

# FEMALES AND MODELLING OCCUPATIONAL CAREER IN THE CHANGING WORLD OF LABOUR – REPORTS ON RESEARCH

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**Summary.** The planning and pursuing an occupational career, especially in the era of such rapid changes and macrosocial transformations, are much more difficult than even a dozen or so years ago. This applies particularly to risk groups, including females. The biographies of individuals – formed by the pre-professional phase which concerns the human participation in the educational system, the phase of occupational activity, and the post-professional phase – related to the performance of family functions have become obsolete. Occupational activity is not only longer, but it is also accompanied by educational activity, indispensable and expected in the labour market. This entailed a different career modelling, characterised by the concept of change. Demand on the labour market, its internationalisation and increased flexibility force the individual to shape their career path in the short-term perspective, taking into account the latest trends, requiring proper management and setting goals compatible with market expectations, and not only consistent with their own interests. Females also faced with this challenge, and while fulfilling a number of social roles, implement various models in the design and implementation of their occupational careers. In this article, the strategies of planning the development and pursuing occupational career upon the basis of the conducted research are presented. The fundamental presumption is that an individual shapes their career independently, and this notion of career is interpreted as following the adopted values determining the attitudes and behaviours of a human being. In this dissertation, the profile of contemporary careers is provided, and the analysis of the notion of occupational career is conducted.

## KOBIETY WOBEC MODELOWANIA KARIERY ZAWODOWEJ W ZMIENNYM ŚWIECIE PRACY – DONIESIENIA Z BADAŃ

**Słowa kluczowe:** kariera zawodowa, rynek pracy, edukacja, zmiana

**Streszczenie.** Planowanie i realizacja kariery zawodowej, szczególnie w dobie tak szybkich przemian transformacji o charakterze makrospołecznym, są znacznie trudniejsze niż jeszcze kilkanaście lat temu. Dotyczy to w szczególności grup ryzyka, w tym kobiet. Dezaktualizacji uległy dotychczasowe biografie jednostek, kształtowane przez fazę przedzawodową, dotyczącą uczestnictwa człowieka w systemie kształcenia, fazę aktywności zawodowej i etap pozazawodowy – związany z pełnieniem funkcji rodzinnych. Aktywność zawodowa jest nie tylko dłuższa, ale towarzyszy jej jednocześnie aktywność edukacyjna, niezbędna i oczekiwana na rynku pracy. Pociągnęło to za sobą odmienne modelowanie kariery zawodowej, której cechą charakterystyczną jest pojęcie zmiany. Popyt na rynku pracy, jego umiędzynarodowienie, uelastycznienie, zmuszają jednostkę do kształtowania swojej ścieżki kariery zawodowej w perspektywie krótkofalowej, uwzględniającej najnowsze tendencje, wymagającej właściwego zarządzania i stawiania celów kompatybilnych z oczekiwaniami rynkowymi, nie tylko zgodnymi z własnymi zainteresowaniami. Wobec tego wyzwania stają także kobiety, które pełniąc szereg ról społecznych wdrażają różnorodne modele w zakresie projektowania i realizacji własnych karier zawodowych.

*We have changed from dugout canoes on sailing ships, from sailing ships on steamboats, from steamboats on space shuttles, but no one knows where we are going. At our disposal, we have unprecedented power, but we have no idea what to do with it<sup>1</sup>.*

### Introduction

Occupational career in the contemporary world has become a significant, and for certain individuals even the most important, value. It is a part and parcel of the personal development of a human being, and it constitutes an important constituent of its activity throughout a human life. More and more frequently, the sphere of labour is permeated by the issues not being in connection with occupational career enriching the competences of an individual by means of adding new knowledge, new abilities, and also new experiences, not indispensably being in a direct connection with the performed occupation. It is difficult to consider occupational career, the course of it, and also the process of planning,

<sup>1</sup> Y.N. Harari, *Sapiens. Od zwierząt do bogów*, Wyd. Literackie, Kraków 2018, s. 8.

not taking under consideration personal development because these are areas which, in a certain period in life, are 'travelled' simultaneously, which permeate and 'contaminate' one another. In particular, it is noticeable in the case of the occupational careers of females, in which the implementation of plans and striving to accomplish the objectives of occupational career are in a direct connection with the aspect of roles in the family. Even though, in the recent years, changes in the patterns of the course of occupational careers, determined, among others, by the dynamics of the labour market and numerous antinomies in development, have been noticeable, but, regardless of these processes, gender still remains an important factor in the course of the particular stages of occupational life.

### **Occupational career – around the old and new paradigm**

Conducting the synthesis of the different interpretations of the notion of occupational career, it ought to be ascertained that this term has been evolving in the direction of career being defined as a process. Its meaning has been extended as well, and it now encompasses both the involvement of a human being in the development of occupational career as such, and also reflection upon oneself undertaken in the course of life. A human being, pursuing occupational career (by means of making particular choices), writes their own biography in some ways. These choices do not only consist in undertaking decisions relevant to occupational career, but also living by particular values, pursuing particular interests and living a particular lifestyle. Therefore, by means of career, a human being accomplishes self-realisation. Particular decisions result in a human being leaving a mark of their presence upon the world of fellow human beings, in 'writing' own life<sup>2</sup>. It ought to be emphasised that, more and more frequently, occupational career is being in connection not only with the period of employment, not only with the time of being occupationally active, but it tends to be perceived in reference to the different stages of the life of a human being. For that very reason as well, the notion of the lifelong career<sup>3</sup> or the boundaryless

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<sup>2</sup> A. Słowik, *Portfolio jako propozycja monitorowania kariery*, „Pedagogika Pracy” 2006, nr 46, s. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Wiatrowski defines the lifelong career as “the process of the development of career throughout an entire life, taking under consideration all social roles, which an individual fulfils at the different stages of life”; Z. Wiatrowski, *Dorastanie, dorosłość i starość człowieka w kontekście działalności i kariery zawodowej*, ITE-PIB, Radom 2009, s. 66.

career<sup>4</sup>, encompassed by tendencies which last throughout an entire life and mobilise a human being to acquire new qualifications, and to perform different jobs, have come into use.

Changes in the labour market, the dynamics of economic phenomena, and also the evolution of the system of values, render it possible to consider occupational career in the humanistic dimension, in reference to ,the intellectual, mental, physical, social, cultural, ethical and spiritual development of a human being, whereas the above-mentioned categories are in mutual connection, and, for that very reason, it is possible to formulate a conclusion that the appropriately formed process of career leads to the integral development of a human being<sup>5</sup>. Currently, occupational career also has broader temporal framework, and it encompasses the period of making occupation-related, the time devoted to occupational career, and the period of being retired. Duane Brown defines occupational career as the process of choice and adjustment to an occupation. It is a lifelong process, and it remains in interaction with other social roles, in particular, with the family ones. Among the most typical problems connected with the development of occupational career, the following ought to be included: problems with making decisions, stress, adjusting to an occupation, failure to integrate roles fulfilled in life – of an employee, of a parent, of a spouse, of a friend and of a citizen<sup>6</sup>. Such a view of the matters takes under consideration both the continuity of occupational career and the correlations of it with different roles of a human being, in particular, with those fulfilled in family.

Allan Brid sees career as ,knowledge and information contained in abilities, acquaintanceship and the network of relations, which have been collected by an individual in the course of the evolving sequence of experience being in

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<sup>4</sup> The term ,the boundaryless career' was first used in the literature by M.B. Arthur and D.M. Rousseau in the year 1996. The conception of the career of this type shows the scale of its possible forms, expressing independence of the traditional career path. The boundaryless career may be combined with mobility, with leaving one company to join another, and it may also be relevant to taking advantage of all and any opportunities to develop one's competences and occupational potential in a given position, and it is in connection as well with the disappearance of boundaries between occupational activity and other spheres of life. Currently, more and more frequently, careers are referred to as changing careers (protean careers, and that means such which assume different forms), and also kaleidoscopic careers (a human being pursuing career has to address three, important for the development career, crucial issues: authenticity, sustainability and challenges).

<sup>5</sup> B. Jakimiuk, *Proces budowania kariery zawodowej*, [w:] D. Kukła, W. Duda, (red.), *Poradnictwo zawodowe. Rozwój zawodowy w ujęciu przekrojowym*, Difin, Warszawa 2016, s. 116.

<sup>6</sup> A. Słowik, *Portfolio...*, s. 82.

connection with an occupation<sup>7</sup>. Occupational career is perceived not only in the category of progress in occupation and acquired experiences, but also in that of the knowledge which can be acquired thanks to that. The view of Brid is a reference to the new kind of career – the boundaryless career<sup>8</sup>, which is a response to the needs of flexible organisations and of a knowledge-based economy. This system consists in crossing boundaries in the world of labour, and in implementing temporary projects instead of constructing permanent structures.

The analysis of the above-mentioned (and others, available in the literature) definitions of career renders it possible to formulate the following conclusions:

- 1) neither success, nor the absence of it is presumed. Progress in career cannot be evaluated because there is no comparative criterion of assessment in the definition of career;
- 2) the course of career is the resultant of that what can be observed, and also that what cannot be, and what is relevant to the emotional states of an individual, to values, and also to the objectives which this individual pursues. Both dimensions of career, the objective and subjective, are in a close mutual connection;
- 3) career is a peculiar system, the sequence of the experiences of a particular individual, being in connection with occupation. This is a unique system determined by autonomous choices, and, presuming this meaning of the term, each and every career is unique in its character<sup>9</sup>.

A similar view of occupational career can be found in the text of Maciej Szymański, who remarks that career „[...] encompasses in itself not only a performed job, but also decisions preceding the period of undertaking a job, and also all those which are taken by an individual after the period of occupational activity, and also connection between job and other roles fulfilled by an individual in family, in community, in leisure time<sup>10</sup>. [...] is an unique sequence of occupations and positions, of values, and also of roles fulfilled by an individual throughout their life, shaped by the period preceding occupational career and

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<sup>7</sup> A. Bird, *Careers as Repositories of Knowledge: Considerations for Boundaryless Careers*, [in:] M. Arthur, D. Rousseau (eds.), *The Boundaryless Career. A New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era*, Oxford University Press, New York 1996, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> M. Arthur, S. Khapova, C. Wilderom, *Career success in a boundaryless career world*, “Journal of Organizational Behavior” 2005, no. 26 (2), pp. 177–202.

<sup>9</sup> A. Miś, *Kształtowanie karier w organizacji*, [w:] H. Król, A. Ludwiczynski (red.), *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Wyd. Nauk. PWN, Warszawa 2006, s. 478.

<sup>10</sup> M. Szymański, *Ścieżki kariery studentów socjologii UAM*, Promotor, Warszawa 2010, s. 81.

exerting influence upon a further period<sup>11</sup>. Planning and constructing occupational career are the process of lifelong learning, which requires that a human being makes countless decisions in response to unexpected and unplanned events. Pursuing occupational career, even in the labour market friendly to an employee, is not easy for an individual regardless of their gender, age or possessed qualifications (*nota bene*, requiring to be constantly updated). The path of career, the choices made in the aspect of education and occupation, constitute a combination of events, and are the resultant of different individual factors and social conditions. The notion in question encompasses the area of occupation as well as the problems of the integration of occupational roles and different commitments existing in a family, in a community, or the patterns of spending free time. Frequently, it expresses the own and primary desire of each and every human being striving to accomplish particular objectives, and also to find an appropriate place in society. Occupational career, currently also viewed much more broadly as life career, acquires a new dimension, concentrated upon personal development, not necessarily finding its reflection in financial gains, and in climbing up the ladder in organisations, „abandoning the traditional understanding of career, based upon the principle ‚it is fine to climb up, it is bad to climb down.’<sup>12</sup> Generations entering the labour market, or already present there and active in it, expect occupational career to bring more benefits and different relations with an employer, rendering it possible to fulfil own aspirations. However, there also exists another aspect of the current labour market, namely technological transformations, life transferred into the social media, permanent readiness to be mobile (in the mental, geographical and qualification aspects alike), which compel an individual to create their own occupational career somewhat *ad hoc*, to adapt their career plans to family life, and the other way round. In the epoch of knowledge worker, the management of intellectual capital, the management of knowledge and management of development, even an individual that has received a profound education, an occupation, rapidly mastering new abilities, cannot be confident about the direction of the development of their career, career plans in a particular organisation, and the consequences of decisions which are made. The reason for that is the fact nowadays it is difficult to indicate the qualities and competences (formal and non-formal), which render an individual

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<sup>11</sup> A. Miś, *Kształtowanie karier...*, s. 478.

<sup>12</sup> R. Tomaszewska-Lipiec, *Kariera – zdeprecjonowana wartość nowego pokolenia?*, „Problemy Profesjologii” 2016, nr 1, s. 54.

predestined to ‚make’ occupational career. Planning and monitoring the course of own occupational career, and even taking advantage of the assistance of a specialist, a coach, a career advisor, provides a human being only with a temporary confidence that their development has a right direction, and that they are a part of a well-functioning structure. For that very reason, it is indispensable to undertake continuous research, in particular qualitative, in order to analyse the phenomenon of occupational career, the course of it and the process of planning.

### **The process of planning and of the implementation of the occupational careers of females in the light of own research**

The social transformations taking place, including, in particular, the transpositions in the labour market, urbanisation, the dynamically progressing transformations of cultural context, are conducive to increase in the number of females that are independent and that are undertaking occupational activity. The above-mentioned changes and processes redefine social roles. However, it cannot be conclusively ascertained that the situation of females is the same as that of males. Ulrich Beck<sup>13</sup> draws attention to the phenomenon of ‚the unfinished process of the individualisation of females’. The reason for that is the fact that females are compelled to make numerous decisions being in connection with having, or not having, children, with looking after them or with existential freedom. This is a dilemma the solution to which renders it indispensable to make a choice between occupational activity and being a mother, between a marriage and independence, or, alternatively, means that one looks for some compromises, for the ways of reconciling contradictory reasons and values, for methods rendering it possible to fulfil mutually-excluding social commitments and roles, which renders the position of females much more adverse than that of males. A similar opinion is that expressed by Anna Titkow<sup>14</sup>, who thinks that the identity of a Polish female is based upon constant choices, upon family-centric individualism, upon ‚the multitude of self-portrays’. For numerous females, social constructions constitute an evident handicap, rendering it impossible to get rid of the feeling of guilt in the situation of making a choice which does not conform to the dominating social model of femininity in the settings such as:

<sup>13</sup> U. Beck, *Spółeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej rzeczywistości*, Scholar, Warszawa 2002, s. 76.

<sup>14</sup> A. Titkow, *Tożsamość polskich kobiet. Ciągłość, zmiana, konteksty*, IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2007, s. 25.



family, occupation or society. The standards, dos and don'ts which, in the past, somewhat determined who a female was, which formed the models of femininity, contemporarily, to a great extent, have ceased to be applicable. It does not mean, however, that they have ceased to exist. After the year 1989, Poland has been a country which is open to Western Europe, which is open to the world, not only in the context of economy, but, as well, in that of the secularisation of society. Life, and the quality of this life, have started to be perceived in a different way, and the system of values and priorities has changed as well. Amongst numerous transformations in the occupational career of females, correlations between career and families have become a significant area of research, because of both social and economic considerations.

Females adopt the heterogeneous strategies of modelling own occupational career. Making such significant decisions like that concerning the choice of an occupation or planning the personal path of occupational career is becoming significant in the times when fulfilling educational and occupational aspirations is ever more important in the life of each and every single human being. Interests, skills and aspirations, but also the situation in the labour market and demand on particular occupations, constitute the particular conditions of occupational life, and all these factors ought to be taken under consideration while one is planning their career. The stage of planning, and afterwards implementing the well-thought strategy of the development of occupational career, is a constituent of self-fulfilment in this area. Apart from the need of constant perfecting and complementary education, a human being has to be prepared for the complete change of qualifications, thanks to which they will be able to continue their occupational activity. There exists the need to methodically analyse and conduct research within the scope of planning and pursuing own careers in order to exemplify the discussed area. The authors of this article have conducted research<sup>15</sup>, which rendered it possible to investigate only a small part of this phenomenon.

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<sup>15</sup> Research material (in this article, a chosen part of the conducted research is presented because of the large volume of the collected material) is constituted by the opinions of females that were either occupationally-active females (that had been employed for no fewer than three years) or were on leaves (child care leaves, maternity leaves, sick leaves or sabbatical leaves), at the age between 26 and 35 years, having a tertiary education, and also rearing no fewer than one child. The subject-matter of these opinions are experiences being in connection with the course of occupational career, whereas the subject-matter of the research analysis is both pursuing these careers and the process of planning occupational career. The subject-matter of the research was females living and working on the area of the following cities: Częstochowa, Sosnowiec, and also Kielce. The research was conducted in the years: 2015–2018. In order to conduct interviews, meetings with 54 females were organized. The leading research method was a qualitative research (free, in-depth). The conducted research rendered



The general objective of the conducted research was to provide knowledge about the course of the occupational careers of women, and also about social determinants exerting influence upon them, as well as about certain personality-related conditions perceived in social perspective. Attention is concentrated both upon the analysis of external, and that means: social, factors, and the personality-related ones, which were internalised by means of social formation, determining the occupational activity of a woman, the sphere of family life, including, in particular, the mutual influence exerted by these two spheres upon one another. The principal research question the study of which is attempted in this article is: What strategies are adopted by women in the process of planning educational and occupational career?

In the course of conducting interviews with the participants in the research, it was established that, in the majority (in the case of more than half of the studied) of cases, the issue of planning occupational career is only taken under consideration at the stage of finding a job. Earlier decisions, including, in particular, those relevant to the choice of a major, were rather accidental, which can be noticed easily by means of setting the currently occupied position against the education of the female respondents. Only half of the studied females perform a job being in a direct connection with the direction of education, or a related one. The remaining part verified their educational decision, or has been compelled to undertake jobs in other occupations.

In the studied group, the process of planning occupational career for a distinct majority of females was based upon an accidental decision stemming from circumstances. This accidental character was noticeable as soon as at the stage of the choice of the major, which, as it is admitted by 10 of the studied, was misguided and determined principally by the opinions of the members of family, or also by the financial situation of parents. This is confirmed by the parts of utterances quoted below:

*I do not plan, I act. It has been like that ever since.* (Ludwika S.)

*I have not planned anything. It just happened that I am a teacher.* (Marta S.)

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it possible to collect qualitative data relevant to the hitherto path of the occupational careers of females, as well as social conditions determining their choices, including that relevant to the systems of values. The interviews were conducted as free interviews, and each of them was recorded with the use of a voice recorder. For each and every meeting, the direction of an interview was determined in the guidelines for it. Each of the studied individuals was informed about the anonymous profile of the research as well as about the objective of the interview conducted with them.

*I have not planned anything. What happened, happened [...] I have no regrets now.* (Dorota C.)

*[...] I do not even remember how it came to happen [reference to the choice of a major]. First of all, it was certainly related to the fact that this tertiary education institution was easy to enrol to, and parents could afford such studies. I thought that it would be possible to do something more upon the basis of this education. I did not want to miss out on tertiary education because, already back then, and like now, it was majority that received the education of this kind. I have wanted to do something being in connection with art, perhaps with film, ever since, but it was impossible for me, so I chose philology.* (Alicja C.)

*The choice of a major was determined by the fact that the tertiary education institution was not far away. I could commute to classes and, all in all, this education did not cost my parents much. I did not want to be a teacher, but rather an archaeologist [...] I have nothing to show for it as far as these plans are concerned.* (Joanna C.)

*My parents wanted me to receive tertiary education very much [...], All in all, I had no other idea for myself, either.* (Hanna C.)

The above-quoted words indicate that motives behind the choice of major were frequently not correlated with interests, nor with the plans of future career. It had particular consequences for the further situation of the studied females in the labour market, in particular, in the aspect of the period of looking for a job which would fulfil their expectations. The accidental character of educational decisions had its consequences in the course of the process of transition into the labour market. In this aspect, the analysis of the collected research material shows certain divergence between tendencies occurring in the studied group against the results of the research conducted in the year 2016 by the IQS Group on more than 800 Poles. In accordance with this research, in the course of making a choice, the majority of respondents were taking under consideration, first and foremost, their own interests; such was a decision of 66% of them, 20% deciding to continue education in a tertiary education institution adjusted to the situation in the labour market, and 19% were guided by the opinion of families and the same number by the judgement of relatives. Every sixth studied Pole made a decision relevant to the choice of a major upon the basis of the social prestige of a given major and of a future job. Other reasons exerting influence upon the decision to undertake tertiary education and the choice of the profile include: financial situation (12%), the level of difficulty of the major being chosen (8%), and also the opinion of a partner (6%); 3% of the studied Poles declared

that they exerted no influence upon the choice of the studied major, whereas in the case of female interviewees being the subject-matter of this research, only two individuals declared that the choice of a major was in a direct connection with their interests.

*I had dreamt of law ever since, and it must perhaps be the indispensable quality of this major because everyone in my year wanted to be a lawyer. Of course, the fact that my mum is a notary public did certainly exert influence upon me, but in the positive context.* (Anna K.)

*I chose sociology because of (my) interests [...].* (Karolina S.)

A small part of the studied females follows the precisely planned career path. Designing their educational and occupational future, they were taking under consideration external factors, first and foremost, the situation in the labour market, as well as external conditions.

*I come from a small town, in a matter of, from a village, therefore, tertiary education was to be for me the gates to the other world. I knew that I had to secure entry to a good tertiary education institution, have good grades and find a job before long. [...] I` followed this plan step by step, and not always was it easy. I remember my job interview as if it had been held today. I had memorised answers to each and every question, I was simply learning to pass this interview. [...] It is no different today; I set myself an objective, I know that I have to do this or that to reach it, and so on, until the very top`. [What is that top?] `It still cannot be seen; it is too early.* (Martyna S.)

*Everyone was choosing pedagogics or management, the latter being a foolish thing to do, after all, because all it takes is to be able to count. I was good at everything, therefore, I did a bit of reading, I talked to a pedagogist, to parents, and decided to [...]. I knew that it would be easier for me to find a job in that case.* (Maria S.)

*The occupation of a pharmacist seemed to be terribly attractive to me, [...] so, I do not know how to put it, erm, important, and I wanted to become one very much.* (Magdalena S.)

More than half of the studied, performing the analysis and the assessment of their hitherto career path, point out that they faced not only a difficult market situation, but also, first and foremost, the lack of adjustment between their competences and the scope of performed activities, which is confirmed by the below-quoted words:

*I graduated from a major [Polish philology] that, later on, made it indispensable to adjust my plans to the market and to opportunities. For two years, I could not*

*find a job in school or anything similar. I did various things to become independent and mature like normal people.[...] In the meantime, I completed some courses, learnt a language, constantly refreshed my command of lexis, and so on and so forth it went [...]. (Alicja C.)*

*Shock, it was just a shock that I experienced after tertiary education. I could not find a job at all [...] after half a year, all that I found was an internship, and, on top of that, not being in connection with my education at all. If one asked me to count them, I guess I would say that worked in five companies in half a year. I did not even think about working in the occupation I learned to perform, but the worst thing was to realise I could not really do anything. It was only each and every new job that provided my with the abilities which I am taking advantage of now. (Joanna C.)*

*When I was starting my tertiary education, I imagined all of that completely differently, so, all in all, reality prevented me from fulfilling my plans a little. I remember as it had been today that I would go to job interviews and everyone was asking me about experience, about particular abilities, and I was a history graduate [...]. All in all, it has changed in my case by now [...]. I also ask new people what they can do, and tertiary education is quite a different mater. (Iwona C.)*

The lack of precisely-formulated plans relevant to the choice of a major for the majority of females resulted in particular consequences in the first years of their occupational activity. It ought to be, however, noticed that there exists a close correlation between the major of the completed tertiary education and difficulties in entering the labour market. The interviewees that indicated that it was difficult for them to find a job, or also that they remained unemployed for a longer period of time, graduated in humanities or social majors. In turn, such problems were not reported by the graduates of exact science majors, even though in their case the process of the choice of occupation was not planned or well-thought, either.

*I did not plan anything, my choice was accidental, I only knew I wanted to study a major in the field of medicine. (Magdalena S.)*

*I only knew one thing that anything was good, apart from administration or philology because I already had two sisters that could not find a job in school, but my plans were not very precise. (Paulina K.)*

In the group of the studied females, there is a small percent of careers organised according to intentions, subordinated to plan and objectives. These are determined by the conditions currently existing, the indispensability of subordinating oneself to the laws of the market and organisation. In the course of

these careers, attention ought to be paid to accidental choices not correlated with interests and values.

The ability to plan own occupational development, and also to make educational choices, exerts influence upon the further course of entire occupational life, which is confirmed by the participants in the research. The turbulent profile of the environment, the dynamism of changes, the uncertainty of fates in the contemporary labour market result in the fact that planning and management of own career or occupational development becomes ever more difficult. The studied females are aware of that fact, and, in connection with this, adopt different strategies of planning their occupational development, and also career. A few of them precisely determine their objectives, but do not change them even regardless of transformations in the environment; such an attitude, however, incurs a certain risk: frustration if the plan proves to be impossible to be fulfilled. Part of the female respondents, in turn, rely entirely on fate and accident, having adopted the presumption that, since contemporary reality is so much changing, all and any planning does not make any sense, and the crucial aspect of the management of occupational development, and also of own career, is constituted by noticing opportunities as they arise. The studied females expressed their opinions as well on the issue of occupational and educational plans. Most frequently, females plan to improve their occupational qualifications, or to requalify, which is certainly in connection with the difficult situation in the labour market and problems with finding a job in the occupation which they have learnt to perform. That exerts influence upon the plans of females relevant to further education and acquiring new qualifications, which will be matching the needs of the local labour market.

Pursuing occupational career in the case of the studied females was rendered difficult, first and foremost, at the stage of looking for a job. The female respondents admitted that not always were their educational decisions well-thought and good, which resulted in the indispensability of undertaking further education, occupational reorientation, or also a longer time of remaining unemployed. During that period of time, females undertook jobs not being in connection with the acquired education, which, in the case of some of them, turned out to be the prospective field of self-fulfilment. Females are acutely aware of the possessed competences and their attractiveness in the aspect of occupation. They invest in their educational development, thanks to which they pursue occupational career, both by means of promotions in the workplace and broadening the scope of performed functions.

## Conclusion

In particular, it is females that are affected by the results of social and cultural, educational and economic transformations occurring in Poland. Change and unpredictability are not friendly to individuals that face additional difficulties relevant to undertaking occupational activity, among others, the disabled, but also females, seen as obliged to perform traditional social roles. In accordance with the opinion of Violetta Drabik-Podgórna, ‘the contemporary model of transition, being in connection with globalisation, the segmentation of the labour market and chaos in terms of occupation is abundant with unpredictable phenomena, recurring and encompassing the different spheres of life’<sup>16</sup>, not everyone can face new market challenges with success, and, first and foremost, not everyone is given an opportunity to prove the worth of the competences possessed by them. The choice of the path of the occupational career of each and every human being is not once-in-a-lifetime decision made at a certain moment of the life of a human being. Usually, it has a form of certain, continuing process in the course of which an individual makes a number of decisions being in connection with their job, and also matures, and their opinion on the subject of occupational career is formed gradually. Not always are the choices of an individual good, but they provide an opportunity to acquire knowledge and abilities, which will be the basis for new decisions.

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<sup>16</sup> V. Drabik-Podgórna, *Tranzycja jako nowa kategoria biograficzna we współczesnym poradnictwie zawodowym*, „Edukacja Dorosłych” 2010, nr 1, s. 100.

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