

Shaping a Pro-Development Orientation & Proactivity as Intentions Corresponding to the Process of Self-Education in a Career in the Globalizing World

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ABSTRACT

The multidimensionality and complexity of contemporary social configurations contribute to difficulties in capturing and clearly defining the factors determining changes in the social system and in theoretically describing the social dimension of human existence. This context also raises questions about the place of (self-)education in relation to careers, as a space for career planning, development, and monitoring. A new perspective on postmodern social structure is emerging, fostering a narrative focus on the nature of the social world - the interdependence between the new quality of global sociocultural relations and the individual dispositions of individuals. It seems important to emphasize that one of the particularly important factors that influence the condition of modern man is broadly understood (self-)education, the aim of which will be to shape a proactive and pro-development orientation. Adaptation to an amorphous environment occurs through the practice of learning a new context in the world of “boundaryless careers” in which one participates, plans, and develops one’s career, contributing to its transformation and inducing desired changes. The degree of influence on the current situation (including the career situation) or the social environment (including the organizational environment) is individualized and depends on the subject’s propensity to take active steps that indirectly trigger these changes in the environment. Contemporary studies on the quality of the career domain should consider its broadly understood pro-development and proactive dimension, which essentially refers to the level of what we broadly call lifelong (self-)education.

Keywords: Globalization, Career, “Boundaryless” career, Proactivity, Pro-development, (Self-)education

INTRODUCTION

The meanings attributed to careers crystallize around dominant messages and are rooted in specific spatial-temporal conditions. The processes of globalization of the world economy, its reorganization, and restructuring prompt reflection on the specificity and dominant nature of global economic transformation (Cybal-Michalska, 2006, pp. 30–31; Cybal-Michalska, 2013; Cybal-Michalska, 2024). Contemporary career studies require consideration of multi-contextual changes in the world of work, which place new demands on employees. Career development and career management programs, key

issues from both the individual and organizational perspectives, focus on multiple aspects: “from individual careers and the relationship between work and family, to policy and strategic dilemmas such as the aging workforce, the use of new technology, and organizational performance” (Arthur M.B., Hall D.T., Lawrence B.S., 2004, p. 8). Viewed from this perspective, “career research examines both individual and organizational changes, as well as changes in society” (Arthur M.B., Hall D.T., Lawrence B.S., 2004). In a “discontinuous space-time and heterogeneous system of cultural meanings” (Misztal B., 2000, p. 157), career development and shaping one’s professional identity become cognitive practices based on individual experimentation. The contemporary social configuration, in which the search for identity has become a flexible point of reference, opens a range of numerous opportunities for individuals to shape their own career throughout their lives.

This article is a theoretical discussion. The aim of this article is to provide a structured assessment of the development of a pro-development and proactive orientation and to demonstrate the relationship between proactivity and pro-developmental orientation and career success. The underlying theme that inspires reflection on professional ergonomics is to highlight the fact that professional development increases ergonomic awareness, which contributes to improved job satisfaction, increases productivity, and reduces the risk of burnout. This article is a review, presenting an overview of existing knowledge on proactivity and pro-developmental orientation in careers, organizing knowledge in this area, and, above all, pointing to directions for further research on the determinants of career success. The article has an analytical-descriptive structure and includes numerous references to current literature on professional development in a world of constant change.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER PATHS

Undoubtedly, a component of the phenomenon of economic globalization, and particularly the development of a free market economy, are changes in the work environment, work structure, work perception, as well as in the characteristics, meanings, and values attributed to work. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of these changes for the quality of career construction, career progression, and the modification of individualized career paths. Contemporary career studies require consideration of multi-contextual changes in the world of work, which place new demands on employees. Among the most important are the growing importance assigned to careers and the ability to plan, manage, and monitor one’s own career from a lifelong perspective. Global trends and processes of differentiation, multi-contextualization, multi-dimensionality, and interdependence of various areas of social life undoubtedly present the problem of implementing the concept of lifelong learning, career planning, management, development, and shaping. The logic of these changes prompts reflection on the issue of international careers, or “careers without boundaries,” “variable careers,” and “post-corporate careers,” as a unique innovation in broadly understood career planning and career progression (Baruch Y., Peiperl M., 2000, p. 347). The zeitgeist also implies, as A. Bańka puts it, a transculturalization of the

economic context, which in turn contributes to the transnationalization of personality development. This process manifests itself “in the universality of experience required to achieve an optimal level of life competencies, allowing for a career to be pursued across borders” (Bańka A., 2007, pp. 47–48). The presented considerations correspond to Ch. Handy’s concept of “career portfolio.” A career portfolio, a tool for the renewal of career capital, is “a set of individual investment actions included in career plans, (...); it is a planned source of competencies intended to have measurable commercial value on the labour market” (Bańka A., 2007, pp. 89–90). Based on the assumption, emphasized by B. Arthur, K. Inkson, and J.K. Pringle, that the accumulated values that constitute career competencies and are useful in establishing and developing a career constitute career capital, the subjective shading of this conceptual category should be clearly emphasized. This means that career capital (which can both accumulate and depreciate and be exchanged for “fresh” capital) is “a concept reflecting in an individual’s mind a diagnosis and forecast of accumulated personal resources” (Arthur B., Inkson K., and Pringle J.K., after: Bańka A., 2007, p. 80) acquired through educational, professional, social, and cultural experiences. As a result, accumulated career capital contributes to securing “future returns on investments, (...) it can provide rewards in the form of security, satisfaction, socioeconomic status, long-term employment, or autonomy” (Bańka A., 2007, p. 83). In a knowledge-based economy, which consequently reflects the knowledge orientation of modern society, the development of careers and investing in career “portfolios” (which are an investment and renewal of career capital) through pro-development and proactive approaches become key elements.

The image of the individual as an agent is an important theoretical construct. Herr outlines this problem, stating that individuals are capable of creating careers. Careers do not exist, like professions or jobs (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 2). This specific shift, as K. Obuchowski notes, “of an individual’s orientation from the external conditions of existence to internal conditions” (Obuchowski K., 2000, p. 62) leads to considering career in connection with the individual as an individual being, whose property is an individual career (Bańka A., 2005(a)). At this point, it is worth recalling a fragment of Collin and Watts’ discussion, in which the authors posit the need for a re-evaluation of thinking about career. They state that “we need to focus more on career as a subjective construct of the individual, rather than on career as an objective construct” (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 2). Therefore, the subject develops a career based on perception and attitude toward it, which means, as Patton and McMahon emphasize, that career is “a pattern of influences that coexist in an individual’s life” (Patton W., McMahon M., 2006, p. 2). This view represents an individualistic tendency (ambition, a sense of agency, and motivation to act), which is validated by economic theories promoting investment in the potential of human resources within organizations (Rosenbaum J.E. [in:] Arthur M.B., Hall D.T., Lawrence B.S., 2004, p. 330). This view underlies the thinking about careers as “properties” of individuals, considering individual career choices, individual career planning strategies, and individual stages of career development.

When considering a career, one cannot ignore the issue of the subjective meaning given to a career by the subject in the context of the possibility

of experiencing it satisfactorily. As E. Ginsburg states, “the process of shaping a career is open-ended, and its goal is to find a job that provides the greatest possible satisfaction” (Szymański M., 2010, p. 82). The process career development has a decisive impact on the quality of perceived job satisfaction and practiced career commitment. Moreover, the results of B. Adekola’s research show that career development has a stronger relationship with the job satisfaction experienced by the subject than with his or her career commitment (Adekola B., 2011, p. 108).

CAREER SUCCESS AS A RESULT OF AN INDIVIDUAL’S CAREER EXPERIENCES

The issue of career success is a significant area of interest for career theorists. Referring to the denotations and connotations of the terms “subjective career” and “objective career,” cognitive connections with definitions of career success are observed. The construct of career success is a specific composition of elements of a subjective or objective nature, as well as an emphasis on the existence of duality (subjective and objective dimensions) of career success. In attempting to resolve the dilemma of what the construct “to be successful” means, references have been made to down subjective (as a sense of success) or objective (as a component of the subject’s system of knowledge about itself) understanding.

Career success, as a result of a subject’s career experiences, can be defined as “the realization of desired professional tasks at any point in a person’s professional experience” (...), it is “the achievement of a desired goal” and “the successful completion of an attempt to achieve something” (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, p. 179). Alternative meanings of career success, emphasizing what is “desired” by the subject or being an assessment of “success” as a result of social comparisons, highlight its subjective and objective perception.

In problematizing career success, the need to move away from a selective understanding of success is emphasized. The depth of the construct of career success can be revealed by examining it from two perspectives. Reflections on success are dominated by a relativistic approach, which emphasizes that: objective career success influences the subjective dimension of career success; the subjective and objective aspects of career success are interdependent; or - adopting an evaluative perspective - the primacy of subjective career success over objective success (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, pp. 177–178).

The concept of career success undoubtedly develops in opposition to a one-sided approach to the issue. An interpretation of career success, referring not only to objective success (in relation to indicators such as the number of promotions, salary increases, etc.), or success in a professional context (an indicator could be the scale of career satisfaction or an individual’s position in the organization), may also emphasize success in other domains of a person’s life. Furthermore, career success can be assessed through the lens of a peer group, within or outside the organization where the individual has taken up employment. The issue of the idiosyncratic nature of success for the individual

is particularly important, taking into account their preferences and work-life balance (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, pp. 177–178).

The issue of career success, emphasizing the quality of changes in the world of work that determine transformations in the employment structure, expresses the problem of transience. In the contemporary landscape of “boundaryless careers,” traditional drivers of career success, defined by a hierarchical order, are increasingly horizontal in nature, and are certainly undergoing significant distortion. The “new order” of career construction is becoming an increasingly individualizing force. The “poly-boundary” described by O. Marquard (Marquard O., 1994), which allows for participation in multiple creations of career construction histories, gives individuals the opportunity to live multiple histories, appealing to a multitude of independent goals rather than to the centralized goals of the organization.

Comments presented on the feeling of success in a career, they emphasize its subjective nuances. In this sense, success, or rather the feeling of success, can be “judged primarily on the basis of an individual’s report of their subjective state” (Sokolik M., after: Majczyna M., 2000, p. 44). “Subjective Career Success” in Van Maanen’s view is “defined as an individual’s individual perspective and assessment of their career from the perspective of aspects that are important to them” (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, p. 179). In the career trajectory, the sense of satisfaction, contentment, and self-fulfilment in professional work and the sense of professional success mutually reinforce and determine each other (Davis R., England G., Lofquist L., after: Szymański M., 2010, p. 89). Success can evoke a range of experiences that contribute to the professional potential of everyday life. Prototypically, it stems from the conscious and perceived overall success in the career domain. The subjective framing of success, where everyone follows their own path to career success, makes it difficult to speak of identical careers, as A. Bańka emphasizes. Due to the possibility of different attitudes and perceptions of similar events by individuals, one can be at the same time and place, performing the same sequence of tasks, experience, feel, and judge success or lack of fulfillment (Bańka A., 2005(b), p. 25). The subjective understanding of career refers to concepts expressing different subjective career aspirations. The subjective careers of people in similar social or professional environments may overlap, but, as Bailyn emphasizes, “it would be a mistake... to assume that all members of a particular social category will share the same subjective career orientations” (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, p. 179). It seems no coincidence that Savickas, in his proposed career construction theory, clearly emphasizes the fact that individuals differ from one another in terms of character traits, which the author includes: personality traits, self-concepts, and abilities. It is precisely the degree to which an individual has the opportunity to demonstrate these traits that determines the quality of defined career success (Patton W., McMahan M., 2006, p. 63).

Moreover, the definition of success changes over time, and one’s own definition of career success may not necessarily align with its “objective” definition. It is worth recalling here that “objective career success” is defined as an external perspective that outlines more or less tangible indicators (e.g., profession, professional role, income, social role, and social position)

of a subject's career situation. Objective career success reflects organizing the understanding of success around status differences (Van Maanen, after Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, p. 179). Research by R. J. Pollegrin and C. J. Coates indicates that this split is often visible and discusses the processual dimension of defining success. In the early stages of career development, it is defined in terms of prestige, power, and income. Over time, definitions of success emphasize the importance of the ability to satisfy higher-order needs, which include self-fulfilment and professional satisfaction (Rokicka E, 1992, pp. 124–125). Career success can be conceptualized as a function of the capabilities and potential inherent in the subject and the criteria that a candidate for a chosen position must meet. In this sense, as R. Davis, G. England, and L. Lofquist point out, the ability to adapt and allocate one's competencies and skills to the work environment is fundamental to achieving success (Szymański M., 2010, p. 87).

It is difficult to demonstrate simple and direct correlations between personality and environmental variables and a sense of satisfaction or career success. Furthermore, it is difficult to demonstrate a high correlation between satisfaction, career satisfaction, and career success. In this context, it is worth noting the originality of the classic research on the interrelationship between career satisfaction and career success by Lofquist and Dawis (Cytrynbaum S., Crites J.O. [in:] Arthur M.B., Hall D.T., Lawrence B.S., 2004, pp. 67–69). It is more of a chain of causal connections. N. Frijda reached interesting conclusions in his research. Gratitude can stimulate positive emotions identified as an antidote to adaptation to happiness and a way to prolong it. The concept of gratitude, conceptualized as an emotion, attitude, or moral virtue and sharing common mechanisms with happiness and well-being, emphasizes the subject's general disposition to positively experience everyday events, the ability to perceive opportunities, appreciate existing and new possibilities, and invest mental energy in developing the worldview that life is a daily gift. It is assumed that gratitude prototypically stems from a positive perception of the results achieved by an individual as a result of their own activities and the activities of others as their external source and as a result of relationships with others (Bańka A., 2005(b), p.18). Underlying considerations of career satisfaction, the construct of gratitude, understood as a general disposition created in the subject's daily actions that evokes positive experiences of gratitude, certainly deserves empirical consideration.

A cognitively interesting issue in the context of the dynamics of the relationship between satisfaction and career success is the process of career adaptation. Achieving career satisfaction can be conceptualized as progressing along a cyclical curve. Taking D. Super's career dynamics of three stages: establishment, maintenance, and withdrawal as a reference point, career satisfaction reaches a high level upon entering the profession, then reaches its lowest level in the middle phase of the establishment stage (especially if initial expectations of rapid progress are delayed or thwarted), and then increases again (although not to the same high level as at the beginning of the career cycle) until asymptote, which occurs around age forty. In the case of career success, a crisis is experienced initially, followed by a linear increase until middle adulthood, followed by a withdrawal stage. As emphasized in their studies by Bengé and Copwell, among others, the developmental

trends in career satisfaction and career success differ across various stages of an adult's life, with a possible convergence in the mid-career period, which occurs around age 40. Therefore, cross-sectional data on career satisfaction and success indicate a lack of a clear relationship. Only the intersection of the satisfaction and success lines in midlife, between ages 35 and 40, reveals that the developmental trends for career satisfaction and career success have the highest degree of correlation. This suggests that a negative correlation between the variables can be expected at the beginning of the establishment stage, when career satisfaction is high and career success is low, and intermediate correlations between the variables at the establishment stage and the mid-maintenance stage. The originality of this perspective undoubtedly lies in the consideration of developmental trends in the issues of career satisfaction and career success, the dynamics of the relationship between them, with reference to the stages of adult life, as a factor that may influence these two supposedly complementary components of career adaptation (Cytrynbaum S., Crites J.O. [in:] Arthur M.B., Hall D.T., Lawrence B.S., 2004, pp. 68–69).

One of the fundamental issues in the discussion of career success is the issue of subjective-objective career duality. It is worth noting that while this thread is not far from being inspired by structuration theory, which is the subject of Giddenson's findings, it particularly emphasizes the inherent "bilaterality" of the career concept. The duality and interdependence of subjective and objective perspectives on career success, in a sense, calls for combining both the objective and subjective aspects of career success and for specifying the nature of the relationship between the distinguished aspects of career success (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, p. 181). Following Van Maanen, one can repeat that "there is little evidence to assume that (subjective and objective careers) converge in any dimension," and that this thread (the degree of correspondence between them) is frequently addressed in career research (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, pp. 179–180). The subjective-objective career duality is also a subject of considerations regarding possible compromises between work and family, work and leisure. This is essentially a search for answers to the question of a possible compromise between objective career expectations and subjective career preferences. This highlights not only the need to capture both aspects of success in research, but above all, the need to ignore the role of time in a relativistic approach to the interdependence between subjective and objective careers (Arthur M.B., Khapova S.N., Wilderom C.P., 2005, p. 181). The relationship between objective and subjective careers raises questions about other variables, which undoubtedly include career success (its variability and differentiation) and the relationship between its objective and subjective nature.

PROACTIVITY AND PRO-DEVELOPMENT IN CAREER AS A DETERMINANT OF EXPERIENCING CAREER SUCCESS

In addressing career success, phenomena such as "career boundarylessness" and "career interorganizationality" inform and reinforce the interest in career proactivity. Adaptation to an amorphous environment occurs through the

practice of learning the new context in which one participates, contributing to its transformation. The degree of influence on the current situation or social environment is individualized and depends on the individual's propensity to take active steps that indirectly trigger these changes in the environment. Contemporary studies should consider its broadly understood pro-development dimension, which essentially refers to the level of what T.S. Bateman and J.M. Crant called the development of individual proactivity. Initiative, as a component distinguishing proactive behavior, understood as the ability to initiate action and gather resources and support for the change process. The essence of this initiative is not limited to initiating change but extends to the quality of engagement in the process of achieving the goal of bringing the change to completion (Bańka A., 2005(b), pp. 8–9). It seems too important in the educational sphere to be ignored. The educational space fosters and increases the opportunities for assigning meaning to the subject's future decisions. A temporal orientation toward the future allows for a better individual focus on "choice" rather than "fate" or "randomness." This thinking is closer to promoting autonomous agency rather than adaptation to existing conditions. Embarking on the path of subjective activity is fostered by educational influences focused on openness to new possibilities and situations, rather than uncritical anchoring in traditional, homogeneous assumptions and principles. Proactive behavior, as the subject's purposeful actions, was the subject of Z. King's interest. Research has identified two groups of proactive behavior components: cognitive components and behavioural components (De Vos A., De Clippeleer I., Dewilde T., 2009, p. 763). The main distinguishing feature of proactivity is taking the initiative to change the environment, which means that an individual "has the ability to shape the environment to a degree that exceeds the ability of the environment to shape behavior" (Bańka A., 2005(b), p. 8). Pro-development as a cognitive practice, implemented continuously, and conceptualized as a shift toward the development of a proactive personality, will be the "building blocks" for the formation of the following traits: seeking change, recognizing opportunities, creating situations, demonstrating initiative, and acting (Bańka A., 2005(b), p. 12). The way of thinking about proactivity as a personality disposition and proactivity as an attitude of commitment resulting from conditions, needs, and contextual circumstances has been significantly influenced by the views of T. Bateman and J. M. Crant. According to the authors, proactive individuals are distinguished by seven interrelated traits. Emphasizing the personal dimension in the culture of school reality and embarking on the path of (self-) education means focusing on the creation of the following characteristics: seeking opportunities for change, establishing effective and change-oriented goals, anticipating problems and taking countermeasures, seeking ways to achieve goals, taking the path of action with awareness of risk and assuming responsibility, perseverance in pursuing goals and achieving them, demonstrating achievements, and implementing changes by influencing the environment (Bańka A., 2005(b), pp. 9–11). An important aspect of status and proactive conditions, a personality disposition emphasized by E.W. Morrison and C.C. Phelps, is "responsible engagement."

This construct is defined as a constructive effort on the part of the subject aimed at negating the status quo in order to introduce functional changes in the scope of performed tasks (Bańka A., 2005(b), pp. 13–14). The concept of Frese, Kring, Soose, and Zempel (1996) similarly emphasizes the issue of personal initiative. It defines proactivity as “behavior directed towards taking the initiative (doing something when no one tells them to and when the role does not require it; (...) long concentration, waiting for future problems or opportunities), and persistence (overcoming limitations so that change can occur) (Parker S.K., Turner N., Williams H.M., 2006, pp. 636–637).

CONCLUSION

The vision of a world of constant fluctuations, and ideas that question the existence of career competencies “once and for all,” emphasize the need to focus on the issue of “proactivity.” The development of career competencies is a specific postulate concerning the human condition, which is not without significance for the shape of the social order. It is a continuous process of acquiring new skills and refining existing ones. The multiplicity, fragmentation, variability, and complexity of social life’s organization influence changes in the perception of career development and overcoming the tension between past experiences and future possibilities. As a conscious creator of their own biography, the individual participates in the processes of “investing and renewing” (A. Bańka) career capital. Referring to the category of proactivity, as can be found in E. W. Morrison’s research, among others, allows for the delineation of another field of interdependence, indicating the existence of a link between individual activity and career success, exemplified by: obtaining a job, commitment, job satisfaction, and a satisfactory assessment of “human capital assets,” or the individual’s “market value” (Bańka A., 2005(b), p. 32). In this sense and for this reason, career commitment is of significant importance for career development and realizes the idea of the subject as a conscious creator of his or her own biography.

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