

Career Constructing and Management as a Determinant of Career Success in the Globalizing Society—On the Need for Pro-Development and Proactive Investing in the Career “Portfolio”

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ABSTRACT

In light of the pace of development of the global world, the acceleration of social life, the hard to predict direction of social change, the question arises about the quality of the transformations in the world of work and the process of constructing careers understood as investing in the career “portfolio”. A contemporary study of career requires us to take into account the multi-contextual occurring changes in the world of work, which create new requirement for the employees. Career development is a life-long process of a comprehensive nature. In the process of constructing a career emphasis is put on the subjects’ work on themselves, their permanent participation in life projects and multi-layered processes as well as the acquisition of experience and the capacity for self-awareness. This view is a background for thinking about career as a “property” of an individual, along with their individual career choices. This peculiar shift of an individual’s orientation from external conditions to internal conditions prompts us to consider career in connection with an individual seen as a pro-development and proactive subject, who possesses an individual career and a sense of success in its construction. Success in a career is the result of integration of two processes: career planning and career directing and management. In this sense, it is understood as the subject’s achievement of the objectives of their career. The distinguishing feature of proactive and pro-development planning, directing and management of a career is the awareness of being a causative agent that performs actions in a desired direction and influences the surrounding reality, thereby initiating changes. There is no doubt that active coping in a reality subject to permanent change requires people to adapt to the constantly changing context of creation of individual careers, and the new way of thinking about career means entering a path of permanent constructing of a career in the world of “boundaryless” careers.

Keywords: Globalizing society, Career constructing, Career management, Career success, Career “portfolio”, Proactivity

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary studies in the subject of career require including multicontextual changes in the world of work, which make employees face new challenges. The most significant changes include the increase

of the role of career and the ability to plan, manage and monitor one's career in a lifelong perspective. Changes in the job environment, in the job structure, as well as changes of an individual's perception of work are a component of the development of a free market economy. Changes in the sphere of features, meanings and values ascribed to work also constitute a noticeable element of a free market economy. It is difficult to overestimate the meaning of these changes for the quality of careers and their individualized paths (Cybal-Michalska, 2013; Cybal-Michalska, 2014). Career development and career management programs, which are the key issues from, both, individual and organization perspective, focus on a lot of aspects: "from individual careers and the relation between work and family; to policy and strategic dilemmas, such as aging workforce, the usage of new technology or organizational performance" (Arthur, Hall, Lawrence, 2004, p. 7). Looking at this problem from this perspective, "the research into career includes examining, both, individual and organizational changes, as well as changes in the society" (Arthur, Hall, Lawrence, 2004, p. 8).

Career Portfolio, as a Tool to Renew Career Capital—On the Need for Career Constructing and Management

Logic of transformations induces thinking about the problem of international career or "boundaryless career" (Arthur, Rousseau, 1996), "changeable career", "post-corporate career", as a kind of novum in planning career in a wide sense, as well as climbing a career ladder (Baruch, Peiperl, 2000, p. 347). Zeitgeist also implies, as Bańka puts it, transculturalization of an economic context, which in turn contributes to transnationalization of a personality development. This process manifests itself "in universality of experience required to achieve an optimal level of life competence, allowing to realize career beyond borders" (Bańka, 2007, pp. 47–48). Presented considerations correspond to "career portfolio", term created by Ch. Handy. Career portfolio, as a tool to renew career capital, is "a set of individual investment shares, which are included in plans linked with career, (...); it is a planned source of competences that have measurable commercial value in the labour market." (Bańka, 2007, pp. 89–90). In the knowledge-based economy, which in turn determines contemporary society's orientation towards knowledge, career development becomes the key element, which society members should focus on and invest in career "portfolio". In contrast to social capital or cultural capital, in the career capital particular importance is attributed to personality as a value. One can distinguish three values here, a) commercial value which is "a subject of potential transactions to other forms of capital; b) reconstruction value, that is value which is modified from the point of view of preconceptions", c) value, which is deliberately constructed and developed by a subject, who takes into account time dynamics (Kobasa, Maddi, Kahn, after (Bańka, 2007, p. 85)).

The world of careers is the world of numerous micro-changes. In micro-changes portfolio, time between them is shortened – after a stability period,

another separation comes faster and faster. Moreover, multiple career changes may occur simultaneously (see: Mayrhofer, Iellatchitch, 2005).

Conceptualization of qualitatively new approach of career as an individual's "property", points to multidimensional nature of contemporary discourse, which combines the implications of interdisciplinary dialogue and creates the need for a review of theoretical reflections on ways of understanding career, as well as conditions and determinants of its shape. In an attempt to clarify the conceptual category of "career", it is difficult not to notice the lack of focus and ambiguity of semantic meanings ascribed to this notion. Furthermore, the distinguishing feature of thinking about career is the variety of meanings, in which this term is used. The scope of the notion of "career" can be its subjective and objective semantic structure, evaluative (also with negative shading, as the categories of "careerist" or "careerism" (Bauman, 1960, p. 25)) and non-evaluative (which is also a determinant of thinking about career as an individual's "property") understanding or the capturing the issue from a subject's or organizational perspective. Undoubtedly, a career or rather its choice (as one of the most important and, moreover, individualized choice of a man) is a lifelong journey and it has "characteristic turnings, which individuals can get to know, evaluate, contemplate, and foresee. (...) Professional actions last for about 40 years and more and it is hard to realize that individuals could not plan such a long period of time" (Adomaitiene, Zubrickiene, 2010, p. 88). There is no doubt that active fending for oneself in a reality of permanent changes, requires to adapt oneself to constantly changing context of individual career creation. While, as W. Lanthaler puts it, a new way of thinking about career means "being a manager of knowledge in one's own case" (see: Lanthaler, Zugmann, 2000) and constructing a kind of career "portfolio".

Obuchowski, contrasting the structure of object culture with the formation of subject culture, points to transformation, I will quote here I. Wallerstein's words, "of the world, that we know (whereby, it is worth noting that, according to the author, the quality of a social change is, in fact, "the end of the world that we know" (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 55). The author's considerations come to the conclusion that "for the first time in the history of mankind, there is a real chance, that personal satisfaction and freedom of initiative of direct manufacturers of ideas and things became a condition for proper functioning of their workshops, not just the content of Utopian, pro-human slogans" (Obuchowski, 2000). Indeed, as A. Giddens stresses, choice is a fundamental component of everyday activities of individuals. Intellectual emancipation and an ability of reflexive behaviour, in the world of permanent changes and diversity of social environments (environments, in which individuals are involved, either directly or indirectly), enable to express personal subjectivity by creating individual lifestyles and to "choose" one's own identity (Whittington, 1992). The issue of identity crystallizes the problem of trajectory of individual lives in career, as well as the problem of construction of a subject's professional identity. In this sense, as "any other formalized narration, it is something, which has to be worked out and what naturally requires creative contribution" (Giddens, 2001, p. 107), as well as reflexive attitude towards one's own biography. Identity constitutes "a

reflective loop, where leaving yourself, you return to yourself” (Zawadzki, 2003, s. 5). In the context of changes in the contemporary world, it seems particularly important for women to specify the answer to the question: “Who am I in this changing so fast world?” (a dynamic question). Answering such a dynamic and complex question and seeing the speed and intensity of changes, individuals try to determine to what degree they are the active subjects of prospective changes that take place in cultural and social contexts (Misztal, 2000, pp. 158–160). As King (1999) puts it, “the psychological power of one’s own identity, insight and persistence in achieving career goals represent the main components of motivation and “devotion” (understood as commitment – added by A. C.-M.) to career, as well as to cooperation, cohesion (...) in an organization” (Adekola, 2011, p. 104). In this sense, creating career in the world oriented to a global change becomes not only the problem of civilization, having impact on the shape of the development of societies, state systems and their interrelationships, but it also becomes the problem of the individual dimension.

The image of individuals as causative agents constitutes an important theoretical construct. Herr (1992) outlines this issue, stating that it is individuals that are capable of career creation. Careers do not exist, unlike professions or jobs (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2). As Obuchowski notices, this kind of shift “of an individual’s orientation from external conditions of existence to internal conditions” (Obuchowski, 2000, p. 62) tends to consider a career in relation to an individual as an individual entity, who owns an individual career (Bańka, 2005a, p. 89). This is a good place to recall a fragment of Collin and Watts’ discussion (1996), in which authors assume the need to reevaluate the thinking about career. They state that “you should focus more on the career as an individual’s subjective construction, rather than on the career as an objective construction” (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, subjects develop their careers based on their perception and attitude towards their career, which means, as Patton and McMahon (1999) stress, that a career is “a pattern of influences, that coexist in an individual’s life” (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2). Speaking of the title category, it is worth noting that an individualistic model of career, characteristic of the American society (in whose culture, individualistic orientation is omnipresent) is based on the conviction that individuals are the main causative agents of prospective changes in their own careers. While, employers are, to a large degree, just reactive to their employees’ efforts and actions. This view represents an individualistic tendency (it determines ambition, causative power, motivation for action), which finds its validation in economic theories that support investing in the potential of human resources within a given organization (Rosenbaum, 2004, p. 330). This view is a background for thinking about career as “a property” of an individual, including their individual career choices, individual planning strategies or individual stages of one’s own career. In the assessment of the discussed position, there is one neuralgic aspect, that is the emphasis that, admittedly, individuals, largely, control their careers, but, at the same time, while speaking of the management of careers, one should also take into account the stream of inner organizational experience that creates the mechanisms of a career system.

The capturing of a career as “an individual’s property” (Baruch – 2004, Bańka – 2005), accepts an individualistic assumption of the unique quality of each man’s career, for a career is “an individual collection of a series of unique positions, jobs and professional experience” (Bańka, 2005b, p. 23), as well as a subject’s responsibility for the construction of one’s own career. With regard to the aforementioned position, one can distinguish, which is categorized by Bańka, a few types of career capturing, while pointing to a chosen, distinctive career criterion: the promotion criterion, the profession criterion, the stability criterion and the criterion of work practice.

The contemporary definition of a career is not limited only to the aspects linked with the practice of promotions, with having a specific profession, with a satisfying job position of individuals or the with stability of internal relations of the content of a practiced profession. A much broader scope of what denotes and connotes the notion of “a career” includes “in addition to a purely professional situation (...), as well as the level of mental well-being, understood as the lack of tensions disorganizing individual activities, economic and social prosperity and a successful family situation” (Bańka, 2005a, p. 8). Perhaps the most characteristic trend of thinking focused on a subjective aspect of a career (along with emphasizing characteristic of interactionism, an objective aspect of a career) is the category created by Goffman – “a moral career”. This moral career is understood as individuals’ reactions to themselves in specific situations; reactions that cause permanent changes in the concept of the Self. In the presented theoretical orientation, the emphasis is placed on the research in the internal dimension of a career; it means studies in the subject of changes that take place in an agents’ identities and their ideas about themselves and other agents of the social life (Rokicka, 1992, p. 125).

In the contemporary capturing of a career, the emphasis is placed on the importance of activities which are not directly related to work, such as: ways of spending free time, forms of recreation, education, family roles which are associated with employment (Bańka, 2005b, p. 26). In this less restrictive approach to the definition of “a career”, one stresses the importance of constructing (not choosing) a career for the design of life quality (Maree, 2010, p. 362). Career understood in this way, as D. T. Hall puts it, means a sequence of individual experience (understood as “the formation of internal processes of individuals, such as: aims and aspirations, satisfaction, ideas about themselves, attitudes towards work under the influence of changing roles”) (Miś, 2006, p. 477) associated with professional roles that constitute the history of their professional lives. Individuals give a kind of specific meanings to selected elements of the reality, thanks to the ability to read cultural codes, they create their own individual history, and they have history ahead of them. They construct their own lives and thereby - their personal careers “through identification (giving meanings) with their own professional behaviours and numerous experiences in their workplaces” (Maree, 2010, p. 363). They also give meaning to the experience context. Taking responsibility for the search of the meaning of their own role of their professions, which, according to Ch. Handy (the author of *The Age of Paradox*) have the source in: a direction (individual sense of action for a

good cause), continuity (a subject's belief in the survival and continuation of the products of their labour) and union (participation in the community, with which individuals identify and which they co-create) is a lifelong process and a task of lifelong learning (Piotrowska, 2006, p. 11). The British scholar adds, that "the meaning will come to those, who develop their sense of direction, continuity and union" (Biolos, 2006, p. 30) in the field which is their profession.

The essence is the sequential development of an individual (integrally linked with the development of their careers) throughout their whole life. Not accidentally, having regard to the cognitive practice in the construction of the model of career counselling, Zunker states that the key role in designing life integrated with career construction is related to the following aspects: the subject's perception of success, their motivation to work, individual need for internal satisfaction, performed roles, the quality of relationships with other life partners, developmental and contextual changes (Maree, 2010, p. 364). In this approach, as emphasized by, among others, Greenhaus, "career" is defined as "a pattern of work-related experience, which spans and determines the basic direction of an individual's life." (Bańka, 2005b, p. 24). In this sense, one can quote Arnold, "broad approach to career assumes, that it is a sequence of positions associated with employment, roles, activities and experience" (Bańka, 2005b, p. 24) gained by subject throughout their lifelong development. Reflexive and knowledge organizing (the knowledge about a career as "an individual's property") cognitive approach orders to seek a set of elements constituting this position. It seems to be necessary to determine the range of characteristics to construct "a career portfolio" within a chosen theoretical tradition.

A significant element of distinguished definitions of "a career" is their distinct subjective, personal shading. "If a man happens to live in a particular society, they want to have a singled out, suitable for them positions," (Bauman, 1960, p. 16) as Bauman says. A career is always assigned to a given individual. It is a state of their possession, and it is individuals who give a kind of individual meaning to their careers. We do not turn towards a practiced profession (e.g. I exercise a profession...), but towards being a representative of a practiced profession (e.g. I am...). A profession is just a pretext, under which individuals develop their careers. Everyone who works or looks for work (as in the case of unemployed) has a career (Bańka, 2005b, p. 24). In this sense, every subject's career is unique in character. Based on these assumptions, Hall emphasizes that a career is "a structure, a sequence of a given individual, associated with work (...), this is a unique structure, dictated by autonomous choices" (Miś, 2006, p. 478). There is nothing strange in it, as individual dreams, desires, longings, and imaginings make up the most personal and individual model of an ideal life (Bauman, 1960, p. 18).

Another element of the subjective approach is to draw attention to the existence of conditions of shaping an individual's career. Both, objective and subjective factors, examined in isolation, do not exhaust the scope of this context. Holistic approach to the issue of a career development includes both objective elements (duties, positions, activities, roles, professional decisions), as well as subjective elements (values, aspirations, attitude, expectations,

needs, orientations, emotional aspect of professional experience). Individuals who manage their careers can change objective elements of the career development environment (e.g. a change of a job) or subjective (e.g. a change of expectations). Moreover, in case of similarly developed and manifested career, there are systematic changes taking place, both, in objective events linked with the job market dynamics and in subjective subject's reactions to these events (Bańka, 2005b, p. 25). Subjective perception and a sense of a career make "one man's career, another man's just a small honour" (Worach-Kardas, after: Szymański (2010), p. 80). Thus, as Hall states, a career is the result of two dimensions: what is observable (an objective dimension) and what is unobservable (a subjective dimension), which are closely related (Miś, 2006, p. 478).

An example of such a theory, about which one can say that having a new look at participation in "the modern social formation" (Sztompka), it focuses on the nature of the social world (showing interdependence between globality and individuals' dispositions) and it refers to the domain of life that a career constitutes, is the theory of career construction by Savickas (see: Banai, Harry, 2004, p. 97).

This is, in fact, the first theory of a career development which was presented at the beginning of the XXI century. It constitutes an upgrade, development, and integration of the segments of a theory of professional development by Super (1957). It is impossible, however, to overrate Super's influence on, both, the development of the concept of career exploration, as well as on showing the distance travelled in career conceptualization – from the implementation of the image of self in the world of work to integrate the career with the course of an individual's life. Savickas' work upgrades the content of earlier theories, especially topics linked with a career development, focusing on the issues of a professional personality and adaptability to a career. Savickas, referring to constructionism as a metatheory, referred as well to the schema created by McAdams (1995) and he included three classic segments of a career theory: (1) "individual differences in traits, (2) developmental tasks and coping strategy, and (3) motivation" (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 162).

An individual career pattern, constituting "a career portfolio", is identified by a researcher with an achieved professional level and a sequence, frequency, and duration of work. "It is determined by a social-economic level of parents and an individuals' education, their skills, their personality, concepts of the Self and adaptability to a career, together with the possibilities that a society gives" (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 63). According to the distinguished theory, reflecting the constructivist view on a career development, the career domain is perceived as a central part of a subject's life and an important reference point in shaping an individual's identity. The essence here is treating a career choice, the skills of adaptability and development as elements of an integrated process. The author points to the concept of four cores: the structure of an individuals' life, their professional personality, the skills of adaptability and a theme of a subject's life for understanding individualized professional behaviours. In the theory of career construction by Savickas, professional behaviours and their development are considered processually,

taking into account their organization in a holistic, permanent and contextual way. An individual's career development is not considered in isolation from other dimensions, components of an individual's life. Moreover, a career (which is not a context-free part) is perceived as a central dimension for life designing, thus it should be integrated with individual lifestyle (Maree, 2010, pp. 363–364).

Savickas' theory of career construction says that "individuals construct their careers through giving meanings to their professional behaviour and experience" (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 63). The construction of an individual's life course, which was shaped by social processes (a society and its institutions) is composed of a core and supporting roles. The essence here is the balance between the social roles of the core. Homeostasis between a professional and a family sphere contributes to the stability, while the lack of it causes stressful situations. Personal preferences linked with life roles (work can be regarded as a core role but it can also play a supporting role) are deeply rooted in social practices (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 63). As Savickas stresses, in the process of a career construction, the essence is the development and implementation of professional self-concepts. These self-concepts are implemented in the professional roles that individuals play. Self-concepts "develop thanks to interactions of inherited skills (...) to play different roles and abilities to judge to what extent results of playing given roles meet with the praise of peers and our supervisors" (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 63). Thus, the realization of the concept of Self in the work environment is linked with the synthesis (developed on the ground of the role and from the lessons learnt from feedback) and a compromise between an individual and social factors (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 63). The author, to explain and interpret the phenomenon of a career development, takes into account its individualized character and he tries to get to possibly universal essence of the mechanisms and assumptions, which should be included while considering the quality of people's professional life. These mechanisms are: [a] contextual possibilities, [b] dynamic processes, [c] non-linear character of the development, [d] diversity of perspectives and [e] individual patterns (Maree, 2010, pp. 363–364). This specific reference to the subject's activity and social constructivism, represented by Hartung and Savickas, stresses the importance of the development of four dimensions of professional behaviours, distinguishing: "[a] life structure (a set of work and other human roles, which constitute an individual life), [b] strategies of career adaptability (coping/imitating mechanism used by individuals to perform developmental tasks and to deal with environmental changes, which cumulate during lifetime), [c] thematic motives of life stories (motivation and driving forces, which shape life), [d] personality styles (personality traits, such as skills, needs, values, interests and other properties that create the self-image)." (Maree, 2010, p. 363) According to the distinguished theorists, the theory of creating a career and practice undertaken in its field play a role of a metatheory, which connect and integrate three basic theoretical traditions: developmental attitude (individual development of a subject), narrative attitude (individual psychodynamic motivations and themes of their life stories) and difference/ diversity approach (individual differences, capturing

a difference from others). Thus, they create theoretical perspective called a theory of professional behaviours. Theoretical perspectives of professional behaviours and a career development are considered together as an attempt to indicate a metatheory and they emphasize the necessity of taking into account the following issues: (a) a structure of an individual's life and their adaptability in the career context (as they organize their life roles and how they deal with tasks linked with a career development), (b) life topics (why subjects move in a given career direction) and (c) professional personality of a subject (characteristic features of a subject) (Maree, 2010, pp. 363–364).

What is worth noting, Savickas' views about finding a suitable profession for a given individual, consistent with Super's views, extend and improve the existing range of embracing this issue. This fact is determined by considerations which take into account the emphasis that individuals differ in terms of their professional personality traits, skills, needs, a system of values and self-concept. Considering the above characteristics, the specific set of personality traits and abilities with some degree of tolerance makes every individual is predestined to perform various professions, as well as a lot of different people can perform the same profession (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 63). Savickas' attempt to combine and integrate three theoretical traditions: developmental approach, narrative approach, and diversity approach, creates a theoretical perspective called the theory of professional behaviours. It takes into account individuals' life structures and "life issues", as well as individuals' adaptability in the career context and subject's (professional) personality traits (Maree, 2010, pp. 363–364). Thus, the author as an integrator of the content theory and a process theory, remembering that the development of the career theory is, in fact, a permanent process of a theoretical transformation of the concept of career, emphasizes the importance not only of new views on the topic of career (supporting new ideas) but also of the location and reassessment of existing opinions in the perspective of others (Arthur, Hall, Lawrence, 2004, p. 20).

CONCLUSION

Personal approach to career consists of a sequence of occupied positions, experience, individual's roles. On the level an analysis of this element, you pay attention to the fact how a subject's individual positions, roles, activities, and jobs combine and whether the changes are predictable, whether they overlap with equally changeable interests, competence, qualifications and talents, as well as whether they contribute to the development of an individual's potential (Bańka, 2005b, pp. 25–26). The nature of this approach to career, which is a distinguishing feature of the contemporary approach, is non-evaluative understanding. The lack of comparative criterion for assessing individual justifications for the choices made in the course of a professional life makes it unjustified to call achieved success or the lack of it in the context of progress in one's career (Miś, 2006, p. 478). In this sense, as Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989) put it, "everyone, who works, has a career". Thereby, they indicate neutral shading of the term career, which, as a descriptive category, can refer to all professions (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2).

The development of a career is a lifelong process of complex character. It constitutes the result of integration of two processes: how individuals plan/planned their careers and how they manage it. In this sense, the result is understood as agents' achievement of their career goals. A distinguishing feature of proactive planning and career management is "awareness of being a subject that performs actions in a desired direction" (Bańka, 2005b, p. 35) has an influence on the surrounding reality and, thereby, initiates changes. Between activities of career planning and career management, there is a kind of qualitative "connection", which, in turn, determines conditions of a career development, constructing its "portfolio" and having impact on the satisfaction level of its course. Multiplicity, fragmentation, changeability, and the complexity of forms of the organization of social life determine changes in the perception of career development and overcoming tensions between experience of the past and possibilities of the future. Individuals as conscious creators of their own biography take part in the "investing and renewing" (A. Bańka) processes of the career capital.

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