A World of Diverse Opportunities – On the Need for Proactive Career Capital Renewal in the Globalizing Society

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary discourse on such issues as the quality of the globalizing world providing diverse opportunities, factors determining changes in the social system, and the condition of the human being seeking their place in the reality undergoing permanent change, is one of the most important research orientations. The contemporary social context opens up a wide range of opportunities for individuals to build their own careers. Thus, it seems justified to inquire about the proactivity in the career planning process and to determine whether and how an individual can be prepared to develop, manage, and monitor his/her career to ensure a satisfying experience of oneself and one's place in reality of the globalizing world. Contemporary career studies advocate taking into account the process of investing in career capital, the immanent characteristic of which is the subject's orientation towards proactivity. What becomes an important feature of the individual's mind is the prospective temporal orientation towards the following: the anticipation of events and their unintended effects, the ability to forecast and plan future actions and to assess the consequences, but above all, the ability to create future desired states of affairs, creating new options of participation and action. Undoubtedly, an important issue that requires inclusion in the course of a person's life is career development and renewal of career capital. The research on careers means the study of both changes of individuals and changes of organizations, as well as transformations in society. In the discontinuous space-time and heterogeneous system of cultural meanings in the world of global change, career development and the formation of an individual's own professional identity becomes a cognitive practice based on individual experimentation. The contemporary social configuration in which the search for identity has become a flexible point of reference opens up a range of numerous possibilities for an individual to create his/her own career in the course of life. Continuous development has become an inherent property of career capital renewal. The multiplicity, fragmentation, variability, and complexity, which characterize the organization of social life in the globalizing society, determine changes in the perception of career development and overcoming the tension between the experiences of the past and the possibilities of the future.

Keywords: Globalization, Career capital, Proactivity, Professional identity, Development

INTRODUCTION

The neoliberal discourse in economics has influenced the quality of the debate surrounding career domain. Over the past four decades, there has

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been a proliferation and multiplicity of co-occurring theoretical assumptions about career. A distinctive feature of thinking about career is not only the variety of meanings in which the concept is used, but also the language of economics, which is increasingly indicative of the quality of the debate. Positioning the reflections on the possible, although more and more dominant way of perceiving career, may also bring to mind the reflection on the rightness of views about the excessively economic shading of semantic meanings ascribed to career. And although reflections on careers can also be accused of a too simplistic approach to human nature, undoubtedly an important issue that requires consideration from the perspective of an individual and in the course of human life is the development of career and the process of renewing career capital through proactivity (Cybal-Michalska, 2013; Cybal-Michalska, 2016).

In the "discontinuous space-time and heterogeneous system of cultural meanings" (Misztal, 2000, p. 157), career development and formation of professional identity of an individual becomes a cognitive practice based on unique experimentation. The contemporary social configuration in which the search for identity has become a flexible point of reference, opens up a range of numerous possibilities for creating a career in the course of life in the globalizing world of multiple possibilities.

GLOBALIZATION, CULTURAL PLURALISM – ON THE ORIGINS OF A WORLD OF MULTIPLE POSSIBILITIES

From the opposition to conventional theories of social modernization (especially their "Western-centrism") and lack of interest in civilizational and cultural diversity, the perspective of viewing the world as a whole evolving in "globally" suggested directions arose. According to Golka, globalization has not created a homogenous world, and it is unclear if this vision will ever come true. This view is echoed by Featherstone, who argues that the current process of globalization, which contradicts earlier expectations for an increasingly homogeneous world, leads to a growing sensitivity to difference and is a consequence of the fact that the flows of information, knowledge, money, goods, people, and ideas have intensified to such an extent that the sense of spatial distances that separated and insulated people from the need to take into account all other entities of social life that make up humanity has been destroyed. As a result, "we all find ourselves in the backyard of others" (Kahn, 1995, pp. 126–128). Globalization as a phenomenon growing out of the process of differentiation and cultural pluralism of the modern world, is seen in the perspective proposed by of L. Roniger. According to the author, globalization is "both the diffusion of specific models of economic development, growth, and marketization, as well as the corresponding adaptation or rejection of cultural patterns of westernization" (Starosta, 2000, p. 48). In this context, globalization should rather be understood as a worldwide web of interdependence, affecting individual societies and states so that they can be a part of a certain whole (Golka, 2001, p. 79). The best-known representatives of this approach, A. Giddens, A. McGrew and P. Streeten, argue that globalisation understood as interdependence, influence, and intensification

of relations between states, is an expression of perceiving the world as a network of interrelations. Only in this way can we treat globalization holistically and indicate its civilization implications. At the basis of A. Giddens' considerations lies the assumption that "globalization means the intensification of social relations on a global scale, which links various localities in such a way that local events are shaped by events occurring many thousands of miles away and influence them in turn" (Kempny, 1998, p. 242). Specifying the scope of this concept, it should be considered, following A. McGrew, that globalization "consists of the multiplicity of connections and interactions of states and societies that make up the current world system" (Golka, 1999, p. 114). Consequently, as L. Roniger points out, globalization is characterized by: "the transnationalization of cultural patterns, the continentalization of economic exchanges, regional transnationalization, and the increased importance of locality" (Starosta, 2000, p. 48). P. Streeten also draws attention to the aspect of deepening global connections in almost all spheres of contemporary socio-cultural, economic and political life, defining globalization as "the intensification of economic, political and cultural relations across borders" (Liberska, 2002, p. 17).

The question as to whether the term globalisation refers to global consequences or global undertakings is not the root of the above statements. The answer is provided by Z. Bauman, who emphasises that the ubiquitous term globalisation most often refers to global effects, "still unintended and unforeseen", and not to global initiatives and undertakings. A consequence of the above-mentioned view is the recognition of globalization as a largely uncontrollable, spontaneous and irreversible process, where it is difficult to determine the state of globalization in the contemporary world, whose fate largely depends on chance at the level of global actions, dependencies and interests. Perspectives on viewing the globalizing world are thus difficult to grasp because of its dynamic and always-in-the-making nature. This view finds contemporary confirmation in the deliberations of Z. Bauman, according to which "the concept of globalization conveys an indeterminate, capricious and autonomous character of the world and its affairs, no center, no desktop, no team of directors, no executive office. Globalization is another name for <new world disorder>" (Bauman, 2000, p. 71) and "refers directly to G.H. von Wright's <anonymous forces>; forces operating in the void, on a foggy, soggy, untameable and untraversable <no man's land>, extending beyond the reach of anyone's ability to specifically plan and act" (Bauman, pp. 72–73).

In the context of the above considerations, it is worth emphasizing, after K. Obuchowski, that for the first time in the history of mankind there appeared a real chance for personal satisfaction and freedom of initiative of the immediate creators of ideas and things to become a condition for proper functioning of their workplaces, and not just the content of utopian, pro-human slogans (Obuchowski, 2000). Indeed, as A. Giddens points out, a choice is a fundamental component of everyday activities of individuals. Intellectual emancipation and the capacity for reflexive behaviour, in the world of permanent change and diversity of social environments (in which the individual is involved directly and indirectly) enable the expression of personal

subjectivity through the creation of individual lifestyles, the "choice" of identity (Whittington, 1992, pp. 695–696), or investing in the career capital (Cybal-Michalska A., 2020).

PROACTIVITY IN CAREER – EMPOWERMENT OF AN INDIVIDUAL AND UNDERTAKING ACTIONS LEADING TO CHANGE

Contemporary discussion on career is largely linked to an emphasis on proactive behaviour. The context for developing, planning, directing and managing careers as well as making career decisions by an individual is provided by the fusion of knowledge about the opportunities inherent in the individual and the recognition of the labour market and the opportunities found in the world of work. This tendency manifests itself in treating a career as a "property" of the individual, but also in recognizing careers as inseparable opportunities for the development of the individual and for the development of the organization and changing the social environment. Consideration regarding the process of socialization into the labour market focuses on the aspect of spontaneous subject-initiated "adaptation through the search for information and (...) adaptation through the development of feelings and facilitation of adaptation to the <<unknown>>" (Bańka, 2005-A, pp. 32–33). For Greco, these basic elements of subjectivity are the foundation of career planning and management because, as he puts it, you can create opportunities for the future by taking charge of your career. The initial involvement means taking full control of actions (Bell N. E, Staw B. M., 2004, p. 232). Adequate and realistic self-assessment and perception of social facts form the basis for innovative proactivity not only in an individual but also in social dimension, because "career, work or market are social categories" (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 35).

Proactive behaviour, understood as intentional actions of an individual, has been the focus of Z. King; R. A. Noe; and C. Orpen. Research has distinguished two groups of proactivity components, which can be described as: cognitive components and behavioural components (De Vos A., De Clippeleer I., Dewilde T., 2009, p. 763). The main distinguishing feature of proactivity is that the individual takes the initiative to change the environment to an extent that exceeds the ability of the environment to shape his or her behaviour. Causal actions undertaken and manifested in social reality – as emphasized by T. S. Bateman, J. M. Crant – may have their source in proactivity as a permanent personality trait, but they may also be the result of "proactivity as an attitude of engagement resulting from life conditions, circumstances and other needs created by the environment" (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 11). The construct of proactivity thus defined, as J. M. Crant points out, includes both personality and contextual variables. The way of thinking about proactivity as a personality disposition and proactivity as an attitude of engagement resulting from contextual conditions, needs, and circumstances has been significantly influenced by the views of T. Bateman and J. M. Crant. Proactive people, according to the authors, are distinguished by seven interrelated traits: seeking opportunities for change, setting effective and change-oriented goals, anticipating problems and taking countermeasures,

seeking ways to achieve goals, embarking on a path of action with awareness of risk and acceptance of responsibility, persistence in pursuit of the goal and achievement of the goal, claiming achievements and implementing changes by influencing the environment (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 9-11).

The essence of proactivity is therefore the self-efficacy of the role, also known as the individual's assessment of their potential. As emphasized by M. E. Gist and T. R. Mitchell, among others, it is a fundamental variable of a subject's motivation, which, referring to the causal potential inherent in his or her, tends to perform a task more efficiently, deal with changes more effectively, set more complex goals, or apply effective task strategies. Generalized self-efficacy is a competence referring to the potential of an individual to perform tasks proactively and contributes to an increased sense of subjective causal control (Parker P. K., Turner N., Williams H. M., 2006, p. 638).

CAREER CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL AS A RESULT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S PROACTIVE BEHAVIOURAL ORIENTATION

Thus, the continuous development is an inherent property of career capital renewal. Career development is a lifelong process of a complex nature. It is the result of the integration of two processes: career planning by the individual and the processes of leadership and career management. In this sense, it is understood as the achievement of career goals by the perpetrator. The distinguishing feature of proactive career planning, leadership and management is "the awareness of being an individual that performs actions in the desired direction" (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 35) and influences the reality surrounding them by initiating changes. Between the activities of career planning and leadership or career management there is a kind of qualitative "connection", which in turn determines the conditions of career development and affects the level of reward and job satisfaction. Treating the distinguished components as correlates, we can point to the conceptual model of career development (Adekola B., 2011, pp. 101–103). This position is specified in the views of J. Adomaitiene and I. Zubrickiene, who emphasize the individualized nature of the results of the planned career because they are associated with individual career satisfaction, self-realization and quality of life, all of which are understood and considered in an individual way (Adomaitiene J., Zubrickiene I., 2010, p. 98).

The concept of career development was first introduced to the literature by Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, and Herman. The basis of their discussion was the recognition that career choice is a developmental process that takes many years and ends in early adulthood. In subsequent years Ginzberg further defined his position by assuming that it is a process of making professional decisions (occupational choices) throughout life. This view is close to the one proposed by theorists of the concept of career development. Brown and Brooks described career development as a process of preparation for choice, a process of choosing and constantly making choices from many professions available in the society. This process for most people is a lifelong one (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, pp. 5–6).

In the literature we can come across attempts to equate the terms "professional development" and "career development". As A. Bańka defines it, the career is "the property of the individual" hence professional development can be identified with the understanding of career development. In accordance with the orientation of lifelong learning the distinguished approach to the career does not limit its actualization neither in terms of temporal nor spatial horizon (Szumigraj, 2011, p. 209). For D. Super, the process of professional development involves the formation and realization of a professional self-image as a result of the interplay of inherited abilities, physical constitution, opportunities to observe and play various social roles, and an assessment of the extent to which role-playing meets with the approval of caregivers and peers (Cossette I., J. Allison Ch. J., 2007, p. 13).

The contemporary type of careers in the era of "boundaryless careers" has its consequences for the psychosocial and behavioral attitudes of individuals "whose goal in life is to be active in the workforce (a primary marker of mental health) rather than inactive (a primary indicator of social exclusion)" (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 35). The common thought is, as Amundsen captures it, that people derive meaning from the world of work through a subjective interpretation of their own career experience (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 6). When no a priori career scenario can guarantee a success, investment in a career identified as "the property" of the individual ("in their own right") becomes a necessity. The dynamics of contemporary careers called "boundaryless careers", requires, as Bańka explains, proactive planning, directing and managing careers not only among youth or people in early adulthood (i.e. "newcomers (...) trying to move from the educational market to the labour market"), but also among people from other age groups (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 35). This is precisely the inseparability of career and life, to which Wolfe and Kolb drew attention. Although their approach was proposed in the 1980s, taking into account the dynamics and pace of change, there is no reason to reject the definition of career development presented by the authors as incompatible with the times in which "career makes a career". They concluded that career development is related to the whole life, not only to work. Thus, it relates to the overall life of an individual in the ever-changing contexts of life. Environmental pressures and constraints, obligations that tie her/him to significant others, responsibilities towards children and aging parents, the total structure of circumstances are all factors that must be understood and reckoned with. In this respect, career development and personal development merge. Self and circumstances – evolving, changing, revealing themselves in mutual interaction – create the focus and drama of career development (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 7). The distinguished definition of dynamic nature (individual-environment, continuity and change) sheds additional light on the discussed problem. It allows recognizing that the construction of career is focused on the lifelong development of an individual, it is a process of crystallization of individual identity in relation not only to the world of work, but "the world in man and man in the world" (Cybal-Michalska A., 2018).

Qualitatively differentiated, within the existing theories, the process of career development is usually considered by showing both changes and

continuous elements. Changes taking place during the professional life cycle are connected with acquiring maturity. Career maturity as a construct derived from the psychology of human development and career development ascribes significant importance to the effective implementation of life tasks related to the crystallization of professional identity (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 19). In this sense, for D. Super the condition of transition to adulthood is to attain career maturity defined as a psychosocial construct capturing the degree of professional development of an individual on a continuum of life phases starting from the development phase until the phase of decline (Cossette I., J. Allison Ch. J., Donald E., 2007, p. 12). The measure of "career maturity" is to determine the degree of readiness of an individual to make career-related decisions (Freeman, 1993, p. 261). It should be noted, as Savickas particularly emphasizes, that although the occupational self-concept becomes more stable from the moment the subject enters late adolescence, which implies a certain continuity in choice and adaptation, self-identifications and occupational preferences change with time and with experience, just as the situations in which the individual lives and works change (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 63). In view of this fact, the concept of "career maturity" indicating the degree to which the subject fulfills career development tasks at each stage of life was replaced by Savickas' concept of "adaptability" (Leung P. A., 2008, p. 120). Thus, in a broader sense, the scope of the term "career maturity" encompasses not only the crystallization of professional identity and transition to fulfilling adult social roles, but also constant readiness for exploration and permanent involvement in it. Only through exploration of the environment and exploration of the possibilities inherent in the career, does the individual have the opportunity to achieve adequate and realistic self-esteem and competencies necessary for the realization of their career. The role of seeking information and acquiring it is indisputable for making binding life decisions (Bańka, 2005-A, p. 19).

In line with the general tendency for career development processes to become more intensified, career planning is considered to be the first step on the road to its realization. Individual plans and goals are "aligned" with expectations. Career planning in a general sense is considered as an initiative taken by an individual. Equally important in this aspect is the emphasis on the fact that an individual exercises personal control over his/her career and makes conscious choices about his/her profession, organization, tasks and self-development (D. T. Hall, after: Adekola B., 2011, p. 102). It is a lifelong process with a high degree of complexity, which includes, but is not limited to, the following aspects: career choice, job search, promotion, striving to change the quality of the pursued career (Adomaitiene J., Zubrickiene I., 2010, p. 91).

The distinguished aspects can be found in the theory of career development and exploration proposed by Donald E. Super, who is referred to by Savickas as a "planning researcher". Moreover, the author takes as a starting point the claim that planning, an attitude towards planning (which can be shaped) and temporal orientation towards the future are the basic factors determining readiness to choose a career. The conclusions that D. E. Super reaches, indicate a holistic approach to the issue of planning. As it refers to skills, values and

interests of an individual manifested in different social roles (importantly: not only in a professional role), and the task of an individual is to anticipate which of them will be available for him/her in his/her environment and to prepare for them and model them (Cossette I., Allison Ch. J., Donald E., 2007, p. 1). The activities that distinguish the anticipation phase, as emphasized in the original career construct by D. V. Tiedeman and R. O'Hara, include exploration, crystallization, and clarification. In the stage of exploration an individual, through numerous interactions with others and grasping the "difference" in relation to others, defines oneself, and in the stage of crystallization, on the basis of accumulated knowledge, creates an "image" of oneself and a vision of oneself. Choosing a career path is attained at the stage of clarification and it announces the transition to the implementation stage (such stages as: induction, reformation and integration) realized in the practice of a given profession in the work environment (Szymański M., 2010, p. 86).

Career planning according to D. T. Hall is defined as an intentional process to become aware of oneself, one's abilities, limitations, choices and their consequences, and to identify career goals (direction, timing and sequence of steps) and how to achieve them (Adekola B., 2009, p. 102). Moreover, the current state of the subject's competences at a given moment is a kind of basis for constructing the future. The accumulation of competences is a continuous process and always seen from the perspective of future career (Ścibiorek Z., 2009, pp. 70–71). These thoughts are extended by the perspective adopted by a recognized career theorist J. Krumboltz, emphasizing the lifelong practice of career planning, understood as continuous learning, improvement, acquisition of new skills and qualifications (Szymański M., 2010, p. 86). Its premise is based on the thesis about the need to live with permanent change in the world subject to permanent fluctuation. The pace and dynamics of changes on the labour market gives rise to the need to manage changes, which are evidence of career flexibility and constitute an expression of adequate response to various circumstances and events while maintaining balance in the sphere of professional life. Paying attention not only to the anticipation of events, but to the proactive approach is a clear focus of reflection on the causative agent in career planning. The direction of such understanding of career planning process is illustrated by Z. B. Leibowitz, claiming that it is a process in relation to which individuals define their skills, interests, values. Individuals are responsible for initiating their career plans, identifying their goals, values, and interests, and exploring their career options in order to plan their careers (Adekola B., 2011, p. 102).

However, it should be noted that the tendency to give importance to the initiation of actions (rather than stopping at aspirations) is supported by reflections on the management or career management. It is indisputable that an important determinant and condition of career development (in a word: the next step) after its prior planning is career management understood as a continuous process of organizing professional life. The goals and stages of career development planned by the individual require their implementation. This is done by means of skills, specific competencies and appropriate career

management practices (Adekola B., 2011, p. 102). We are living in an era of "career management", says Watts, and adds that the catchphrase "do-it-yourself" is becoming a norm. The inability to predict careers makes them "rigged" (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 6). Subjective agency is the key to a career. This view is echoed by Bolles, who recommends that you must take charge of your job search for yourself or your career change if you want to succeed (Bell N. E, Staw B. M., 2004, p. 232). Individuals are condemned to actively participate and collaborate in constructing their career development. Career management, as defined by D. T. Hall, (a similar position is taken by J. G. Greenhaus) is a continuous process of preparing, developing, implementing and monitoring career plans and strategies, taken by an individual or in cooperation with the career system of an organization (Adekola B., 2011, p. 102). Career management in the times of "boundaryless careers" becomes an activity that requires orientation towards the future (futuristic temporal orientation) as well as active participation and collaboration in a reality undergoing permanent change (Cybal-Michalska A., 2019).

The dynamics of modern careers built from "mini-careers" (which illustrates the transition from one employment cycle to another measured by the length of an employment contract, i.e. tenure, lasting from 5 to 7 years), requires a proactive style of career management, which manifests itself in the creation and restoration of mental capital by the subject and the construction of a network of social support. The causal factor of effective career management based on proactive career behaviour, as emphasized by R. Claes and S. A. Ruiz-Quintanilla consists in a broadly defined initiative which refers to: 1) career planning (initiative manifested in innovative behaviour, i.e. in making changes to the career trajectory); 2) skills development (initiative turned towards improving the potential inherent in the individual in order to improve competence in solving and performing tasks), 3) consultative behaviour (initiative manifested in seeking sources of information, advice or help from others), 4) social networking (initiative leading to building a network of interpersonal connections). The semantics of the discourse on the distinguished domains of proactive behaviour boils down to the recognition that only at the level of general theoretical constructs are they disconnected. At the level of proactive behaviour, they explicitly overlap (Bańka A., 2005-A, pp. 35–37).

Career management clearly relates to the perspective of professional identity. J. L. Holland, L. A. Johnston, and N. E. Asama, reviewing research on the reliability and validity of the Vocational Identity Scale (VI), conclude that individuals with a strong sense of vocational identity are professionally mature with many constructive views and opinions about career-related decision making, having interpersonal competence, characterized by conscientiousness, optimism and responsibility, taking care of mental hygiene and able to proactively deal with obstacles or environmental hindrances without getting discouraged (Allison Ch. J., 2007, pp. 15–16). The regularity, which B. Adekola points to in his research, shows the general content of links between career planning and management, sense of satisfaction and involvement in the career. However, considerations on the direction of the interrelationships seem to be much more important. The conclusion of the research is

as follows: career planning and management are conditions for career development, whereas job satisfaction and career commitment are outcomes of career development (Adekola B., 2011, p. 108). A major implication is to emphasize the importance of career design. Conclusions from the research show a stronger relationship between career planning and career development than between career management and its development. According to this reasoning, it can be concluded that career planning is relatively more important in the context of career development process than its management (Adekola B., 2011, p. 108).

CLOSING NOTE

The image of an individual as a causal agent is an important theoretical construct. Herr outlines this issue by stating that it is individuals who are capable of creating careers. Careers do not exist as occupations or jobs (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 2). As K. Obuchowski notes, this is a specific shift in "orientation of an individual from external conditions of existence to internal conditions" (Obuchowski K., 2000, p. 62). This kind of, as K. Obuchowski notes, "shift in orientation of the subject from external conditions of being to internal conditions prompts to consider careers in connection with an individual as a unique being, whose property is a unique career" (Bańka A., 2005-B, pp. 8–9). At this point, it is necessary to recall an excerpt from Collin and Watts' discussion, in which the authors assume the need to reevaluate thinking about careers. They state that we need to focus more on career as a subjective construct of an individual than on career as an objective construct (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 2). In view of this, an individual develops a career based on perceptions and attitudes towards it, which means, as Patton and McMahon point out, that a career is a pattern of influences that coexist in an individual's life (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 2). This view represents the individually oriented tendency (ambition, sense of agency, self-motivation), which finds legitimacy in economic theories that promote investment in human resource potential within organizations (Rosenbaum J. E., 2004, p. 330). This view is the warp of thinking about career as an individual's "property" taking into account individual career choices, individual stages of its development, career planning and management strategies.

Multiplicity, fragmentation, variability and complexity of the forms of organization of social life determine changes in the perception of career development and help overcome the tension between the experiences of the past and the possibilities of the future. The individual as a conscious creator of his/her own biography participates in the processes of "investing and renewing" the career capital.

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