TRANSFORMATION OF CAREER CONCEPT AND ITS EFFECT ON CAREER MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

The systemic transformations, which are happening in the western culture and becoming more intensive, can be analyzed as worldview changes, passing from the perspective of modernity towards post-modernity. The aim of the study is to reveal the influence of these changes on the formation of the contemporary concept of the individual career and the practices of career management in the organizations. The research methods applied in the study were scientific literature analysis, systematic analysis and synthesis. The authors conclude that grand metanarratives, which characterize modernism, are changed to individual narratives based on self-realization in postmodernism epoch. Changes in postmodern organizations determine that hierarchic management, hyperbolized rationality and depersonalization of relations is more and more often rejected. Therefore, postmodernist career is more dynamic, open and global and this is determined by such factors as constantly changing external environment, global computerization, significance of aspects of restructuration of organizations and networks. In postmodern era career was started to be conceived not as a vocation or implementation of predetermined roles or traditions, but as self-designed and self-directed project. Organizational career became just a fragment of self-developed individual narrative. Career is owned by the individual, but the organizations via their career systems can also actively participate in the employees' career development.

Key words: career, career management in organization, modernism, postmodernism.

Classification JEL: M12 – Personnel Management.

1. Introduction

Changing assumptions and attitudes towards individuals and their career, behavioral models and motivation in the society and in the organizations, management mechanisms and decision-making models, changes of the organizational forms and principles of functioning, transformations of the objectives and indicators of efficiency measurement, changing moral orientations can be analyzed systemically as the cultural evolution transiting from modernism to postmodernism perspective *(Roberts & Armitage, 2006)*. The period of modernism was characterized by universal, centralized, hierarchic and static structures of organizations, instrumental, rational and control culture based on authority, professionalism, objectivity and scientific method. In the context of general bureaucratization the employee was reduced to an impersonal technological instrument to achieve the objectives of an organization. Work functions of an individual could be scientifically measured and optimized. Career was treated as a given and easily foreseen phenomenon. Industrial, technological relations and patriarchal structures dominated the society. Beliefs in linear, optimistic progress in the future, in global and universal projects (metanarratives) prevailed in the social dimension *(Feldman, 2000; Nemoianu, 2009)*.

On the other hand, postmodern discourse, which started as a purely cultural movement, is linked to the societal changes in 1960 – 1980 and became an emancipation breakthrough not only in the narrow field of art, but also started to influence other spheres and ideas of the society together with management of organizations and formation of a new approach to career and employee development *(Wilterdink, 2002)*. In the postmodern organizations the need for moral sensitivity towards an employee was exposed, the line between purely male or female career choices started disappearing. Decentralization of management, de-bureaucratization,

networking, and importance of life-long learning were highlighted, rationality as a dominant organizational virtue was supplemented by creativity and in the science of management.

The notion of human resources was started to be used reflecting and stressing that a person is not only an impersonal executor, but also the most important resource of the organization. It also should be noted that in the postmodern era great intellectual metanarratives of modernism become cleaved and were changed by many different narratives thus the ideas of one true, stable and universally adaptable form of organization or career were debunked *(Albrow, 1997; Linstead, 2003; Garrick & Rhodes, 2000)*.

By indicating the above mentioned cultural – epochal transformations, *aim of the study* is to reveal the influence of these changes on the formation of the contemporary concept of the individual career and the practices of career management in the organizations. The research methods applied in the study were scientific literature analysis, systematic analysis and synthesis.

Seeking to implement the aim of the study authors are starting from the systemic analysis of influence of modern and postmodern worldviews on organizations and careers. Then the importance of postmodernism as the concept of anti-modernism for individual career opportunities and the influence of simulacra conception on the transformation of career understanding are discussed. And finally changing organizational career management context and practices are analyzed, conclusions are made and further research questions indicated.

2. Influence of modern and postmodern worldviews on organizations and careers

Transformation of modern and postmodern forms of thinking and virtues can be disclosed analyzing the discourse on organization and organizing. Change in contemporary organizations, their management structures, hierarchies, priorities, functions and organizational behavior in general is an obvious reflection of distrust in virtues characteristic to modernistic worldview and transition of the society to postmodern stage. Naturally the question arises what substantive provisions were characteristic to modernistic worldview? What principles were the basis of management of organizations and search of individual identity, which were inseparable from individual career management?

First of all, it is necessary to emphasize that virtues of Enlightenment were very important for the worldview of modernism. Rationality, logic, order, scientific objectivity, technologization and empiricism became dominant discourses. Society believed in the social, linguistic constructions, metanarratives, all-uniting stories (e.g. virtues, knowledge, objectives) such as Enlightenment, positivism or Marxism, and metanarratives as universal linear optimistic directions of history of mankind *(Garrick & Rhodes, 2000; Linstead, 2003; Breisach, 2003)*. These principles added to the formation of scientific management, instrumental work culture, distribution in defined functions of the job, control and setting various rules, dominance of management based on hierarchy and centralization in an organization. These methods became the theoretical basis for management classics such as H. Fayol, and F. Taylor, and their contribution. The creation of rational and universal structures and principles of organizations based on modernism ideology is very important for the formation of concept of career in those times, which could be sought in compliance with certain categories and functions. In this concept of career, scientific characterization of individual abilities, understanding of an employee as an obedient executor of principal functions and long-term and stable concept of career gain a foothold *(Biberman & Whitty, 1997; Gergen, 2001)*.

While analyzing academic discourse more features characteristic to the concept of career in modernism can be distinguished:

- Modernist career was characterized by an approach that an individual must have a special specific education which is meant for a particular position;
- Modernist individual lives in almost constant, stable environment, therefore his/her career is a static one;
- Modernist era is dominated by the premise which is based on rationality that the best and most suitable profession or place of work (position) can be offered to an individual using the knowledge of psychology and management taking into consideration his/her strengths and aptitudes;
- Modernist career is oriented to the execution of clearly defined, narrow requirements and obedience to social structure *(Sampson, 2009; Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Thorngreno & Feit, 2001)*.

Analyzing the characteristic of modernist careers associated with metanarratives, it is necessary to note the change related to the transition to postmodern thought. In the modern era they begin to raise distrust, emphasizing the growing critique and doubt in the universal principles and their applicability, unimplemented idealistic goal of contemporary intellectuals *(Linstead, 2003)*. In postmodernism after rejecting of metanarratives as fundamental discourse of society, the opportunity to consolidate objective criteria and rely solely on rationality, science, as the virtue of stability in all spheres of life, is disappearing. It is important because reliance on normative and rational arguments is diminished; consequently, a number of criteria is entrenched together with the discussions on relativity of organizational structures. It means that traditional functions in organizations are constantly changing; management structures undergo regular updates, the concept of a modernist person as an expert of one area (fixed, long-term career) is changing. Organizational and career relations and criteria based on rationality and hierarchy in postmodernism epoch is changed into cooperation, decentralization and networking. The career of an individual is characterized by greater mobility, and traditional execution of fixed requirements is changed to integration of individual objectives into the strategy of organization *(Albrow, 1997; Clegg, 1990; Nemoianu, 2009; Campbell & Ungar, 2004)*.

This transition basically changes traditional understanding of career concept, which was based on long-term given phenomenon (possibility to achieve a certain position for long time by meeting the criteria) moving to individual, more motivated career construction as a life-long project. Together with this career transformation changes in the educational process, educational system, which is trying to meet the current career realities, are noticed. In conclusion, in postmodernism there appeared a possibility to treat a career not as one universal story (integrating individual self into it) and implement the requirements of dominant metanarrative, but to treat it as a small, individual story, oriented to personal narrative and self-realization. Individual himself/herself becomes the author and assessor of the career story. Since postmodern career is constructed on the bases of every individual's personal experience, emotions, creativity and social relations, career process itself becomes more autonomic and dynamic. Structural and imperative nature, held in modernism, is lost, and career of an individual becomes strongly related to individual motivation *(Thorngreno & Feit, 2001)*.

Creating social relations based individual narrative the significance of networking is exposed to the development of career concept. It should be noted that the special niche for networking to become predominant was determined by significant technological changes of the XXI century, formation of various virtual social networks and global computerization. Millions of individuals all over the world join such networks as Facebook or Twitter. Consequently, the number of opportunities to make new connections and possibilities to get necessary recommendations or reach certain people, necessary for reaching career goals, is growing. Networks are also relevant to career by the applicability of existing connections with

regards to work or in search for new employees. Career based on network becomes very dynamic and global. Furthermore, applying certain search engines in networks or using specific career oriented portals facilitate companies to find the most talented and suitable people *(Tullier, 2004; Clark, 2009)*. The same is noticed even analyzing scientist careers and exclusively academically oriented scientific portal Researchgate, in which scientists publish their articles, communicate, get acquainted, look for job opportunities or potential candidates for job vacancies. Virtual networks also give an opportunity to use such facilities as virtual CV templates as in an exclusively professional network LinkedIn, thus increasing ones visibility, possibilities of career choices and decreasing individual isolation.

In summary, it should be emphasized that great metanarratives, characteristic of modernism, in postmodernism epoch are changed to individual, personal narratives based on self-realization accents. Changes in postmodern organizations determine that hierarchic management, hyperbolized rationality and depersonalization of relations is more and more often rejected. Therefore, postmodernist career is more dynamic, open and global and this is determined by such factors as constantly changing external environment, global computerization, significance of aspects of restructuration of organizations and networks.

3. The importance of postmodernism as the concept of anti-modernism for individual career opportunities

It was mentioned in the first part of the study that one of the basic features of modernism is belief in scientific vision of the world, linear continuity of activity, rationality, stability, and imperative of education as the guarantee to a successful career. However, it should be noted that postmodern practice of creation and development of organizations became a great challenge to traditional theoretical approach. In the western world in postmodern era the number of examples when multimillion corporations using right opportunities were created by uneducated but especially creative leaders. Bill Gates can be the example of these opportunities at the beginning of postmodern era. He quit his studies at Harvard in the USA and created Microsoft Company which later made him one of the richest people in the world and an example of one of the most successful careers in the history *(Groome & Horell, 2003)*. The above mentioned example reflects the importance of formation of personal narrative and its actualization in practice as opposed to traditional norms of the society, universal practices of organizations and execution of static requirements of modernistic career. Small teams of not necessarily traditionally educated, however creative people in the discourse of organizations proved that they can become an alternative to well-developed rational bureaucratic structures led by professionals *(Wallace, 1998)*.

The second important factor is that modernistic society was dominated by patriarchal relations, secularism and the priorities was rationality as the feature of Enlightenment. However, postmodernism, as the project of questioning of traditional norms, affected and highlighted the change related to the opportunities to expression of individuals in respect of career position of gender, ideologies and religious aspects. When the boundaries between traditional forms of organizations, public and private sectors are fading, careers become hybridized, and work places that were considered exclusively male or female begin to disappear. As perception of career is changing, organizational structures transformed; global pluralism regarding staff began to predominate highlighting such aspects as belonging to different religious, ethnic groups, and the need for differentiation in the aspect to gender in leading positions *(Vibert, 2004; Albrow, 1997)*.

The third important factor is changing concept of dependency of modern organization as career platform on concrete geographical field. Organizations in modernity were usually dependent on concrete geographical zone and the human resources and infrastructure present there. However contemporary postmodern organizations diversify their activities in different

places of the world, production processes are differentiated into segments, they establish new functional departments and units or transfer production into various places of the world taking into consideration such factors as benevolent external environment (laws, workforce, political stability), *(Bertens, 1994)*. Therefore it can be stated that modern organization could only suggest just local career for the individual in concrete country, and the postmodern career is distinctive in more global perspectives.

Concluding it must be stressed that the postmodern organizations and career formation is essentially based on the critics of modern ideas. However on the other hand, the transformational processes are reinforced by formation of good practices in the concrete spheres of business when in contradiction to the traditional approach business leaders invoke brave and innovative decisions, the essential attitudes and principles of modern organizations and career are questioned and hybridized.

4. The influence of simulacra conception on the transformation of career understanding

The significance of simulacra conception is particularly relevant in the context of modern technological and economic development, when the increasing role in the society is played by simulations created by television, the Internet or the press and when authenticity and identity are noticeably disappearing in many spheres of life. Simulacrum concept is known since the times of Plato philosophy but in postmodern discourse it became very popular in the works of J. Baudrillard *(Cavallaro, 2001; Johnsen 2012; J. Baudrillard, 2002; Genosko, 1994)*.

This term describes the fact that in modern society, the growing role is played by fictitious characters and false meanings which no longer represent reality as it was in modernist period, but they surpass and deny the pre-existing content causing the deterioration of the pre-existing relationship between the representing and the represented *(Toffoletti, 2010; Kefala, 2006; McGuigan, 2006)*. Modern societies and organizations were characterized by certainty, clear objectives and functions, social order and hierarchy dominated; every employee could find a place in the organization where he/she could feel needed and useful. In postmodern society the boundaries between reality and fiction, authenticity and simulation, rationality and imagination, practicality and complete mindlessness are blurring. 'Death of God' announced during modernist period has been replaced by 'death of reality', which is relevant when analyzing the changes of career conception *(Burbach, 2001; Baudrillard, 2002; Linstead, 2003)*.

By less relying on rationality as the fundamental principle, fading of authenticity, distancing from historical dependence and weakening of identity, the number of career models which take simulacrum features is increasing *(Luntley, 1995)*. For the organizations, individuals are consumers that can be manipulated; therefore, modern careers escalated by mass media are more and more often oriented not to the particular specialization focusing on abilities, identity, or authentic needs of society, but careers are factors that ensure prestige in order to comply with the guidelines of false images, to maximize the dimension of experience *(Hjorth, Kostera, 2007)*.

Postmodern epoch is dominated by the cult of 'stars' career, when mass media attention is focused on business, entertainment or political elite. Therefore, individuals seeking a career beyond their performance are motivated by organizations to correct personal dysfunctions by using different types of products. The objective of achieving a prestigious career characterized by simulacra features automatically formalizes the individual as successful, provides additional social value, gives meaning to his/her existence and allows to differentiate others into one's own and others', into successful and isolated, lower-ranking individuals. These are career models and dream images constantly seen on social networks, which have no equivalent in reality but determine future employees to seek not for what they really need, but

what is dictated by postmodern fashion, directing them towards fictitious, usually never coming true and inevitably de-motivating goals and identities *(Woodward, 2009; Allmendinger, 2000; Harwood, Garry, 2009)*.

In summary, it can be said that careers in the context of simulacra exist not in reality, but in hyperreality (mass media) and they become manipulations of individual consciousness by modern corporations and the effective marketing instrument which can be used for achieving financial goals.

5. Changing organizational career management context and practices

Careers are located at the intersection of societal history and individual biography. Individual career is developed within organizational career system in concrete external context. Therefore modelling contemporary career system of the organization it is necessary to identify and analyze the most important contextual factors, which could have direct or indirect influence on the structure and processes of the system. Different scholars are discerning different contexts in this respect. Patton and McMahon *(2006)* are identifying social and environmental-societal systems as contexts of career development. Baruch *(2004)* directly analyzes the contexts of organizational career system distinguishing two most important categories of them – public organizations and the society in wide sense. It is noted researching the contexts of career systems and career development that currently the importance of separate contextual factors is changing, also the interaction among certain factors is increasing in importance. What contexts are discerned and analyzed depends on the purpose of the research.

The cultural context of changes of work and organizing was investigated by many scholars who were identifying several important tendencies in this area, which are evidently related to economic factors, the objectives of organizations and governments to increase work efficiency and to retain competitiveness *(Jarvis, 2003; Baruch, 2004)*:

- More dynamics in the economics, less stability in relations among the organizations and inside organizations;
- Expansions on new forms of work organizing: virtual and network organizations;
- Development of new forms of working: work in several organizations at the same time, increase of contractual and project work, part time work;
- Formation of more flexible and global labor markets;
- Decrease in state regulation of employment relations, providing opportunities for individualization and diversification of employment relations;
- Increase in demand of knowledge workers and decrease in demand of technical workers;
- Decrease in stability related to employment relationship;
- Decrease in loyalty to organizations;
- More often change of employing organizations and professions.

Thus, the environment for the majority of organizations is no more so stable and easily predictable. Therefore they are made to become more dynamic and flexibly reacting to permanent changes *(Fitz-Enz, 2002)*. Due to these reasons career in the organization is now more determined by the employees' knowledge and skills, which are necessary for the organization in the given time In this context Jarvis differentiates between old and new career paradigms (Table 1), *(Jarvis, 2003)*.

If earlier career was considered to be vertical movement from one position to other acquiring more and more formal rights, currently this chain of movements is no more such reliable – influence of the employee, guaranteed by his/her competencies, is becoming more important than his/her rights possessed or posts taken in the organization *(Jarvis, 2003)*. The organizations themselves are becoming flatter in the sense of the hierarchy levels, as

a consequence of that they cannot often suggest sufficient opportunities for a vertical career. Therefore, a horizontal career – moving in the same or similar level of management or professional hierarchy but towards different work contents – is becoming especially important. The employee possessing the necessary competencies is no longer considered to be just a resource, but he/she is becoming an equal partner of the organization, entrepreneur selling his/her competencies to the organization and much influencing the most important decisions *(Jacobsson, 2003)*. Understandably this partner status is acquired not by all the employees, but just by those who are sufficiently qualified and essentially are working in knowledge production area.

Table 1: Career paradigms (Jarvis, 2003)

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Office	Virtual space
Success = career ladder	Success = valued skills
Authority	Influence
Manager/Management	Leader/Leadership
Entitlement	Marketability
Loyalty to company	Loyalty to work and self
Salaries and benefits	Contracts and fees
Job security	Personal freedom and control
Identity = job, position, occupation	Identity = contribution to work, family and community
Attention to bosses and managers	Attention to clients and customers
Employees	Vendors, entrepreneurs, team members
Retirement	Self-employment – 2nd career

New context of changes of work and organizing leads to changes in career conception and to variety of career forms. The analysis carried out by us enables to identify the following contemporary conceptions of career:
- Arthur and Rousseau *(1996)* are using the concept of 'boundary-less' career, stressing that career of the individual today is rarely limited by one organization and even one profession;
- Peiperl and Baruch *(1997)* are using the concept of 'post-corporate career', stressing the increase of importance of individual career in comparison to organizational (corporation) career;
- Pink *(2001)* states that contemporary career deserves the title of 'Lego career', meaning that employees have to construct and reconstruct their careers from separate parts. The parts could be contracts, abilities, needs, possibilities and etc.;
- Hall *(2002)* uses the term 'Protean career', which originates from the Greek god Proteus, who could change his form according to wish. Hall wants to direct attention to that the individual adapting to changing environments and taking into considerations his/her changing needs, has to learn to newly discover, to construct himself/herself and permanently to review career direction;
- Pryor and Bright *(2011)* name the contemporary career as 'chaotic' due to intensive changes and unpredictability.

All the changes happening worldwide related to expansion of new forms of work and organizing, and changes in the conception of career influence career system of organizations. However this affect is modified by certain historic, specific managerial, legal and political aspects of the environment of the organization.

Currently it is almost unanimously recognized that career is owned by the individual, but the organizations via their career systems can also actively participate in the employees' career development *(Simonsen, 1997; Reardon et al., 2000; Boudreaux, 2001; Savickas, 2001; Savickas, 2002; Desimone et al., 2002; Gilley et al., 2002; Hughes, 2003; Baruch, 2004; Upton, 2006; Boxal & Purcell, 2008)*. In the widest sense the organizations themselves can be considered to be career systems *(Baruch, 2004)*. However more concretely career system is defined as the whole of HRM policy, practice and priorities, also concrete actions of the management, applied to career development in the organization *(Sonnenfeld, 1996)*. Career system reflecting the dynamic aspects of HRM and sustaining career development of individuals, includes and integrates the majority of HRM processes.

Career system determines who is in power and how to acquire power in the organization. Well-designed career systems provide an opportunity for organizations to upraise to the highest levels of management hierarchy the people who are able to generate, create and implement new ideas helping the organization to adapt to rapidly changing environment. New employees coming to the organization, and having a chance to make career, are bringing and spreading their own conception about the structure, strategy, culture, social relations *(Higgins, 2005; Greenhaus & Callagan, 2006; Higgins & Dillon, 2007)*. Career systems applied for the top management team of the organizations have the biggest influence on the organizations. The upper-echelons' theory analyses the influence of composition of management team and peculiarities of its formation on the organizational outcomes *(Hambrick & Mason, 1984)*.

Thus, it can be stated that the postmodern organizations remain stable, reproduce themselves and are changing via and due to the careers of employees, which are developed within organizational career systems *(Jones & Dunn, 2007)*. An organization can even be considered as the enacted product of a complex system of interacting careers – a nice reversal of conventional business thinking *(Inkson & Arthur, 2002)*.

6. Conclusion

Permanent changes of the western culture inevitably form new experiential and perceptual types, images, roles and life forms, which find expression in contemporary states, organizations and their microelements – individuals. The systemic transformations, which are becoming more intensive, can be analyzed as worldview changes, passing from the perspective of modernity towards post-modernity.

Analyzing the features of these characteristics, it is usually agreed that the essential representative components of modernity project comprise such aspects as world concept based on scientific method, rationality and stability, search and ability to find the objective truth, increasing secularization processes, belief in the technological progress, its' continuity in the social dimension and trust in unifying and universally upheld meta-narratives.

Historically, the genesis of post-modernity the most often is related to the changes in the society, which started first of all in the cultural sphere. These processes are distinctive in the critical approach towards traditional concepts, formation of new experimental artistic forms, which were based on differentiation, relativity, adoration of the need for freedom, hybridization, repudiation tendencies of the signs overwhelming the represented contents and absolute forms. It is especially relevant that spread of the mentioned parameters acquired continuity also analyzing the culture in wide sense in other dimensions of the society, such as politics, management and administration.

Post-modernity helped to reveal the existence of alternatives for all traditional constructs, stables and long term structures. Therefore everything which seemed to be unchangeable can be changed and positively deconstructed. Traditional requirements and norms, distinctive for the individual of modern culture, can be changed in the era of post-modernity on the basis of unique experience parameters, life construction projects grounded in the personal characteristics (individual, small narratives).

Change of these and other aspects in relation to individual and his career is analyzed in the study. In the era of post-modernity approach to career has essentially changed. Career was started to be conceived not as a vocation or implementation of predetermined roles or traditions, but as self-designed project. Organizational career became just a fragment of self-developed individual narrative. Career is owned by the individual, but the organizations via their career systems can also actively participate in the employees' career development.

The authors analyzed the essential changes in career conception taking place passing from modernity to post-modernity. However some questions in this respect remain open, they require further theoretical analysis and empirical investigation. The relation between contemporary career patterns and contemporary organizational structures must be analyzed. Also it remains not sufficiently clear what challengers encounter the organizations encouraging postmodern career. It would be valuable to investigate how postmodern careers interacts with wider societal power structures, how fast and from the organizations detached careers affect distribution of power within the society and organizations themselves. From point of view of social theory it is necessary find the answer to the question what parties participate in the discourse on post-modern career and that are their interests behind the expressed positions. The clarification of the above mentioned questions would positively influence the development of postmodern career in practice and would be useful for human resource management as science.

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