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## **ADAPTATION PROCESS TO LABOUR AND EDUCATION PROCESSES ON THE ASPECT OF CONSTANT INDIVIDUAL TRAITS OF PERSONALITY CONCEPT**

### **Summary**

In the article psychological aspects of adaptation were discussed. Opinions of specialists in the field of job counseling on professional adaptation were presented. Professional adaptation in the light of constant individual personality traits concept was analyzed. Implications of constant individual personality traits concept on labor process and education process were demonstrated.

*Keywords:* adaptation process, labor process, education process, constant individual personality traits.

### **Psychological aspects of adaptation**

Adaptation most frequently means one's ability to accept needs for introducing changes into one's own life, as well as flexibility in one's attitude towards continuously changing reality. Adaptation understood in such a way is an issue concerning the entire human life.

Psychologists recognise two aspects of adaptation – the outer one, which usually means treating adaptation as assimilation into one's environment and adjustment to one's social roles - and the inner one, which concerns people themselves and their personalities that are shaped in the course of adaptation. Inner changes occurring in human personality in the course of adaptation allow him or her proper functioning in the changing world. Lack of changes in the

structure of personality means lack of adaptation, while changes inappropriate to one's situation reveal improper course of the adaptation process.

The best possible solution of adaptation issue involves the necessary passive adaptation (i.e. – compliance with the reality) and – at the same time – the best active adaptation possible.

Active adaptation occurs when one not only adapts to the encountered reality, but also tries to change that reality by adapting it – to a certain degree – to oneself. Active adaptation may have creative character when an individual, through his or her activity and influence, contributes to the development of reality, which subsequently stimulates his or her creative development.

Definitions of personality adopted by a number of psychologists refer directly to adaptation. G. W. Allport points out that one out of five groups of psychological definitions treats personality as the result and style of an individual's adaptation. According to his own definition, personality is a dynamic organization of those psychological and physical systems of an individual, which determine his or her specific way of adaptation to the environment.

According to H.J. Eysenk, personality is a fairly constant and durable organization of one's character, temperament, intellect, and physical construction, determining specific ways in which individuals adapt to their environments.

In A. Kardiner's opinion, personality is an effective tool for adaptation, common to all individuals of a given society.

S. Siek states that personality, which develops as a result of maturation, learning, and adaptation, determines further development and adaptation of an individual.

According to ICD-10 classification, personality is a set of durable patterns of thinking, feeling and behaviour, which characterizes an individual's style of life and method of adaptation.

When one's personality functions properly, his or her reactions to stimuli from the environment are adapted to that environment.

A course of the adaptation process depends on flexibility of personality traits of the adapting person. When requirements of the environment exceed one's adaptation abilities, human internal „barriers” make the process of adaptation impossible. That generates stress, which can cause functional disturbances, known as adaptation disturbances.

In my opinion, the „barriers” mentioned above are generated by constant individual traits of personality, when they are inadequate to parameters of the situation that requires adaptation. Causes of other kinds of adaptation disturbances (for example, excessive subjection or too strong a wish to dominate the environment) can also be explained by the theory of the traits.

## **Job counselling experts' opinions concerning occupational adaptation**

According to R. Lamb's definition, job counselling is a process in the course of which a career officer helps his clients (i.e. people looking for a job) in better understanding themselves in reference to the occupational environment, in order to allow them a realistic choice of a job, change of an employer, or achievement of an appropriate occupational adjustment<sup>1</sup>.

What has been described as the most recent task of job counselling is „prevention of inappropriate or merely accidental adaptation to one's occupational situation”<sup>2</sup>, as well as „providing a client with aid in achieving the best possible occupational adaptation from the social, economic and professional point of view”<sup>3</sup>. According to R. Lamb, in the course of counselling process a career officer „observes how the occupational plan is being realized, and, if necessary, he gives some advice, until his or her client achieves occupational adaptation”<sup>4</sup>. It should also be noted that the process of occupational adjustment is practically endless, because of continuous changes occurring both in people and in their occupational environment.

According to A. Bańka<sup>5</sup>, the purpose of career counselling is to let the client know about his or her possibilities and interests from the standpoint of occupational adjustment, as well as about contraindications and special requirements from the point of view of minimum and the best possible level of occupational adjustment.

J.E. Karney<sup>6</sup>, on the other hand, maintains that occupational adaptation means suitability (adequacy) of an employee's potential in reference to his or her occupational situation and environment, which can be achieved in two ways - by adapting an employee to his or her job, or by adapting an occupational situation to the employee's needs. When defining occupational usefulness as „usability, adequacy of an employee's occupational efficiency to the requirements of his or her occupational environment”<sup>7</sup>, occupational adaptation should be defined as a process of achieving the best possible occupational usefulness.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Lamb, *Review of Career Counselling, A handbook of career officer's methods and information*, Warsaw 1998, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> G. Waidner, J. Sturm, K.W. Bauer, *Methods of Career Counselling. Psychological Aspects – Practical Guidelines*, Warsaw 1996, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> R. Lamb, *Career Counselling...*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> A. Bańka, *Zawodoznawstwo, doradztwo zawodowe, pośrednictwo pracy. Psychologiczne metody i strategie pomocy bezrobotnym, (CareerCounselling, Employment Exchange and Related Issues. Psychological Methods and Strategies to Help the Unemployed)*, Poznań 1995, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> J.E. Karney, *People and Their Work. Selected Issues in Psychology and Pedagogy of Labour*, Warsaw 1998, p. 89.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Not all experts in the field of career counselling pay enough attention to issues connected with occupational adaptation, however. When defining career counselling, its objectives and goals, some of them do not even speak directly about occupational adaptation or adjustment. Yet, an appropriate job should guarantee achievement of the necessary compatibility between an employee's predispositions and the requirements of his or her job. The process in the course of which people acquire such compatibility is a process of occupational adaptation, and „compatibility, which is the essence of it, can be achieved when a given individual meets the requirements of his or her occupational environment, and the occupational environment satisfies his or her needs.”<sup>8</sup>

It generally understood that compatibility between people's predispositions and requirements of their occupational environment should be achieved mainly through their adaptation to environment. As the statement that it is only man who should adapt cannot be proved, occupational adaptation should be defined as a process in the course of which, thanks to procedures applied by both parties in this relationship, an appropriate compatibility between people's predispositions and the requirements of their occupational environment is achieved. Determination of the best possible relationship between possible human predispositions and the necessary requirements of the occupational environment seems to be the basic issue of occupational adaptation. Searching for an answer to the question put forward by scientists involved in career counselling as to which party (man or environment) should adapt and which should remain unchanged is pointless. Instead, one should properly define man-derived factors determining the process of occupational adaptation and the extent to which people are able to adapt to their occupational environment, as well as define tolerable changes in occupational environment, made in order to adapt it to people.

The course of occupational adaptation is, therefore, determined by traits of human personality and properties of occupational environment.

A career counsellor, helping his client in his or her occupational adaptation, should know personality traits, especially the ones that constitute the basis for occupational development of a given individual, as well as methods used to make this process effective.

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<sup>8</sup> H. Skłodowski, Założenia teoretyczne koncepcji przystosowania zawodowego i ich implikacje praktyczne przy tworzeniu narzędzi i metod diagnozy, (Theoretical Assumptions of the Theory of Occupational Adaptation and Their Practical Implications in Creating Diagnostic Tools and Methods), [w:] Psychologiczna problematyka doradztwa zawodowego ([in:] Psychological Issues Related to Career Counselling), Vol. 1, Łódź 1999, p. 29.

### Occupational adaptation from the point of view of constant individual traits of personality

Traits of human personality can be determined on the basis of the theory of constant individual traits of personality<sup>9</sup>, which has been theoretically justified by M. Mazur's<sup>10</sup> theory of autonomous systems. According to the theory, lasting differences between people are reduced to differences in magnitude of constant individual traits of their personality. All people have the same constant individual traits of personality, but those traits are of different magnitude in different people. The dimensions of constant individual differences are determined by differences in the same constant individual personality traits in different people. Their variable traits are also different, but they are not lasting and can be easily changed by the influence of external factors.

Constant individual traits of personality, as well as variable traits, constitute a set of people's steering properties that regulate their relationships with their environment by influencing human behaviours. Constant individual traits of personality are independent of environmental influence; therefore, they cannot be shaped in any way. The traits can be divided into two groups: traits connected with intellectual functions, and traits connected with interpersonal relationships. If the traits connected with intellectual functions are of appropriate magnitude, they guarantee innovative processing of information and competent intellectual functioning. At the same time, the traits connected with interpersonal relationships determine interpersonal skills and relationships between people.

A systemic tool constituted by the theory described above allows determining limits of human possibilities in the adaptation process. By using this theory when solving problems connected with passive and active adaptation, such as defining limits of the necessary and voluntary adaptation, one can get a clear and fairly easy-for-practical-use theoretical concept of occupational adaptation.

People's occupational usefulness is highest when there is compatibility of all their constant individual traits of personality, together with variable traits,

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<sup>9</sup> Theory of constant individual traits of personality, worked out by J. Wilsz, was published in the following literature resources: Вільш І. (Wilsz J.), *Структура, зміст і функції сталих індивідуальних якостей учня у процесі допрофесійного навчання і виховання* (*Structure, Essence and Functions of the Constant Individual Traits of Personality of a Pupil During Pre-occupational Training and Education*), Київ (Kiev, Ukraine) 1997; J. Wilsz, *Psychologizowana wersja koncepcji stałych indywidualnych cech osobowości i jej wykorzystanie przy wyborze zawodu* (*Psychology Oriented Version of the Concept of Constant Individual Traits of Personality and Its Application to Choosing an Occupation*) [in:] *Kształcenie zawodowe: pedagogika i psychologia* (*Occupational Education: Pedagogy and Psychology*) nr III, ed. by T. Lewowicki, J. Wilsz, I. Ziaziuch i N. Nyczkało, Częstochowa–Kijów 2001; J. Wilsz, *Teoria pracy. Implikacje dla pedagogiki pracy* (*The theory of work. Implications for the work pedagogy*), Kraków 2009.

<sup>10</sup> M. Mazur, *Cybernetyczna teoria układów samodzielnych* (*Cybernetic theory of autonomous systems*), Warsaw 1966.

and requirements of their jobs. Such a compatibility can be achieved only when the situation is adjusted to constant individual traits of human personality, and also when the situation is adjusted to variable traits of human personality, or, when people adapt to their situation, within the confines of variable traits of their personality.

The level of occupational usefulness that can be achieved by people depends on constant individual traits of their personality. When people select their jobs taking these traits into consideration, then the level of occupational adaptation they can achieve should be high.

Model cases can involve the following situations:

- one possesses constant individual traits of personality required for one's job and is adapted to the job;
- one possesses constant individual traits of personality required for one's job, but is not adapted to the job;
- one does not possess constant individual traits of personality required for one's job, but is adapted to the job;
- one does not possess constant individual traits of personality required for one's job and is not adapted to the job.

In the first situation, seeking career counsellor's advice is not necessary. In the second situation, despite appearances, a career officer can be helpless if a job-seeker, in spite of having all the constant individual traits of personality required in a given job, does not possess the necessary qualifications (e.g. appropriate education), or if a job-seeker's age or life circumstances do not allow him or her to obtain those qualifications. Such a situation should be considered the most dramatic one, because the person could have had great achievements in a job compatible with the constant individual traits of his or her personality, if only he or she had been included in the career counselling and orientation system at an appropriate time and in a proper way.

The third situation also results in serious dilemmas. The man concerned, often persuaded by other people, has devoted many years of his life to obtain education in the field incompatible with constant individual traits of his personality. Because he did not possess those traits, obtaining education was a huge effort for him. For the same reasons, it should not be expected that he will be successful in his job. Such a situation is especially painful when the man possesses a clear gift in another field, where he could have achieved perfect results with much smaller effort.

In the fourth situation, the aid provided by a career officer should only be limited to finding another job for the client. The job should be compatible with constant individual traits of the client's personality. The more compatible those traits will be with requirements of the job, the more effective the process of occupational adaptation to that job will be.

The cases described above do not make allowances for the most frequent situations, when people do not possess all constant individual personality traits necessary for a given job, and are not fully adapted to their jobs. Should they take up such jobs, then? Answering such questions is extremely difficult, both from the standpoint of an employee and from the standpoint of the employer's interest. Taking up a job compatible with the possessed constant individual traits of personality is in each employee's own interest (success at work, self-realization, satisfaction with the job, etc.). As to the employers' interest, it should be in agreement with employees' interest, because employees who possess constant individual personality traits compatible with requirements of a given job will be the most useful ones. This guarantees a high level of occupational adaptation and splendid effects of work. Such employees can be expected to have a high level of professionalism, high efficiency, activity, creativity, high level of knowledge, qualifications and skills needed in a given job. Searching for such employees is a basic task of personal advisers (commonly called „head hunters“).

The theory of constant individual traits of personality allows forming a clear-cut answer to the question asked by researchers into the field of occupational adaptation: which of the two parties (people or their occupational environment) must adapt, and which one can remain unchanged? The answer should sound as follows: as for the occupational environment requirements that are compatible with constant individual traits of one's personality – the occupational environment should be adapted to people, while as for the occupational environment requirements that are compatible with people's variable traits – people should adapt to the requirements of their occupational environment, within the confines of those traits. In practice, situations when one's occupational environment is fully adapted to all constant individual traits of his or her personality are very rare. Instead, people are often required to adapt to their occupational environment also within the confines of constant individual traits of their personalities, which is impossible because, as for these traits, there is only a possibility to adapt the situation to a given man.

In practice, the most frequent situations are those of partial occupational adaptation. Then, people's occupational environment is partially adjusted to constant individual traits of their personalities, while they are partially adapted to their occupational environment, within the confines of variable traits of their personalities. The following cases may occur:

1. One's occupational environment is adapted to all traits of one's personality, both constant individual and variable ones.
2. One's occupational environment is partially adapted to some of the constant individual traits of one's personality and fully adapted to the remaining constant traits, the same situation occurs as to the variable traits.

3. One's occupational environment is partially adapted to some of the constant individual traits of one's personality and not completely unadapted to the remaining constant individual traits. As to the variable traits, the occupational environment is partially adapted to some of them, and fully – to the remaining ones.
4. One's occupational environment is partially adapted to some of the constant individual traits of one's personality and fully adapted to the remaining constant traits. As to variable traits, the occupational environment is partially adapted to some of them and not adapted to the remaining ones at all.
5. One's occupational environment is partially adapted to some of the constant individual traits of one's personality and not adapted to the remaining constant individual traits at all. The same situation occurs with variable traits.

In the first two cases, the level of occupational adaptation can be raised, because partial adjustment of variable traits can be increased. In the fifth case, the lowest level of occupational adaptation should be predicted, but there is a possibility to achieve similar occupational adaptation level as in the third case. This will take place when a given man achieves full adaptation as to some of his variable traits, and partial adaptation as to his remaining variable traits. Also in the fourth case, there is a chance to increase the level of occupational adaptation, up to the level achievable in the second case. The fifth case should be considered the least favourable, although there is a chance to increase one's occupational adaptation to the level similar as in the third case.

To sum up, it should be emphasized that, in all five cases, there is a possibility to increase the level of one's occupational adaptation, either by one's adjustment to his or her occupational environment – which is possible for variable traits, or by adjustment of occupational environment to a given man – which is necessary for constant individual traits. Attention should also be paid to the level of adjustment of occupational environment to constant individual personality traits of a given man. If this level is unsatisfactory and the occupational environment is so „fossilised” that it is unable to adjust to a given man – then there is only one possibility, and that is to find another occupational environment that should be more compatible with the constant individual traits of one's personality.

In my opinion, occupational adaptation should refer only to variable traits. As for constant individual traits, discussing compatibility of those traits with requirements of one's occupational environment is more appropriate. The best situation, both for a given man and for his or her occupational environment, occurs when his or her constant individual traits of personality are fully compatible with the requirements of the environment.

Constant individual personality traits connected with intellectual functions (processing, reconstruction and talent) are particularly important now, because occupational activities are becoming more and more intellectual. Constant individual personality traits connected with interpersonal relationships (emission, tolerance, flexibility) also have a special meaning, because of their significance for conflict-less relationships between people and a need for effective functioning of integrated groups of co-operating experts, who combine their expertise to solve problems.

The following situations created by one's occupational environment should be regarded as impossible to adapt to for certain people, because of intellectual functions of their constant individual traits of personality:

- when an individual endowed with high processing ability has limited access to information processing;
- when an individual endowed with low processing ability is forced to process excess of information;
- when an individual with high reconstructing ability has limited possibility of quick reconstruction of information;
- when an individual with low reconstructing ability is forced to reconstruct information too fast;
- when an individual has no possibility to take a job related to his or her gift;

as well as when:

- a person with high processing ability is forced to co-operate with someone with low processing ability;
- a person with low processing ability is forced to co-operate with someone with high processing ability;
- a person with high reconstructing ability is forced to co-operate with someone with low reconstructing ability;
- a person with low reconstructing ability is forced to co-operate with someone with high reconstructing ability;
- a person possessing a gift in a given field is forced to co-operate with someone possessing no talent in that field;
- a person possessing no gift in a given field is forced to co-operate with someone talented in that or another field.

The following situations should be included in those to which people cannot adapt because of their emissivity, which is the most important trait connected with relationships between people:

- when a person endowed with highly positive emissivity has no possibility to express his or her feelings and imaginations freely, when he or she is

forced to subordination, discipline, system, to play the roles of a performer, an organizer or a ruler;

- when a person endowed with medium positive emissivity has no possibility to draw attention of his or her environment, as well as when he or she is forced to realize organizational tasks and rule other people;
- when a person endowed with zero emissivity has no possibility to follow rules, maintain a given order and fulfill his or her duties, as well as when he or she is forced to break generally accepted rules and play a role of a creator or a ruler;
- when a person with medium negative emissivity has no possibility to organize useful activities, as well as when he or she is forced to play a role of a creator and interpreter of creativity;
- when a person endowed with highly negative emissivity has no possibility to rule other people, make free decisions and reach unlimited sociological power contained in his or her environment, as well as when he or she is forced to play a role of a creator, interpreter of creativity or a performer.

Apart from emissivity, the two remaining traits connected with relationships between people are tolerance and flexibility. People, when given a free choice, select situations within the limits of their tolerance, while they accept constrained situations only within the limits of their flexibility. This is because within one's range of tolerance, he or she accepts stimuli voluntarily, considering them favourable, and thus – desirable. It is no use trying to constrain people's reactions within the range of their tolerance, because they will always react to desirable stimuli. Beyond the range of their tolerance, yet within the range of their flexibility, people accept stimuli, but this is a constrained reaction. The further those stimuli are from the limits of one's tolerance, the greater his or her resistance will be and the stronger constraint must be applied to be effective. Thus, flexibility is a human personality trait that determines constraint efficacy. When the stimuli are beyond the range of one's flexibility, his or her resistance is impossible to overcome, and nothing can cause him or her surrender to such stimuli. Thus, people cannot positively react to situations formed by their environment when stimuli coming from this environment are beyond their tolerance and flexibility.

Thus, if the stimuli coming from people's occupational environment are within the limits of their tolerance, they are accepted voluntarily, and people willingly react adequately to them, so it is no use forcing them to anything, and there is no need to adapt to such kind of stimuli. Occupational activities, if located within the limits of people's tolerance, are fully satisfying for them.

Stimuli coming from people's occupational environment, located within their flexibility, but trying to constrain their reaction, are perceived as undesirable.

ble, so people resist to them. The greater flexibility a given person possesses, the smaller is his or her resistance, and the more probable is that he or she would react as if the stimulus were desirable. Within the limits of one's flexibility, even if the situation formed by the environment is perceived as unfavourable, he or she can adapt to it. The magnitude of effort that must be made in order to adapt depends of one's flexibility (the greater flexibility, the smaller effort must be made). People perceive their occupational adaptation within the limits of their flexibility as necessity, but their feeling of dissatisfaction and psychological discomfort will grow when approaching outer limits of their flexibility.

People can meet requirements of their occupational situation within the limits of their tolerance and flexibility, and thus these limits determine their occupational usefulness. When one's occupational situation is within the limits of one's tolerance, his or her motivational tensions are reduced, and the stimuli located within these limits are perceived as favourable ones because they induce positive emotions. Such stimuli facilitate self-realization and induce feeling of satisfaction. Situations within the limits of one's flexibility increase motivational tension, stimuli located within these limits are perceived as undesirable because they induce negative emotions, but despite they are stressful, people can cope with them.

In the course of the aging process, people's tolerance increases (but the rate and degree of this process can be different in different people), while their flexibility decreases. Thus, it may be predicted that one's ability to adapt voluntarily to one's occupational environment will increase with age, while ability to adapt under constraint will decrease.

It should be noted that, according to the theory of constant individual traits of personality, magnitude of tolerance depends on kind of stimuli coming to people. If the kind of stimuli is compatible with one's talent, which is a trait connected with intellectual functions, more tolerance will be revealed in reference to such stimuli than it would be if the stimuli were not compatible with one's talent.

It should also be emphasized that people better tolerate stimuli coming in a quantity compatible to their processing ability, at a rate compatible with their reconstruction ability, and when the kind of such stimuli is compatible with their talents.

Potential level of occupational adaptation possible to achieve for a given man, at different stages of his or her occupational life, as well as conditions necessary for him or her to really achieve such a level, can be, with certain approximation, determined on the basis of the theory of constant individual traits of personality.

Summing up, it can be stated that:

- the process of professional and educational adaptation can proceed undisturbed only in reference to one's variable traits;
- if one's professional and educational situation is in line with constant individual traits of his or her personality, it can be said that, within these traits, he or she is perfectly adapted to his or her occupational situation, without any need for further adaptation;
- if one's professional and educational situation is totally incompatible with constant individual traits of his or her personality, it can be said that there is a total lack of adaptation within these traits, without any chance to achieve such an adaptation;
- if one's professional and educational situation is totally incompatible with constant individual traits of his or her personality, there is only one possibility of adapting his or her professional and educational situation to these traits, which boils down to changing his or her professional and educational situation;
- as occupational adaptation depends on all traits of human personality, efforts made to achieve such adaptation should be focused on adaptation to the imposed professional and educational situations within one's variable traits, and on changing of one's professional and educational situation within his or her constant individual traits.

The above mentioned implications of the theory of constant individual traits of personality for adaptation process are consistent with opinions of experts in the field of psychology, who think that disturbances of adaptation behaviour reflect a person's individual style that, according to this theory, results from his or her constant individual traits.

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## **PRZYSTOSOWANIE DO PROCESU PRACY I PROCESU EDUKACYJNEGO W ASPEKTCIE KONCEPCJI STAŁYCH INDYWIDUALNYCH CECH OSOBOWOŚCI**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule omówiono psychologiczne aspekty przystosowania. Przytoczono opinie specjalistów z dziedziny poradnictwa zawodowego na temat przystosowania zawodowego. Przeanalizowano przystosowanie zawodowe z punktu widzenia koncepcji stałych indywidualnych cech osobowości. Przedstawiono implikacje koncepcji stałych indywidualnych cech osobowości dla przystosowania do procesu pracy i procesu edukacyjnego.

*Słowa kluczowe:* przystosowanie, proces pracy, proces edukacyjny, stałe indywidualne cechy osobowości