

The World of Boundaryless Careers – About the Need for a Subject’s Proactivity

Agnieszka Cybal-Michalska

Faculty of Educational Studies
Adam Mickiewicz University
Poznań, Poland

ABSTRACT

The specific character of qualitatively new changes in the relations between globality and locality implies a completely new perception of reality, ways of interpreting the world and a new quality of judgments about the condition of a modern man – including an individual as “a manager” of one’s own career. The contemporary study of careers requires taking into consideration multicontextual changes in the world of work, which make individuals face new challenges. A career development and career management programs concentrate on multiple aspects: from individual careers and a relationship between work and a family; to policy and strategic dilemmas, such as the aging workforce, the use of new technology or organizational performance. The logic of these changes inclines thinking about “boundaryless career”, “protean career” and “post-corporate career”, as a sort of *novelty* in planning a broadly defined career and how to climb the career ladder. The zeitgeist implies stressing individual initiative and proactivity, as no job is guaranteed forever and no abilities guarantee a market value. This is the world of careers conceived as “an individual’s property”.

Keywords: Boundaryless Careers, Proactivity, Global Society

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary globalizing society in the world of abrupt economic fluctuations attempts to react to the updated fourth wave of economic development in an adequate way, which has been emphasized by J. G. Maree and Z. Pollard (Maree, Pollard, 2009). The phenomenon of global economic transformation is accompanied by a range of qualitative changes. These changes, apart from being geographical in nature, encompass the functional dimension, integrating the world-wide distributed activities focused on the following: the emergence of novel forms of market economy (global economies: financial, commodity, stock markets, global production networks or bank systems etc.), new communication tools, as well as the development of advanced technologies (technological development: information, satellite, telecommunication, computation and biotechnological development etc.). This integration also refers to new entities in world economy (transnational corporations, international mergers, global institutions), and new principles and ways of functioning of institutions (liberalization and development of exchange markets, development of international trade, evolution of global macroeconomy) (Liberska, 2002). The contemporary globalization processes in world economy, as well as its reorganization and restructuring, provoke a thought on the specification and mode of global economic transformation (Cybal-Michalska, 2006). Undoubtedly, a constituent element of the global economy phenomenon, in particular the development of free market economy, is a series of changes in work environment, work structure, work perception and in the domain of features, values and meaning associated with work (Cybal-Michalska, 2012a, Cybal-Michalska, 2012b). These changes are of significance for constructing and course of career and modification of its individual paths.

As a result of the aforementioned changes, attraction is drawn to the quality of work organization system (work flexibility allows for an adequate reaction to demands of job market), increase in job satisfaction (usually through a change in job function and its content), and gradual decrease in the traditional career model (Strykowska, 2001). Processes which affect the world of work are also concerned with transformations in career planning (as part of general professional development), which play a role in changes in career counseling (Maree, 2010). This vision implies a novel perception of reality, ways of interpreting the world and judgments about the condition of a modern man, including an individual as a “manager” of their own career.

THE CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF CAREERS

The study of careers requires taking into consideration multicontextual changes in the world of work, which make individuals face new challenges. The increasing role of a career and an ability to plan, manage and monitor one’s own career in a lifelong perspective, are the most important challenges that individuals have to confront. A career development and career management programs are focused on multiple aspects ranging from individual careers and a relationship between work and a family to policy and strategic dilemmas, such as the aging workforce, the use of new technologies or organizational productiveness. Looking at the problem from this perspective, research in the subject of careers means examining, both, individual and organizational changes, as well as changes in a given society.

Global tendencies, differentiation processes and interdependence of various spheres of social life update the problem of implementing a lifelong learning idea, planning, management, development and shaping of careers. The logic of these changes inclines to consider “boundaryless career”, “protean career” and “post-corporate career” as a sort of novelty in planning a broadly-defined career and climbing the career ladder. The zeitgeist implies stressing individual initiative and proactivity, as no job is granted forever and no abilities guarantee a market value. This is the world of careers conceived as “an individual’s property”.

Various attempts at theorizing on careers show the problematic complexity of this phenomenon. The contemporary debate on the topic of careers is to a large extent connected with emphasizing proactive behavior of an individual. A relevant contribution to the understanding of careers constitutes social learning theory. A. Bandura developed the concept of proactivity in a career as an element of social modeling, conceptualized as a socio-cognitive theory. This tendency is manifested in considering a career not only as “an individual’s property” but also as a range of possibilities serving an individual and organizational development, and a change in social environment. Hall and Mirvis (1996) introduced the notion of a “protean career” which makes the relationship with the linear and vertical career path model rather problematic. The adopted understanding of a career considers all aspects of an individual’s life relevant for its development. An individual is found in the career center, while the professional and organizational context function as a stage, on which all professional events serving career development are played. The proposed career construct is closely connected with another theoretical concept, namely a “boundaryless career”. What plays a crucial role in shaping an individual’s career is his or her, rather than organizations’, proactivity, as claimed by Arthur and Rousseau (1996). Career models characterized by change, elasticity and “boundarylessness” will encompass the careers’ idiosyncratic structure (Patton, McMahon, 2006).

J. Biolos emphasized the aspect of shaping professional identity by an individual being “the master of his or her fate”. The author distinguished between 5 career models, considering them to be the models for the 21st century. On the basis of studies by M. Driver and K. Brousseau, the author suggested the following types: the expert; the traditionalist; the portfolio manager, and enriched the typology with the models of the playful- as well as the spontaneous entrepreneur. The first refers to an individual who construes his identity with the goal of becoming a perfectionist in one field. Being part of a group of experts is ensured by the individual’s cognitive curiosity and a need to broaden their know-how in order to be able to put the acquired knowledge into practice. As emphasized by M. Driver, it is frequently the case that the need for security, apart from the need for knowledge gathering and its usefulness, provides the trigger for expanding one’s expertise. Second, the model of the traditionalist, as stated by J. Biolos, encompasses individuals who climb the career ladder within a particular company, organization or corporation; identify subsequent career stages; and master the rules governing a company’s policy with the aim of reaching the highest position. In consequence, individual success or failure (due to a limited number of positions only very few succeed) depend on – more than in the remaining career models - the organization as such and adhering to its rules. The traditionalists are individuals who aspire to achievements, power and exerting their influence on the functioning of the organization, which they feel strongly affiliated with. The model which seems to

be particularly attractive is the one in which an individual has a chance to follow a straight-line and well-identified career path enjoying the opportunities of being promoted, and at the same time participates in the context of permanent socio-cultural changes. The category of lifelong travelers across various career paths can be subsumed under the portfolio manager. According to J. Biolos, such individuals set out on a journey with the aim of gaining professional experience, acquiring new skills and collecting achievements to boost their career portfolio. The main professional motivation of this career type is the need for creativity, independence, experiencing diversity, eagerness for personal development and future planning. Portfolio managers can develop their career within one or several closely-related fields but can well gather unrelated experiences when working for the institution in which they are employed or when changing professional environment. Next, the planful entrepreneur shapes his career via year-long experience, fulfilling various roles and functions typical of held positions in order to be able to make use of them in the self-employment context in a related company. The last career model distinguished by J. Biolos is the spontaneous entrepreneur. Such an individual is driven by passion, in the name of which he or she is ready to give up on the comfort of permanent employment. The spontaneous entrepreneur tends to value experience which can be gathered when working in organizations of a specific rank only modestly. It is due to the fact that individuals of this career type, just like in the case of the precious model, quickly become convinced that they are destined for self-employment. In contrast to the planful entrepreneur, the career path of the spontaneous entrepreneur does not develop according to a plan and in a thoughtful manner (Biolos, 2006).

In the debate on career development in the world of boundaryless careers, it has been stressed that the responsibility for shaping one's career is shifted from an institution to an individual. The fundamental feature of the post-organizational era is the role of knowledge, which is highly valued on the job market, and therefore becomes the basis for the individual's mobility in their career (Mayrhofer, Iellatchitch, 2005).

The image of an individual as a doer constitutes a relevant theoretical construct. This issue has been outlined by Herr (1992), who claims that individuals are capable of creating their own career. Careers do not exist, in opposition to professions and work (Patton, McMahon, 2006). As noted by K. Obuchowski, this shift in orientation from an individual's external to internal conditioning (Obuchowski, 2000) makes one consider careers in relation to an individual, whose career is his or her own property (Bańka, 2005). At this point it must be noted that Collin and Watts (1996) discussed the need to revalue the way in which we tend to think about career. The authors claim that one should focus on a career as a subjective construct of an individual, rather than on a career as an objective construct (Patton, McMahon, 2006). A subject develops a career on the basis of his or her perception and attitude towards it, which means, according to Patton and McMahon (1999), that a career is a pattern of influences which coexist in an individual's life (Patton, McMahon, 2006). As regards boundaryless careers, it should be mentioned that the individual career model, typical of American society (in which an individualistic orientation prevails) is based on a belief that individuals are doers of changes in their careers, while employers only respond to endeavors and activities undertaken by their employees.

This view represents an individualistic tendency (determines ambition, motivation to act and the feeling of being a doer), which finds validation in economic theories promoting investments into individuals' potential within an organization (Rosenbaum, 2004). Such an idea is the basis for considering a career as a "property" of an individual, taking into account individual career choices, individual career planning strategies or individual stages of career development. The evaluation of this viewpoint requires emphasizing that much as individuals have control over their careers, managing careers should also accommodate a range of organizational experiences forming mechanisms of a career system (Cybal-Michalska, 2013).

Defining a career as the "property" of individuals (Baruch, Peiperl, 2000, Bańka, 2005) is based on an individualistic assumption on the unique character of every person's career. A career is seen as a accumulation of a series of unique jobs, positions and professional experiences (Bańka, 2005) as well as the responsibility of an individual for constructing their own career. In this context, studying the nature of careers, discovering a variety of meanings associated with the construct at the theoretical and empirical level provokes a thought on, both, a man in the world of boundaryless careers and boundaryless careers in a life of a man. The subject matter of the subsequent sections of the paper is proactivity in careers.

PROACTIVITY IN CAREERS

Proactive behaviour, seen as an individual's career-oriented activities, was the main subject of interest of Z. King, (2004), R. A. Noe (1996) and C. Orpen (1994). Research into this field allowed to distinguish 2 groups of proactive behavior components, which can be described as cognitive and behavioral (De Vos, De Clippeleer, Dewilde, 2009). The fundamental characteristic of proactive behavior is taking the initiative and changing the environment. This means that an individual's ability to shape the environment exceeds the environment's potential in shaping human behavior (Bańka, 2005).

There are clear presumptions to make proactivity a strategy of (self-)education. The example can be American educational programs that support career development. These programs have been developed since 1960s and they concentrate on the orientation of coaching, on the implementation of a career development theory in order to prepare students to move from education to the job market. The essence here is the awareness of career choices, that an individual has to make, as well as active planning which is immanently linked with the choices. In this context, three resources, referring to the strand of considerations about models of education for career, are worth mentioning: Career Education: A Lifelong Process by Fuller and Whealon (1979) refers to the philosophy and history of education for career development and it describes models of integration of curriculum and the preparation of teachers to achieve the goal of supporting the planning of perspective and career development. Encyclopedic entry by Herra and Cramer (1996), entitled Career Guidance and Counselling through the Lifespan is a compendium of knowledge on methods of implementation of activities and the quality of educational programs for career development. Moreover, empirical base, documenting research results in the implementation of programs for career development in order to alleviate the transition of youth from the education to the job market, is presented in the work by Baker and Taylor (1998). It is a meta-analysis of evaluation effects (and their multi-contextual discussion) of realization of educational programs for career development (Savickas, 1999).

Adaptation to an amorphous environment takes place through practice of learning a new context, in which an individual is rooted and which is also changed by this individual. The strength of influence on a current situation, or on a social environment has an individualized character and it depends on the subject's tendency to take active measures, which, in an indirect way, cause changes in the environment. Contemporary studies in the subject of people who are resistant to the influence of the environment and who have tendency to take active measures to have their impact on the surrounding reality, refers to the idea which is called individual's proactivity by T.S. Bateman and J.M. Crant (Bańka, 2005). On the plane of (self-)education, initiative seems to be too significant to be omitted. The initiative is understood here as a component that distinguishes proactive behaviors, as an ability to initiate action and to gather resource and support for a process of change. The essence of a change is not narrowed to merely starting it but it means commitment to achieve the aim to complete the change (Bańka, 2005). Self-education space favors and makes the subject's right decisions about their professional career meaningful. Temporal orientation for the future, linked with creating educational-professional path, will allow an individual to be more concentrated on "a choice", not "fate" or "randomness". If, as E. Jednaka-Dąbrowska stresses, hundreds of thousands of graduates leave the university, only the best prepared ones will win the race to get a satisfactory job. These are the people, who, in advance, thought about their future in their professional career, set a goal and started to realize it. The motto: "You plan – you achieve more" (Jednaka-Dąbrowska, 2011) is a call to make the effort of (self-)education through the requirement of proactive, behavioral orientations in career. Such thinking is closer to the promotion of independent, causative subjectivity, than to adaptation to existing conditions. Entering the road of subject's activity is supported by education oriented toward openness to new possibilities and situations and not uncritical anchorage in traditional, homogeneous assumptions and rules. Discovering the sense of multitude of possibilities means entering the road of cognitive and behavioral proactivity, without the necessity to loose axionormative points of reference. Proactive individuals have no one, who will adjust them to the needs of life environment, they alone, in an active, subjective and agency way, take causative actions (Bańka, 2005). Proactive personality is linked with proactive behavior through the scope of self-efficacy in a role and flexible role orientation, which is combined with trust of other subjects of social life Parker S. K, Turner N., Williams H. M.

A. Bańka mentions other characteristics, that indicate proactivity: subject's involvement in initiatives (personal), subjects' definitions of their roles in order to show self-efficacy in roles and responsible involvement. In the context of career, M. Frese says, that personal initiative is a measure for human behavior, within which individuals take up active, self-initiating attitude to work, that extend formal duties, tasks and obligations (Bańka, 2005). The feeling of self-efficacy of role width, as a construct defined on the basis of organizational psychology, describes, as S.K. Parker stresses, the ability of a subject to do a wider scope of tasks, than a given role demands (Bańka, 2005). According to Gist and Mitchell, role self-efficacy, also called assessment of individuals' potential, is a fundamental variable of subjects' professional motivation. Subjects refer to the causative potential inside of them, tend to do their

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tasks more efficiently, to deal with changes more effectively, to set more complex goals or to use effective task strategies. Generalized self-efficacy, which is global competence referring to individual's potential oriented toward proactive task performance of integrative or interpersonal tasks, contributes to increased feeling of causative, personal control (Parker, Turner, Williams, 2006).

An important aspect of status and proactive conditions, personal disposition, that E. W. Morrison and C.C Phelps notice is "responsible engagement". This construct is defined as a subject's constructive effort oriented toward the negation of status quo in order to introduce functional changes in performed tasks (Bańka, 2005). Similarly, Frese, Kring, Soose and Zempel's (1996) concept also emphasizes the problem of personal initiative of a subject. Their concept defines proactivity as "behavior oriented toward initiative (subjects do something, when no one tells them to do it and when their role does not demand it; (...) long focus, waiting for future problems or possibilities) and perseverance (overcoming limitations, so that there was a possibility for changes) (Parker, Turner, Williams, 2006).

Continual and cognitive practice, defined as a shift towards the development of proactive personality in career, will be "substance" for establishing the following features: search for changes, perception of possibilities, creation of situations, showing initiative and taking action (Bańka, 2005). T. Bateman and J.M. Crant's views had considerable influence on the way of thinking about proactivity as personality disposition and proactivity as involvement resulting from conditions, needs and contextual circumstances. According to the authors, proactive people are distinguished by seven inter-related characteristics. Emphasizing the personal dimension and entering the road of (self-)education means concentration on creating the following features: looking for the possibility of change, anticipation of problems and taking remedial measures, looking for ways of achieving goals, entering the path of action with the awareness of risk and responsibility, perseverance in the pursuit of goals and in goal achievement, showing achievements and implement changes, having impact on the environment (Bańka, 2005).

Peculiarity of people searching for the possibility of change is "scanning" the environment to make changes or to achieve something. Proactive individuals enter the path of action, and if there is such a need – they go beyond usual limitations of a situation in order to get possible profits which result from its transformation. Defining effective and oriented toward a change goals is another feature that constitutes a subject's proactivity. Motivational factors should include: maximization of performance, responsibility, looking for changes, that will transform the environment. As a result, proactive achievements motivate subjects and their social environment to take new paths of action. Thus, proactivity changes human perception and constitutes "the substance" to go beyond borders. It is identified from the perspective of a subject and of the environment. Anticipation of problems and taking remedial measures is realized through the analysis of a subject's achievements, as well as through seeking changes outside one's own actions, the use of the informational feedback, active participation in meetings and tasks in events that create changes. Being interested in "creating new tradition" is another psychological feature of proactive people. "Creative individualism" means permanent attitude to look for ways of achieving defined goals. Entering the path of action and not stopping on the idea, while being aware of the responsibility and risk is another characteristic of pre-development. Proactive individuals are distinguished by perseverance. It means that when the situation requires it, they are willing to change their strategies. This striving to achieve a goal, without stubbornness at ways of its achieving, is a proactive individual's attribute of perseverance. Moreover, goal achievement and change implementation, as well as commitment have impact on social environment (Bańka, 2005).

Action facing the development of proactive orientation and attitudes will be also combined with the control assessment, change orientation and flexible role orientation. The control assessment refers to the subject's expectations linked with the feeling of control over situations and having influence on results of a task which contributes to taking responsibility and seeking possibilities of further actions and initiative. As S.K. Parker, N. Turner and H.M. Williams emphasize, active orientation toward changes, identified with felt responsibility for a change or an individuals' belief that they are personally obliged to bring about a constructive change, is associated with high sense of a subject's responsibility for a change and with treating challenges as positive experience, which gives individuals the sense of personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Features that foretell proactive behavior also include flexible orientation toward a role. Individuals with flexible orientation toward a role, define their roles in a broad way and, as Campbell emphasizes, they are committed to team goals, the sense of responsibility for team success and interested in improving domains, which go beyond their narrow tasks (Parker, Turner, Williams, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

Proactivity facing cognitive and behavioral components of behavioral orientation in career, constitutes space for a subject's agency. Proactivity, as an attitude of a subject's commitment in a change of the surrounding reality, is a part of Giddens' logics of influence of human actions on the shape of a social structure, and therefore, on its plasticity. A subject choosing from the multiplicity of possibilities, facing the goals of the career development in a direct way, has influence on its planning and construction, making this multitude meaningful. This view constitutes the basis of perceiving career as an individual's "property". As a consequence, it means focusing on proactive role implementation and proactive problem solving, as well as on subject's causative control and the willingness to explore the inner and the outer. It also means obligations and responsibility for agency resulting from one's own preferences.

The multiplicity of meanings of the surrounding world of "careers without borders" and sources of cultural meanings create numerous possibilities to construct careers by individuals looking for meanings that will make their existence meaningful. Marketisation of almost every sphere of life is a neuralgic aspect for the assessment of the discussed attitude. From an educational point of view, being a manager of knowledge in case of one's own issues (Lanthaler, Zugmann, 2000) is a developmental effect, taking into account the stream of changes of the surrounding and constantly newly constructed reality.

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