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Career management opportunities in international labour market: a theoretical perspective

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Abstract

The dynamic nature of the international labour market and the complexity of situations which are encountered in management of organizations are emphasized in the literature of career management. Competition in contemporary organizations and low psychological contract between individuals and organizations stimulates to think about a different career management approaches. This study provides career management solutions for middle-age employees who have to change their career path by finding a new job in a dynamic international labour market.

Keywords: secondary career; boundaryless career; labour market.

1. Introduction

Nowadays organizations do not offer a lifelong career and every employee knows that after several years he will have to end his career in organization and start a new one in another. The challenge arises when individuals who worked in a local labour market has to start his career management in international. The transitional period when a person embarks for a secondary careerin the international labour market is difficult. Previous studies on secondary career are based on different theories, but there is no unified approach which factors and means have the greatest impact on employability. Even though researchers sought to identify factors that could be used to assess the effectiveness of means of reintegration into the labour market which could be provided for the employees entering

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secondary career, it is clear that a common denominator for solving the above mentioned problems has not been found yet. Cases of successful secondary career indicate the directions in which research could be carried out in order to anticipate problems that are related to the integration of the middle-aged people, who have to change their career path.

The research problem. It is widely accepted and empirically confirmed that middle-aged people, who have been discharged and want to find a new job in an international labour market, experience adjustment problems; thus, the solution requires concerted efforts of the person. It, however, is not achieved easily as every case is unique which depends on institutional factors such as previous work, attained position, as well as on the individual's personal characteristics, communicability, flexibility, etc.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a framework for analysis of career transition in international labour market. It will allow disclosing those factors that affect successful secondary career. On the basis of the theory from organizational design we claim that proactive behaviour pursuing one's own career leads to more successful employment. Taking a theoretical approach, we answer the central questions in this study, i.e. how people adapt to new roles as proactive designers of their own careers and how this proactivity leads to expected results.

2. Changing nature of career management in international labour market

In the literature of recent years the dynamic nature of the international labour market and the complexity of situations which are encountered in management of organizations are emphasized. Social and economic changes affect the career awareness and its management. In addition, global economy, labour migration form changes on macro level that affects organizational behaviour. Meanwhile, changing values and attitudes to work, family and leisure time form changes on micro level that affect individuals' behaviour. In this case, Baruch (2006) gives a definition that "the career is the 'property' of the individual, who may no inspired by new social norm." Therefore, if in traditional hierarchical stable structures individuals tend to move along the path formed by social and administrative procedures, after leaving these structures, individual career management principles must change. Career in a dynamic environment is perceived as achievements throughout the working life; therefore, the person's involvement in career management must be proactive.

The approach to a career must be sufficiently broad. The necessity for that is formulated by economic cycles which require from a person transferable skills, complex and multidisciplinary experience. Proactive individual behaviour in terms of one's own career is referred to as boundaryless (Arthur, 1994) or protean (Hall, 1996). Based on these concepts, a person seeks to manage his/her career, therefore, makes decisions with regard to the career that is best to his/her interests. Instead of pursuing a career in one workplace and gaining job security, a person constantly analyses the labour market, its offers and increase their competence in order to be employable in any conditions of the labour market (Naser & Appelbaum, 2012).

Broadening focus towards career management needs changes in attitudes: the career needs to be managed proactively. It is a big challenge in terms of knowledge as well as psychological preparation. Majority of employees become accustomed to an orderly sequential linear career development in hierarchical structures since human resource management professionals are responsible for their career. Leaving stable hierarchical structures, middle-aged employees enter the open international labour market in which organizational systems are in the process of constant changes and dynamics; therefore, their careers are unpredictable and multidimensional. It cannot be claimed that all organizations work surrounded by major changes, but even those that are able to consistently implement long-term strategies, gradually change the psychological contract with their employees, reducing their obligations to them. Career prospects in organizations are limited as organizational structures are becoming flat; a career is more often vertical than horizontal. At the same time it should be noted that the result of career success for the person remains the same: higher achievements (implemented ambitious ideas and greater salary) and psychological well-being (higher status and greater influence).

Flexible career management is an opposite of psychological contract that was dominated in 80s and 90s. Psychological contract is characterized as a set of "beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between Individuals and their Organizations" (Rousseau, 1995). It is believed that the organization is responsible for personal career management and a career itself is seen without leaving the organization frames. Hence, employee development and career priorities are directly related to the work he/she

performs. The open labour market does not offer such psychological contract. Dynamics encourages organizations to abandon hierarchy ladders, they become flatter and boundaryless; therefore, career management is characterized by complexity and flexibility. On the other hand, a middle-aged person is not in a rush to conclude a strong psychological contract with a new organization. Analysing the change of individual priorities over time, Rae (2005) notes that middle-aged people (35–54 years old) are concerned about career advance and responsibility, marketable skills and expertise, unachieved aspirations. Sterner (2012) analysed Super'sLife-CareerRainbow (Figure 1) and concluded that there is a need forbroader approach to career development that explores life and career meaning over human life.
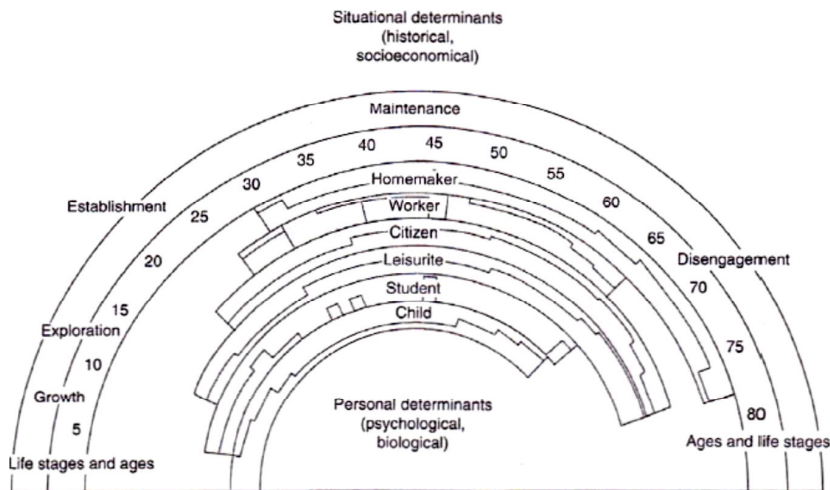

Fig. 1. Super'sLife-CareerRainbow (Sterner, 2012)

Working in hierarchical structures, workers find that their career goals do not coincide with the career management principles of the organization (Baruch, 2006). As a result, all of this leads to greater individualism. Individuals are encouraged not to limit oneself to one organization, but rather manage their careers thinking broadly. The emergence of such terms as intelligent career or protean career represents the process which is controlled by a person, not organization. This career is related to personal choices and self-realization in working life. By making choices a person gains extensive experience which consists of work experience in several organizations, training and change of profession. This is a new form of career where a person rather than an organization takes responsibility for shaping a career path. In this sense, career is a personal contract with oneself which is valid throughout the period of one's working life, i.e. from early adulthood until retirement (Fig. 2).

Entering
Employment

Retirement of
Employment

| Transition into adulthood | Early adulthood | Middle age | Late adulthood |

| Youth | (Active) workforce | Old age |

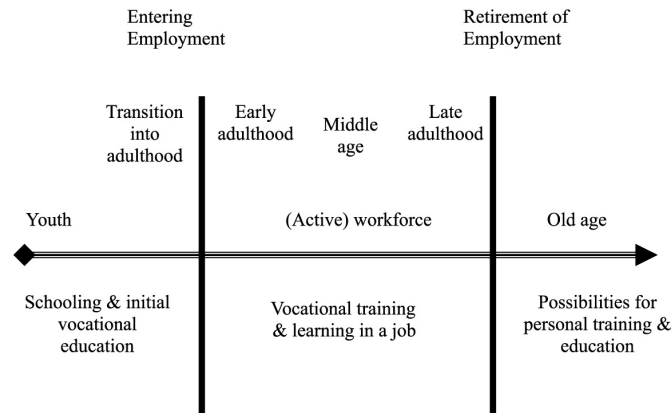| Schooling & initial vocational education | Vocational training & learning in a job | Possibilities for personal training & education |

Fig. 2. The typical life course-career pattern (van der Heijden et al., 2008)

During this period a person changes his/her workplace, acquire professional and transferable skills. Analysing secondary career this concept should be refined separating time spent in first career and time when a person enters into the international labour market for a second career. Therefore, the most relevant phase for this analysis is transitional one when a person must change his/her career management from adaptive to proactive one.

3. The concept of secondary career

Studies focusing on a secondary career aim to explain transition of managers and executives. For instance, Lorsch (1995) emphasizes that retired CEOs may opt to be board members of other companies. Notably, retired CEOs are seen as more effective than active senior executives due to similar experience, available time and flexibility. Meanwhile, Levinson (1988) argues that competition in contemporary organizations stimulate a manager to think about a second career. Hence, the emphasis is put on the main motives and stimuli of a second career. There is a separate strand of literature devoted to CEO succession. The scholars aim to explain the fit between candidate and the contingencies facing the firm (Charan, 2005). Meanwhile, another group of scholars focus their research on second-career individuals entering teaching position. For instance, some scholars state that post-career military personnel are excellent sources for future teachers due to their skills, maturity and self-confidence (Chambers, 2002). Therefore the studies aim to explain transferable competencies and support provided in new organizations.

Notably, some scholars distinguish the career concept from organizational and individual perspective. The traditional career model suggests career progress as sequential steps in one organization or occupation. Hence, career progression is based on continuity and length of service (McDonald et al., 2005). Vertical success and monetary rewards are seen as main features of traditional career. A main underlying premise which is adopted by the scholars is that organizations are responsible for individual's career. Taking into consideration organizational perspective, the emphasis is put on management succession planning and development of managerial talent (Adamson et al., 1998). Therefore organizational structures, culture and internal processes are seen as essential inputs for career systems (Baruch, 2006).

Individual perspective assumes different meanings of career such as satisfaction of economic needs, social status and "life dream". According to Collin and Watts (1996), career is "the individual's development in learning and work throughout life". The individual perspective of career emphasizes the responsibility of individual to plan and manage career throughout life. Therefore, one stream of studies has shifted the attention toward different ways in which individuals can manage career (King, 2001).

However, environmental and organizational changes have impacted the need to develop much broader concept of career. Contemporary literature adopts the view that career is "an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside organization, that form a unique pattern over individual's life span" (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Hence, the definition embraces both individual and organizational perspectives. Meanwhile the

scholars distinguish subjective and objective careers. According to Arthur et al. (2005) subjective (or psychological) career reflects the individual's own sense of his or her career and what it is becoming. On the other hand, objective (or physical) career reflects more or less publicly observable positions, situations and status. Taking into consideration the scientific discussion regarding subjective and objective career, further we elaborate on the concepts of boundaryless and protean career.

4. Contempororary aproaches toward secondary career

The concept of boundaryless career, developed by Arthur and Rousseau (1996), implies "a range of possible forms that defies traditional employment assumptions". The scholars distinguished the term from the previous one – "bounded" career. Notably, an increased number of scholarly investigations into boundaryless career have enriched and broadened scientific literature.

The scientific investigations focused on boundaryless career distinguish the central role of individual agent. Sullivan (1999) emphasizes the following types of career experience: 1) transitions across occupational boundaries; 2) transitions across organizational boundaries; 3) changes in the meaning of employment relationships; 4) network relationships; 5) transitions across boundaries between roles and 6) transitions across boundaries within roles. On the other hand, the emphasis is put on physical mobility across boundaries. Sullivan and Arthur (2006) conclude that the main reasons of researches are twofold. The first reason relates to the fact that researchers have been less interested in the psychological mobility. Taking into consideration interpretations provided by Arthur and Roseau (1996), psychological mobility is the perception of the capacity to make transitions. Hence, the second reason relates to the fact that researchers may find it easier to measure physical mobility.

Notably, Sullivan and Arthur (2006) emphasize that both "physical and psychological mobility – and the interdependence between them – can thereby be recognized and subsequently measured". Hence, the concept of boundaryless career is interpreted as multifaceted phenomenon that embraces various boundaries and levels of analysis. On the other hand, Inkson (2006) emphasizes that boundaries do not disappear but have to be crossed. Hence, the idea to replace the concept "boundaryless" into "boundary-crossing" has been suggested.

Meanwhile, Hall (2004) has developed the idea of the protean career. He claims that the protean career is the one in which the person "is in charge, the core values are freedom and growth and the main success criteria are subjective vs. objective" (Hall, 2004). Notably, the success of protean career is impacted by continuous learning, self-awareness, personal responsibility and autonomy. Niles et al. (2002) define the protean career as "in which (people) are prepared to change with change, to be personally flexible and able to anticipate emerging trends and transform their skills and attitudes to accommodate such changes". On the other hand, the investigations provided by Inkson (2006), allow us concluding that there may be a tendency to focus on the "adaptability" meaning. The scholar suggests more accurate terms such as "self- directed career" and "autonomous career".

Some scholars argue that boundaryless and protean career are distinct constructs (Baruch, 2006). However, the researches concerned with boundaryless and protean career are rather complementary to each other than competing. The scholars argue that adaptability is a trait and boundary-crossing is behaviour (Inkson, 2006). Hence, protean career embrace psychological aspects such as self- direction, adaptability, identity and values. Meanwhile, the meaning of boundaryless career refers to observable behaviour and predictability.

5. Implication for research methodology

According to the literature review, three stages are distinguished which are gone through by a person who has ended his/her first career in has an ambition or obligation to start a secondary career. The first stage is preparation for a finishing the first career. Knowing that he/she will end his job, a person can consistently prepare by reviewing existing competences and acquiring new ones. The second stage is the job search. This stage cannot be defined in time because it depends on (1) how ambitious goals for the future career are and on (2) other factors that are affected by the situation in the labour market. The third stage is the organizational socialization in a new workplace. This stage is difficult for two reasons. First, the organizational socialization depends on the ability to adapt and learn new skills. Middle-aged people do that slower and less willingly than younger ones (Truxillo et al., 2012). Second,

people who have worked for several decades in one field, have worn to some particular rules and work atribustes. Next we discuss each of these stages in more detail.

Stage I: One of the main goals of this stage is to transform the perception of ending the first career. Thus, a person moves from a narrow understanding of a career in one organization to a boundless career perception. A career is seen as exceeding the boundaries of one path and one organization. A person forms his/her career by changing a profession and choosing an organization where new experience is gained. This transformation is related to social and information networks existing within and outside the organizations where a person acting actively shapes his/her future career path. Thus, the stage is designed for new opportunities and evaluation.

Stage II: search for new activities. Middle- aged persons are interested at continual adjustment process to improve position. At this stage , the following levels of proactive activity, which are ranked according to their ambitiousness, can be distinguished(Zikic & Saks, 2009; Parker et al, 2010; van Dam & Menting, 2012):

1) a search for any job; a person has low expectations for his/her subsequent career. It should be noted that they form when a person fails to find a suitable job for a long time. Results of the same research show that older people tend to feel stress less as they have higher self-esteem than young peoplexi. Accordingly, analysing cases of secondary career, it is possible individuals self-esteem will be high and they will be less likely to look for any kind of job.

2) 2) a search of work where a person will be able to use the expertise gained in the firs career. A person looks for a job which requires particular expertise. The work itself or carrying out assignments need competences. In this case, it is important to "end up" in a workplace where your competences were of great importance. It is a constant search for opportunities in a chaotic environment. After finding a suitable opportunity, a person produces excellent results (welfare) while adjusting to the changes; he/she is functionally useful for himself/herself and the employer.

3) increasing competences and retraining in order to get a desired job. The choice of this level shows that a person perceives his/her career clearly and sets clear goals for it; as a result, self-directed career management appears.

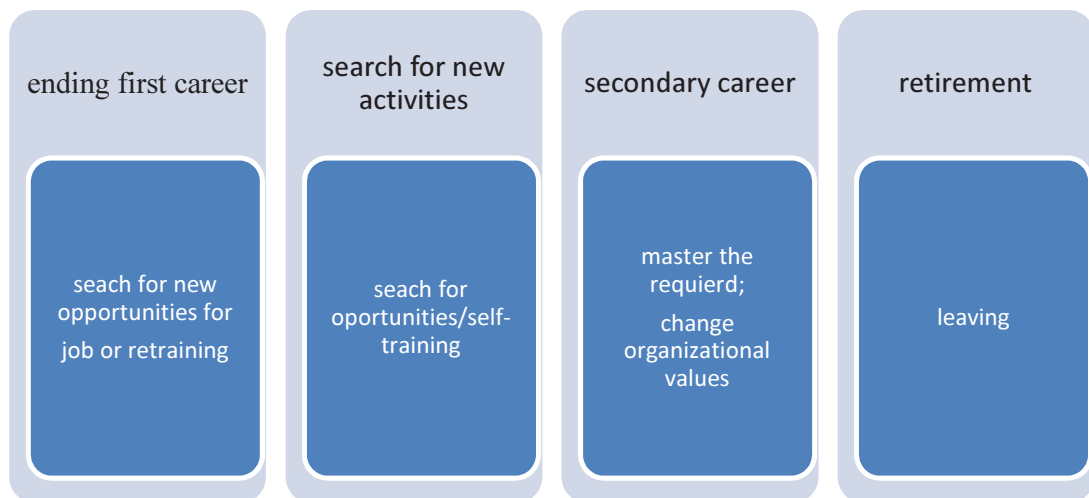| ending first career	search for new activities	secondary career	retirement
seach for new opportunities for job or retraining	seach for oportunities/self-training	master the requierd; change organizational values	leaving

Fig. 3. Steps in career transition

Protean attitude towards a career leads to a personal involvement in career management (Briscoe et al., 2006). Self-management and an approach to career that is not limited to one organization encourage appropriate behaviour: external aid search, active job search by using a variety of means (Briscoe et al. 2012). In order to take advantage of external opportunities, the person makes the most of his/her connections, i.e. a network of people and organizations that can provide him/her with a purely practical, work-related and psychological support. As a result, job seekers actively use their social network (Bac & Inci, 2010; Cahuc & Fontaine, 2010). When looking for work, they use a

variety of means: participate in competitions, send their CV to recruitment agencies or to prospective employers, take short-term jobs, prepare to start their own businesses. This behaviour varies depending on the situation.

Stage III: secondary career. There are three dimensions of socialization in which we highlighted the proactive and reactive behaviour:

1. Achievement dimension. Job search and job performance, the economic and emotional well-being, stability and subjective career success are the factors which depend on how successfully a person copes with difficulties and receives support from the country. Accordingly, proactive behaviour while seeking to achieve the goals is about mastering the required knowledge, skills and abilities while reactive behaviour – learning to perform work tasks. Most of the research of organizational socialization measures how a person learns to perform the work tasks. Analysing cases of secondary career, people have had previous work experience. Accordingly, achievements are related to how much a person is able to use his/her existing skills and achieve professionalism in a new workplace. Adaptability shows a person's ability to act in a self-management mode even when the environment is very dynamic or unfamiliar. Equally important is the fact that a person using a variety of opportunities would retain consistency of his/her career. Thus, a person must be able to adapt while maintaining stability.

2. People dimension. The main idea of socialization is that a person gradually creates great rapport with co-workers. But this is not enough. Fisher (1986) in her study confirmed the importance of finding a person or people who a beginner could learn from, get to know the organization, working groups and the job itself. These relationships are formed through work-related and not work-related personal characteristics. Individual effort, group dynamics and common interests, interaction in terms of work, structured relationship among members of the organization affect how a person's social skills and behaviour will be accepted by other members of the organization. Therefore, proactive behaviour is about learning from the people around in order to integrate into the social environment of the new workplace while the reactive behaviour is about getting along with the new employees and adapting to the social environment.

3. Goals and values of the organization. People coming from different field to a new workplace bring their understanding of organizational values. Thus, learning and adapting to a new job or organization can be more effective if the goals and values of the new organization are understood and are not in conflict with personal values. They transform into the unwritten, informal goals and values of groups that are most affected by formal and informal leaders. Unwritten rules, norms and information networks are an important part of activities of the organization and its interaction with the environment. If one is unaware of this part, socialization is difficult. Accordingly, proactive behaviour means getting familiar with the values of organization, influencing the change of provisions while reactive behaviour – ignoring the values, believing that they are the same as in the former organization.

In addition, the fourth stage can be distinguished, which is not directly related to the secondary career or career transitional, i.e. retirement when person decides to develop non-occupational roles.

6. Conclusions

The theoretical discussion suggests that the approach toward career has changed. The revision of career concept allows us concluding that both individual aspects and responsibility hasrisen dramatically. Therefore the individual should take full responsibility for his or her career. The literature focused on the second career and antecedents for a successful transition is rather scarce. The idea that some individuals are neither independent nor boundary less has to be acknowledged. Hence, successful transition requires combining of individual competencies and organizational support. In our theoretical implications for research methodology we suggest the four career transition process. The first stage on ending first career and starting a movement form boundary to boundary less career approach. The second stage focuses on continual adjustment process to improve individual's position in the international labour market. Competence development and adjustment come into this stage. The third stage is integration and socialization in a new passing working place. |This flexible career management approach for middle-aged employees provide an alternative attitude for reaching better work-life balance.

Acknowledgements

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