very significant impact on the employment situation. Despite intensive equality policies supported by numerous legal

provisions of the European Union (e.g. Article 3 of the U.E. Treaty; Article 23 of the U.E. Charter of Fundamental Rights; Article 8 of the U.E. Treaty; Article 2, para. 4 of Council Directive 76/207/EEC, para. 16; Resolution of the European Parliament of 19 January 2017 on the European Pillar of Social Rights), as well as the Member States, including Poland (see, e.g., Art. 33 of the Constitution of the R.P.; Art. 8. 1. of the U.P. of 3 December 2010; Art. 112 of the Labour Code), the employment situation is still more favourable for men and manifests itself in unequal access to employment in general, limited opportunities for employment in specific professions or industries, and accumulation of women's professional activity in other, as a rule, less well paid and of lower social prestige, with worse employment conditions e.g. wages, limited opportunities for professional development, e.g. access to training or opportunities for promotion, especially to high managerial positions. In the literature on the subject, the phenomena constituting the state of professional inequality are referred to as *sticky stairs*, *velvet ghettos*, *glass ceilings*, *glass walls*, *glass escalators (lifts)* or *glass cliffs*. Their existence in Polish reality is confirmed by numerous authors (Titkow, 2003; Oczki, 2015; Raczkowska, 2014; Załucka, 2010; Bombiak, 2016; Domagała, 2018).

On the other hand, age, due to the temporal, directional and incremental nature of professional development, is an *a priori* factor, so to speak. Therefore, it can be expected that at least slightly different sets of opportunities, needs, expectations, achievements, resources, and perspectives, will characterise a young employee, at the early stages of their professional career, than an experienced professional at the pre-retirement age, leaving the labour market.

Methodological assumptions of own research, scope, organisation of research, characteristics of the studied group

Based on the literature on the subject and findings to date, the following research problems were formulated:

How are the conditions for professional development perceived by the surveyed employees of cultural institutions?

Do the socio-demographic variables, age and gender, significantly differentiate the perception of professional development conditions by the surveyed employees of cultural institutions?

The research was conducted using the survey method technique (paper questionnaire) in the second half of 2021 and included 106 employees of various types

of cultural institutions of the Lubelskie and Mazowieckie provinces. An author's survey questionnaire was used, consisting of forty-one questions concerning the evaluation of professional development to date, professional achievements to date, factors determining professional development and perspectives for professional development in the current workplace. Purposeful random sampling was carried out in such a way that institutions the nature of activity of which falls within the accepted definition of a cultural institution were selected, while their specific employees (respondents) were randomly selected.

The sample included people employed in such institutions as community centres, libraries, theatres and arts centres. Women predominated among the respondents (64.2%). Almost a third (29.2%) of those surveyed were aged 36–45, as were those aged 26–35 (27.4%). One in five (20.7%) respondents was over 50 years old, while one in ten (10.4%) was aged between 36 and 45. A similar proportion (12.3%) of respondents were the youngest workers between the ages of 18 and 26. A quarter (24.5%) of those surveyed had more than 20 years of work experience. One in five respondents had worked between 6 and 10 years, with a similar proportion of respondents with work experience of 11 to 15 years (20.7%), and those with the shortest work experience, up to 5 years (20.7%). Those working between 16 and 20 years were the least represented (12.3% of the sample). Those with at least a master's degree (65%) significantly outnumbered those with a doctor's degree (3.7%). Almost one in four (22.7%) respondents had at most a secondary education. Those with a bachelor's or an engineer's degree accounted for 12.3% of the group surveyed. Half (50%) of the respondents were married, 22.6% were in a civil partnership and 27.4% were single. The study group comprised the vast majority (61.3%) of white-collar workers, with a quarter (26.4%) of white-collar workers doing manual job, too. One in eight (12.3%) respondents was employed as manual workers. Those declaring their job position as a contractor prevailed significantly (78.3%). |In contrast, one in five (21.7%) respondents was a supervisor. The majority (86.8%) of the respondents lived in a city and only 13.2% lived in a rural area.

Results of own research

In order to answer the research problem posed, the prevalence of individual professional development factors was first measured in the surveyed group.

The majority (61.3%) of the surveyed employees of cultural institutions declared that they were rather satisfied with their professional development to date

at their current workplace. Almost one in five (17.9%) respondents was very satisfied, one in eight (12.3%) was dissatisfied, and almost one in twelve (8.5%) could not clearly define the level of satisfaction with their professional development to date at their current workplace. It is worth noting that not a single person surveyed declared that they were very dissatisfied with this aspect of their job.

When asked to what extent various factors determine professional development at their current workplace, the employees surveyed gave the following answers. The vast majority of respondents (68.9%) felt that professional development at their current workplace is determined by ambition and persistence of purpose and of these, as many as one in three (30%) considers the influence of this factor to be very high. One in five (19.8%) describes the influence of this factor as medium, 7.5% as low and only 3.8% as not very important.

Similarly, for almost half of the people surveyed (46.2%), initiative and operative action is an element that strongly influences professional development in the current working environment, and for 35.8% – very strongly. One in eight considered it to be a factor of average importance, and less than 1% considered it to have no impact on employee development.

The distribution of individual responses to the question on the importance of education and diplomas held was slightly different in the surveyed group. Almost one in three people asked about this (35.8%) described the impact of this factor as medium. However, 35.8% believe that education greatly influences career development in their current workplace. Almost one in eight (13.2%) respondents considered this element of their work situation to be of little importance. An identical proportion (13.2%) of respondents felt it had no impact and one in nine (11.3%) felt it had a very high impact.

Four out of ten (40.6%) of the cultural institution employees surveyed felt that their professional development at their current workplace was largely determined by their professional knowledge and skills. Only slightly less frequently (36.9%) was the answer given indicating that this factor was very important. One in six (16.0%) employees surveyed described the impact of this aspect as medium and only 6.6% considered it not important.

Intellectual ability and intelligence, were also found to be important factors for the people surveyed. As many as eight out of ten (82.0%) respondents described the impact of this dimension as at least significant, with half of this group (39.6% of all respondents) considering it very significant. Only 14% of respondents considered this aspect to be moderately important and only 1.9% considered its impact to be either minor or not at all important.

According to the majority (63.2%) of respondents, personal qualities such as being feisty and unscrupulous in fighting for one's own influence professional development to at least a high degree, with one-third (30.2%) of all respondents believing that they have a very high influence. One in eight (12.3%) employees surveyed believes that the influence of such qualities is small and only a small percentage (5.7%) consider it insignificant.

Having acquaintances and patronage is an element that has a very strong impact on development in the current workplace according to almost one in six (17.9%) of the cultural institution employees surveyed. Almost one in four (23.6%) considered this to be a factor of great importance. One-third (32.1%) of respondents are of the opinion that acquaintances and patronage influence development to a moderate degree. In contrast, one in eight (12.3%) saw no significant impact of these factors.

An identical percentage of respondents (12.3%) stated that neither luck nor mere coincidence determine a career in their workplace to the slightest degree. In contrast, as many as almost a third (30.4%) of respondents consider the role of chance and luck to be at least important, including almost one in eleven (9.4%) seeing it as very important. Furthermore, almost one in four respondents (28.3%) considers it to be of medium importance.

The majority of the respondents (59.1%) considered the social climate at their current workplace to be a factor influencing their professional development to at least a high degree. At the same time, 16.1% of respondents considered its impact to be very high. One in four respondents (25.5%) considered it to be a factor of medium importance and one in ten (9.4%) considered it to be of low importance. Only a small percentage (6.6%) of respondents consider the social climate in the workplace as an insignificant element of the work situation.

According to as many as one-third (34.0%) of the surveyed employees of cultural institutions, the attitude of superiors, which is conducive to professional development, is very important in the current workplace. Also one in three (33.0%) respondents attributed great importance to it. One in five respondents (18.9%) said that the attitudes of superiors moderately influence the professional development of employees. One in ten (9.4%) considered this influence to be low and 4.7% did not attach any importance to it.

The vast majority of those surveyed (69.8%) held the belief that, at the very least, good work organisation had a strong influence on career development opportunities at their institution, with one-third (34.0%) of all respondents describing its importance as very high. For one in five respondents (18.9%),

it is a moderately important factor, for 6.6% it is of little importance and for 4.7% it is completely negligible.

The surveyed group was also dominated by those (72.6%) for whom reliable work is at least very important for an employee's development opportunities, with as many as four out of ten (38.6%) respondents admitting that it is very important. One in six respondents (16.0%) described its impact on professional development as medium. In contrast, it was considered to be of little or no impact by 5.7% of respondents each, respectively.

Some respondents (7.6% of all respondents) gave single responses identifying other factors they considered to influence their career development opportunities at their current workplace, generally considering their influence to be very high (very high impact). The most frequently mentioned group of subjectively very important factors for respondents (4.6%) were those related to commitment, creativity and treating work as a passion. The second most common responses (2.8% of respondents) were those related to restrictions on development opportunities such as short career paths, blocking of promotion opportunities by longer-serving employees, and responsibilities limiting development (very high impact). One answer referred to the high impact of the instability of the law on the development opportunities of employees in the sector, another concerned the need to defend one's independence despite the compulsion to flatter and follow orders without thinking (very high impact), as well as the usefulness of the employee due to the employee's usefulness to the institution (very high impact).

Next, the surveyed employees of the cultural institutions were asked what they believe to be their career achievements so far and gave the following answers. More than half (52.8%) of the respondents strongly felt that working in line with their interests was one of their career achievements, and one in three (30.2%) rather thought so. In contrast, only 4.7% tended to disagree with such an opinion, and an even smaller percentage of 0.94% strongly distanced themselves from such a statement. However, one in nine respondents (11.3%) was unable to define their stance concerning this issue. For one in three respondents (31.1%), their professional achievement is definitely their official position. A similar, only slightly higher percentage (36.8%) of respondents rather think so. One in six (17.0%) could not express a clear belief. One in ten (10.4%) tended not to regard their service position as an achievement and 4.7% definitely did not regard it as such. A large majority of 85.9% of the employees surveyed at least to some extent agree that their professional achievement is the expertise they have acquired, with as many as half of them (42.5% of all respondents) strongly

believing so. One in eleven (9.4%) rather does not think so, 1.9% definitely does not think so and 2.8% cannot define their position in this respect.

An even higher percentage of respondents, 91.6%, agreed that their professional achievement to date is the professional skills they have acquired. With as many as 44.3% of respondents strongly confirming such a judgement, 4.7% of respondents are not sure what they think, 2.8% of them rather disagree with the others and less than one per cent (0.9%) strongly disagree. Also, nine out of ten (92.5%) of those asked to consider that what has enriched their development as employees is work experience. Four out of ten (40.6%) respondents strongly agree. A small percentage (3.8%) of respondents rather disagree with such a thesis, 0.9% strongly disagree and 3.8% cannot take a clear position. Similarly, the majority of cultural institution employees surveyed, although in this case, their percentage is much lower (59.9%), consider the authority of a professional to be their achievement, with one in four (25%) strongly believe so. However, as many as one in three (31.1%) is not sure whether this is the case, 6.6% is rather not and 2.8% definitely not sure.

For almost every other (46.3%) respondent, becoming a boss was definitely not one of their professional achievements, 17% of them rather not considered it as a professional achievement and 15% could not specify their opinion on the matter. In contrast, one in five (21.7%) respondents at least somewhat agreed with this question, with almost one in six (13.2%) strongly agreeing. Four out of ten (41.6%) respondents agreed to some extent that obtaining new qualifications confirmed by diplomas, and certificates are what they have achieved so far at work, with half of them, representing 20% of all respondents, strongly confirming this. However, one in four (24.5%) strongly disagreed. A similar proportion (26.4%) of those asked tended to disagree and 7.5% were unable to specify an opinion.

More than half of the respondents (52.9%) disagreed with the statement that acquiring the ability to speak a foreign language well was what made up their career achievements to date, with 28.4% strongly disagreeing. However, almost one in three (29.2%) at least to some extent confirmed such a statement, with almost one in eight (13.2%) respondents agreeing with such a statement with certainty. Slightly less than one in four respondents (22.6%) strongly confirmed that they had achieved recognition from their superiors through their work to date. However, almost one in four respondents (22.6%) were also unsure of their opinion. Four out of ten (40.6%) considered recognition from superiors

as kind of an achievement. Furthermore, only 7.6% of all respondents strongly disagreed with such a statement and 6.6% rather disagreed.

However, the recognition expressed by the supervisor is not accompanied by the subjective feeling of the respondents that their salary is part of their professional success. Only 4.8% strongly considered high earnings to be their professional achievement to date. One in six (16.0%) surveyed employees rather felt this way. The majority (58.5%) of respondents did not confirm such a thesis, with as many as one in three (31.1%) strongly disagreed. One in five (20.7%) respondents was unable to specify their stance. One-third (30.2%) of the employees asked agreed in principle that the accolades obtained for good work were theirs and represented a significant professional achievement, and one in nine (11.3%) strongly agreed with such a statement. However, almost one in five (21.7%) employees surveyed strongly disagreed and almost one in four (23.6%) tended to disagree. In contrast, one in eight (13.2%) did not have an opinion on the matter.

In contrast, the surveyed group was dominated by those (73.6% of respondents) recognising that, at least to some extent, part of their professional development is performing responsible work, with one in three (31.2%) respondents stating this emphatically. One in eight (12.3%) was not sure of their opinion, one in eleven (9.4%) tended not to confirm this, and 4.7% of respondents strongly denied it.

In addition, 12.2% of the respondents gave answers other than those provided in the questionnaire. As important professional achievements, 2.8% of the respondents considered awards obtained through factors other than their employers, including medals, recognition from users of the institution where they work and a subjective sense of self-fulfilment. Even more frequently, positive social aspects of the current workplace, such as the feeling of being part of a friendly, close-knit and motivating team, and the opportunity to expand contacts with the institution's social environment, including international contacts, were highlighted as definitely important achievements. Other statements related to a sense of job satisfaction and achieving one's goals even against one's superiors and despite the high level of difficulty of tasks, as well as staying in one's profession despite exceeding retirement age.

When asked how they assessed their career prospects in their current workplace, employees of cultural institutions gave the following answers.

More than half of them (57.6%) did not see the opportunity for themselves to be promoted to a higher position, with one in three (32.1%), definitely not seeing such an opportunity. One in four (24.5%) respondents could not express a precise opinion. Only one in eleven (9.4%) respondents rather saw such

an opportunity and one in twelve (8.5%) saw it very clearly. On the other hand, the vast majority (73.6%) of respondents felt that they had at least some opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in their current job. One in three (34.0%) respondents strongly confirmed this. One in ten (10.4%) tended not to see such an opportunity, and 3.8% of respondents did not see it at all. One in eight (12.2%) had no opinion on the matter.

When asked, one in four (25.5%) said that there were certainly opportunities for further training at their current workplace. Four out of ten (37.7%) rather confirmed such an opportunity. In contrast, one in six (16.0%) rather did not see such opportunities for themselves and one in ten (10.4%) felt that there were none at all. One in ten (10.4%) respondents was also unable to express a clear opinion. When asked about the chances of obtaining a high income, as many as four out of ten (40.6%) respondents strongly denied the existence of such a possibility. One in four (24.5%) tended not to see such a chance. As many as 21.7% of all respondents had no clear opinion on this. The possibility of a better salary was rather confirmed by only one in eleven (9.4%) respondents, and only 3.4% of all respondents definitely expected an increase in salary.

For the majority of respondents, working in their current place of employment, i.e. in a cultural institution, offers the chance to achieve professional stability. Almost half (48.1%) of them tended to agree with this opinion and one in six (17.0%) strongly agreed. Almost one in five (18.8%) were unable to state their opinion. One in eight (12.2%) tended not to regard their current job as offering an opportunity for professional stability and 3.8% of all respondents did not regard it as such at all. Only a very small percentage (9.5%) of those surveyed agreed that they had a chance to become valued professionals in their current job and only 3.8% definitely saw this as an opportunity. For as many as one in four (22.5%), this is not at all possible and for one in three (34.0%), rather not. Also one in three (34.0%) respondents did not have an opinion on this.

A large majority (63.2%) of the surveyed employees of cultural institutions agreed, at least to some extent, with the belief that their professional situation will deteriorate significantly. As many as almost one in three respondents believed this with certainty, and more than one in three (34.9%) rather thought so. Only one in ten (9.4%) strongly disagreed and one in thirteen (7.5%) tended to disagree. On the other hand, a slight majority of respondents expressed the belief that they are improving their professional skills at their current workplace, e.g. through training. Slightly more than one in four (27.4%) strongly confirmed such a statement, while one in three (33.0%) tended to agree. However, almost

a third of all respondents (30.2%) also strongly denied such a fact, while 2.8% of them tended not to confirm it and 6.6% were unable to state their opinion.

To answer the second research question: Do the socio-demographic variables age and gender significantly differentiate the perceptions of the conditions for professional development of the surveyed employees of cultural institutions, the level of occurrence of each factor was measured in specific age groups and among men and women, and the empirical data obtained were statistically analysed using the tests: Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests. As a result of these activities, the following was found.

As it turns out, women were significantly more confident ($M=4.00$) that their current position was their professional achievement than men ($M=3.42$) ($p=0.025$). In addition, men were significantly less confident ($M=2.74$) than women ($M=3.08$) in emphasising the importance of the good work awards obtained as important professional achievements ($p=0.024$).

Respondents over 45 years of age attached significantly less importance ($M=2.97$) to feisty, unscrupulousness in fighting for one's own as a factor modeling career opportunities than those under 35 years of age. ($M=3.93$; $p=0.008$).

Also, when asked about the importance of having acquaintances and patronage for advancement in the current workplace, respondents over 45 years of age were significantly less likely ($M=2.67$) to consider this factor important than their colleagues under 35 years of age ($M=3.74$; $p=0.001$).

For employees at earlier stages of their career (up to 35 years of age), luck and the mere coincidence were the factors more strongly considered to be decisive for career progression in the current workplace ($M=3.31$) than for those aged 36–45 ($M=2.58$) and even older over 45 years of age ($M=2.61$; $p=0.009$).

Younger people (up to 35 years of age) were significantly more likely to associate a good social atmosphere with opportunities for advancement in their current place of employment ($M=3.83$) than people in the middle of their career (35–45 years of age) ($M=3.29$; $p=0.014$).

Table 1. summarises only the results in which statistically significant differences were noted between the study groups, differentiated by gender and age.

Table 1. Level of occurrence of professional development factors by gender and age of respondents.

Professional development factor	socio-professional characteristics					p
	gender		age (in years)			
	F	M	18-35	36-45	>45	
The position held	M=4.00	M=3.42	-	-	-	0.025
Receiving an award for good work	M=3.08	M=2.74	-	-	-	0.024
Having connections and patronage	-	-	M=3.74		M=2.67	
Fierceness, unscrupulousness in fighting for one's own	-	-	M=3.93		M=2.97	0.008
Luck, mere coincidence	-	-	M =3.31	M=2.58	M =2.61	0.009
Good social atmosphere at work	-	-	M =3.83	M=3.29		0.014

The analyses also revealed several statistically significant relationships. The younger the surveyed employees of cultural institutions were, the greater the importance they attached to the professional development factor of being feisty and unscrupulous in fighting for one's own ($r=-0.336$; $p<0.001$). In addition, a statistically significant negative relationship was observed between the age of the respondents and the strength of the importance attributed to having acquaintances and patronage in the current workplace ($r=-0.352$; $p<0.001$). Similarly, as age increased, the importance of luck and mere chance as an element influencing, in the opinion of respondents, professional development decreased ($r=-0.246$; $p=0.013$). Also, a good social climate was perceived by respondents to be more important the younger they were as employees ($r=-0.241$; $p=0.013$). As the age of the respondents increased, the importance of improving professional skills through education or training as a career development perspective also decreased ($r=-0.256$; $p=0.008$). In contrast, the older the employees surveyed were, the more strongly they were convinced that the rewards and recognitions they had received so far for good work were their significant professional achievements ($r=0.205$; $p=0.035$).

Conclusions

To summarise the above discussion, it can be concluded that the age of the people surveyed proved to be a differentiating factor between the opinions

of the surveyed employees of cultural institutions only in the case of some aspects potentially influencing career opportunities in the current workplace, such as being feisty, being unscrupulous in fighting for one's own, having connections and patronage, luck, mere coincidence and a good social atmosphere. In all of the aforementioned aspects, their subjective importance as a career development factor was found to decrease as the age of the subjects increased.

In contrast, it is interesting to note that gender only significantly differentiates between the perception of the position currently held as a professional achievement (women are much more likely to admit that this is rather the case, while men find it more difficult to clearly define the position), and on the importance attached to the distinctions obtained (this time, while women find it rather difficult to define their position in this respect, men are somewhat more determined not to attach importance to this factor). This almost lack of gender-differentiating importance in the perception of professional development factors by employees of cultural institutions may indicate that negative phenomena related to professional discrimination against women in the surveyed cultural institutions are less noticeable than in other sectors of the economy.

The results obtained, however, lead to other suppositions, perhaps not entirely related to the original purpose of the study, but interesting as they seem. A high percentage of respondents confirmed the importance of factors such as being feisty, showing unscrupulousness in fighting for one's own (51.9%), having patronage connections (41.5%), luck, mere coincidence (31.1%) for their professional development in their current working environment, and their increasing importance with advancing age, may raise suspicions about the presence of negative phenomena such as nepotism, cronyism or clientelism in their workplaces, which could also be a field for further exploration. The present study was conducted only among employees in the public cultural sector, so it is difficult to make assumptions about whether these possible unfavourable phenomena occur only in cultural institutions run by public entities or whether they are typical of the cultural services sector as a whole. On the other hand, interviews conducted by the author with young graduates entering the professional world in public cultural institutions seem to suggest that, at least in part, such negative situations do indeed occur in public cultural institutions. This, in turn, leads to the concern that they may result in an exodus of young, dynamic, creative, well-educated (which can once again be seen in the educational structure of the surveyed group) employees with so-called "passion", to other employers and other sectors of the economy to the detriment of the quality of publicly provided cultural services and national culture in general.

In addition, in the light of the results obtained (with a certain degree of caution related to the representativeness of the surveyed group), in the opinions of its employees, a cultural institution appears to be a place of work which usually functions efficiently, in a manner conducive to the professional development of employees and most often providing the possibility of even considerable satisfaction for people who are ambitious, consistently striving for their goals, efficient, intellectually proficient, reliable, possessing and willing to develop their knowledge, professional skills and acquire professional experience with the support of the employer, and valuing the opportunity to demonstrate them in responsible work, rewarded by recognition from superiors, but who will not be hindered by limited opportunities for promotion to higher positions and limited chances of earning a high income.

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