New career models : Is it the end of traditional careers ?

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Abstract :

Career management is a field of study that has recently seen the emergence of models that involve a certain fragmentation in the discipline's body of knowledge, including modern career models, whose emergence has contributed to the enrichment of the discipline, while at the same time creating confusion.

Through this article, we attempt to answer, through a critical literature review, the question: will the classical career model cease to exist in the face of new career models?

In reviewing the various research studies conducted on the subject, we believe that although no one can deny the existence of new career models, the traditional career remains the ideal sought by the majority of employees

Keywords: Boudrayless career, protean career, traditional career, career theory, KCM, post-corporate carrer.

Introduction

The fragmented nature of the knowledge produced by the scientific literature remains one of the greatest difficulties faced by researchers in the field of management sciences.

The field of management is relatively young and less developed in terms of formulating questions compared to other fields such as the medical sciences (Tranfield et al., 2003). Studies in management rarely address the same issues, share a research agenda, or even ask the same questions (Tranfield et al., 2003). The field of management is characterized by a large and significant research base, but one that has often been criticized for being fragmented, making it of little relevance or use to practice (Denyer et al., 2008. p. 393). As part of the field of management, career management research is no exception.

The year of 1989 was a turning point in the history of career research: In order to counter the fragmented nature of the career literature, a group of researchers organized a series of seminars on career and organizational issues. The same year also saw the publication of the Handbook of Career Theory (Arthur et al., 1989), which brought together contributions from several researchers from different disciplines. The objective behind this book was to propose new directions and address the challenges related to this field of study (Dany, 2014). At the time, research around career had the potential to become a field with its own theories and paradigms (Dany, 2014). Since then, the challenges of the career management field have attracted, and still attract, an increasing number of academic researchers to study careers from different disciplinary perspectives (Baruch et al., 2015). The diversity of approaches used in career management research can be seen as a double-edged sword: Baruch et al. (2015) state that this diversity has helped enrich the discipline, but at the same time, it has resulted in an abundance of concepts creating confusion. Unfortunately, there is neither a predominant career model recognized by researchers nor a common career theory (Baruch et al., 2015). The "Career Crisis" as stated by Dany (2014), occurred in the early 1990s, with the notion of boundaryless careers becoming widespread, making the field of career management more "vivid," Yet, adding to the confusion the field was suffering from, complicating matters even more (Dany, 2014).

Since the emergence of the new career models, the research community has been divided between those who defend the idea of the predominance of these new models, thus heralding the disappearance of the classic career model (i.e., upward career linked to a hierarchical

evolution) on one hand, and those who defend the continuity of the classic career, which they believe remains the norm, on the other.

In this article, we wish to bring an answer - through a critical literature review – to the central question: Will the classical career model cease to exist in the face of new career models?

We will focus on the presentation of career and career management concepts before presenting the different career models (i.e., classical and modern).

1.   Career and Career Management Concepts

Career management remains a field of research that is attracting a growing number of researchers. Several changes in the global context have resulted in a shift in the nature of organizations and individuals, which has led to an evolution in the concepts of career and career management.

First, we will attempt to define what a career is, what mobility and career trajectory mean, before presenting the different career models (classical model/modern models) and the reality of their existence.

1.1. The concept of "career" and related notions

Beyond the commonsense knowledge of what a career is, assigning a "scientific" definition to the concept seems to be extremely difficult: while reading the literature on the subject, the reader is faced with a multitude of definitions without any consensus among researchers. This may be due to the fact that career is - as Arthur (2008) notes - a multidisciplinary concept.

Traditionally, a career was defined in terms of the relationship between an individual and an employing organization (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), where the Employee-Employer relationship was characterized by a mutual exchange: employee loyalty in exchange for an implicit promise of job security by the organization (Rousseau, 1989; cited in Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). As the global context has changed, recent research has tended to define career more broadly, but also in different ways.

Going through the definitions given by Arnold (1997), Arthur et al. (1989), Greenhaus et al. (2000), and Kram (1985); Baruch & Bozionelos (2011) concluded that the different definitions revolved around the notion of a succession of career experiences across time and space. The authors of the "Handbook of Career Theory" agreed that careers are situated in time and space (Dany, 2014).

In their extensive literature review, Sullivan & Baruch (2009) attempted to come out with a universal and comprehensive definition of the concept of career: they defined it as « an

individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations, that form a unique pattern over the individual's life span » (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; p. 1534).

This definition captures both (1) the physical movements between hierarchical levels, jobs, employers, occupations, and sectors; and (2) the individual's own interpretations of the career events they experience, the alternatives available to them, and their perception of the outcomes (e.g., their own definition of career success) (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

Complex as it is, the concept of career goes far beyond the simple succession of professional roles: Baruch & Bozionelos (2011) draw attention to the fact that professional experiences constitute the central aspect of a career, nevertheless, experiences and roles related to the individual's personal life are an integral part of careers.

Thus, careers are shaped by personal and professional experiences that involve an ongoing interaction between them (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Super, 1980; Cited by Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011).

Another concept that is often used in the career management field is that of "career trajectory."

Often confused with career in common parlance, an individual's professional trajectory is "in a frame of reference (more or less explicit, internal or external to the organization), the set of job situations or occupations that he or she performs over time" (Brillet et al., 2012; p. 75[1]). Career seems, in this case, to be broader than the notion of professional trajectory. The professional trajectory can therefore be considered one of the components of the career.

The definitions of career and occupational trajectory already cited imply the existence of a certain amount of movement, and both concepts seem to be linked to the notion of mobility.

Job mobility, as defined by HRM researchers, refers to a change of company or establishment (Cadin et al., 2003; cited by Roger and Ventolini, 2004, p. 1870); as well as to a change of assignment within an organizational structure or a succession of jobs (Roger and Ventolini, 2004, p. 1870).

Job mobility can be (1) vertical mobility, which corresponds to "vertical movements up or down the hierarchy", as well as (2) horizontal mobility, which involves "changes of position without hierarchical evolution"; it can also be (3) national or international geographical mobility (Roger and Ventolini, 2004, p. 1871);

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[1] Free translation. « Dans un référentiel (plus ou moins explicite, interne ou externe à l'organisation), l'ensemble des situations d'emplois ou de métiers qu'il exerce au cours du temps » (Brillet et al., 2012 ; p. 75)

In the following subsection, we will focus on the global context of careers by presenting the evolution of its models: from the classical model (traditional career) to the modern career models (nomadic, protean, boundaryless careers...).

1.2. Traditional and Modern Career Models

The classical (i.e. traditional) career model was popularized during the 1950s and 1960s (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009): The classical career was defined in terms of the employee-employer relationship (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) emphasizing that careers are tied to a single organization and/or occupation that individuals normally join at the beginning of their experiences. They are assumed to evolve within the same organization and/or occupation. Thus, the classical career is conceived in an organized space of hierarchical or professional promotion – which constitutes an internal labor market – and assumes the intervention of organizational actors (including those of the HR function) to support and sustain this hierarchical or professional evolution (Baruch and Bozionelos, 2011).

The classic career is assumed to be composed of a succession of key stages representing the upward movement in the hierarchical, salary and/or professional ladders (Baruch and Bozionelos, 2011).

In the 1990s, modern career models invaded the literature heralding the end of organizational careers (Hall, 1996). Since then, the focus has shifted to careers outside organizational boundaries (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009 ; Dany et al., 2013), notably with the concepts of "boundaryless careers" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), "nomadic careers" (Cadin et al., 2003), "protean careers" (Hall; 1976, 1996), the "Kaleidoscope career model" (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), and the "post-corporate career" (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997).

These new career models are simply the result of environmental changes that have shifted organizational structures, employee-employer relationships, and work contexts, which have influenced the way in which individuals view their careers (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

The central idea conveyed by the career literature has thus become that of an "enthusiastic figure of an independent, entrepreneurial, hyper-mobile individual[2]" (Dany et al., 2013, p. 1).

The shift from traditional to modern models in career research has been abrupt. Sullivan & Baruch (2009) blame academic researchers for moving - all at once - from one extreme to the other.

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[2] Free translation « figure enthousiaste d'un individu indépendant, entreprenant et hyper-mobile » (Dany et al., 2013, p. 1).

"Are we out of the careers?" (Louart, 2013, p. VII), "Has the traditional career vanished?" (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011, p. 78), "Does the notion of career, for that matter, still have any use (...)?"[3] (Falcoz, 2001, p. 6) are just examples of the questions that the advent of modern career models had raised among academic researchers about the survival of the classical career model.

In an attempt to answer these questions, it is appropriate to first present the different modern career models by explaining the principles that characterize each concept.

1.2.1. Boundaryless careers

Boundaryless careers" or nomadic careers are defined as "a succession of work opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single employment configuration" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFilippi & Arthur, 1994; cited by Baruch et al., 2015).

"The nomadic career stream takes the perspective of an open enterprise, interdependent with a labor market seen as a pool of skills" (Cadin et al., 2000, p. 94). This current implies that careers are not "imprisoned" by organizational boundaries, thus favoring inter-organizational mobility. Arthur (2008) points out that the term "boundaryless career" has its origins in the theme chosen for the annual meeting of the Academy of Management in 1993 "Boundaryless organization", a term that some researchers (e.g. Inkson, 2006 and King et al., 2005) have criticized by proposing that the term "boundary-crossing careers" might have been more appropriate (quoted by Arthur, 2008). Cadin et al (2000), on the other hand, chose to use the term "nomadic career" to refer to the boundaryless career.

The concept of "boundaryless careers" was initiated in 1994 by a special issue of the "Journal of Organizational Behavior" through five articles (e.g. Arthur, 1994; Bird, 1994; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Miner & Robinson, 1994; Mirvis & Hall, 1994) considered by Falcoz (2011) to be the founding articles of this trend. Falcoz (2011), in conducting a critical analysis of these articles, was able to identify a number of flaws that characterize this current: (1) A lack of definition of the concept of "boundaryless careers", a lack that was even admitted by Arthur (Cited by Dany, 2014); (2) the specificity of the framework in which this current was developed (American and Japanese contexts and as a reaction to specific economic contexts) and (3) the multiplicity of theoretical underpinnings related to this concept and the lack of linkage between the different theories used.

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[3] Free translation « Le courant des carrières nomades se place dans la perspective d'une entreprise ouverte, en interdépendance avec un marché de travail considéré comme un réservoir de compétences »

Other main criticisms that were addressed to this current concerned: (1) limitations at the empirical level, mainly the difficulties in operationalizing the concept (Dany, 2014) and (2) the dichotomous or binary reasoning adopted which assumes a certain break between the past (represented by classical careers) and the present/future (represented by boundaryless careers) (King et al., 2005; Zune, 2003).

As stated by Arthur & Rousseau (1996, p.5): " Put simply, boundaryless careers are the opposite of organizational careers".

Zune (2003) invites researchers to take into consideration the entanglement of logics and the possibility of accepting that there are different and multiple possible career paths. In this same logic, King et al (2005) and Dany (2014) call for refuting the idea of duality and opposition between the classical career and the boundaryless career.

1.2.2. Protean careers

The term "Protean career" was first used by Hall (1976) to refer to the career orientation in which the individual is responsible for his or her career and career decisions are guided by his or her core values; thus, the primary criterion for career success is subjective (psychological success) (Hall, 2004). A protean career is assumed to serve the individual, their family, and their overall life purpose (Hall, 2004).

In the same spirit as the boundaryless career, two dimensions characterize the Protean career: (1) in the first, the career is guided by the individual's values and (2) in the second, it is managed by the individual himself or herself (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011).

In order not to confuse the boundaryless career with the protean career, it is worth highlighting the divergences between the two concepts: Baruch (2015) points out that the protean career is an attitude or orientation of an individual, while the nomadic career is a description of a whole system in which the so-called traditional barriers are reduced or broken, although they never cease to exist. Thus, it will be easier for an individual with a Protean career orientation to plan and manage their career in a boundaryless career environment (Baruch, 2015).

1.2.3. Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM)

The Kaleidoscope Career Model was developed in 2006 by Mainiero & Sullivan based on five different studies (interviews, focus groups, and three surveys) conducted with a population of over 3,000 professionals in the United States (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Cited in Sullivan et al., 2009).

The KCM model illustrates how individuals change career patterns by rotating different aspects of their lives to organize their relationships and roles through different practices (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Cited by Baruch, 2015).

The KCM model is inspired, as the name suggests, by the way a Kaleidoscope works: As the Kaleidoscope uses different mirrors to create different configurations, the KCM model is based on three parameters or "mirrors" which are (1) authenticity, (2) balance, and (3) challenge whose different combinations would create different career patterns of individuals (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

Authenticity refers to whether the individual's career choices would allow him or her to remain "authentic". By balance, the individual judges whether his or her work would allow him or her to maintain a certain balance with the other facets of his or her life. Finally, by challenge, the individual asks himself whether his job is challenging enough (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

1.2.4. Post-corporate career

The concept "post-corporate career" initiated by Peiperl & Baruch (1997) refers to careers that are held outside of large corporations, with the actors being individuals who have left these organizations - intentionally or not - or individuals who cannot or do not want to pursue organizational careers because of the uncertainty inherent in this type of career (Baruch, 2015; Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011).

The typical example of post-corporate careers is that of independent salespeople (working alone) or consultants (working in small consulting firms or in partnerships). This type of career offers individuals financial and intrinsic rewards but deprives them of rewards in terms of hierarchical advancement (Baruch, 2015; Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011).

The concept of a post-corporate career has been thought of independently of the concepts of a protean career and a boundaryless career. Baruch (2015) points out that it is difficult to locate the post-corporate career scheme within an overall framework of boundaryless career or Protean career, given that the position of actors is hardly identifiable in terms of physical mobility and psychological mobility (two main dimensions of boundaryless career) and in terms of self-direction (main dimension of Protean career).

2. A transition to modern careers or a coexistence of the two career paradigms?

Modern career models did not float to the surface arbitrarily: it is as a result of various environmental changes that have impacted both individual and organizational realities that these new career concepts have emerged; nevertheless, the academic literature on career management has shifted - increasingly and in a very short time - from the traditional to the new career models, giving rise to a simplistic and dichotomous view of the two career paradigms that assumes that the existence of modern careers overwhelms that of the traditional career (Falcoz, 2011; King et al. , 2005; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Zune, 2003).

Such a view is part of false generalizations, failing to take into account the diversity of contexts, organizational practices and individuals (Louart, 2013). The existence of modern career models does not necessarily imply the disappearance of the traditional career, contrary to the idea expressed in the title of Hall's book (1996): "The Career is Dead - Long live the Career", alluding to a rupture between the career in the classical sense characterized by hierarchical evolution on the one hand, and "new" careers on the other. These careers are managed by the individual himself or herself and promote facets other than vertical evolution.

Several researchers (e.g. Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011; Dany, 2001; Falcoz, 2001, 2011; Louart, 2013; Moss et al., 2008; Pralong, 2013; Vinkenburg & Weber, 2012) - while acknowledging the existence of new forms of career - do not deny the continuity of existence of the classical career model.

Louart (2013) draws attention to the fact that we should not fall into the trap of generalization based solely on the theories in use, he emphasizes the importance of observing practical behavior. Currently, we can find both career employees, as we can find others whose employment is managed as a simple contract. This depends on several variables (Size of the company, Sector of activity, Status of the personnel, ...) (Louart, 2013).

According to Dany (2001), the new approaches are useful in that they nourish new representations of the career, but they "struggle to account for the daily experience of many company executives" (Dany, 2001, p. 209). Boundaryless/nomadic careers concern only a minority of people, even though the basic principles underlying them seem to be developing gradually (Roger and Ventolini, 2004).

The answer given by these researchers to the question of the disappearance of the classical career is negative. Moreover, this classical career, offering the possibility of a vertical

hierarchical evolution, remains the norm as demonstrated by Vinkenburg & Weber (2012) on the basis of their literature review of 33 empirical studies related to career paths.

As cited by Godshalk & Fender (2015), observation of reality in the practical world suggests that employees and employers still place perceived value on the traditional career (Dany, 2003; Guest & Davey, 1996; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). The latter thus constitutes - not only one of the possible configurations, but - it remains the prevailing career norm (Falcoz, 2011).

While Pralong (2013) considers the traditional career to be in the minority and reserved for an elite, and Falcoz (2001) asserts that it remains a privileged means of retaining high-potential managers; Moss et al. (2008) were able to prove through their study that even for call center personnel (personnel that can be considered far from elitist) an ascending career is indeed desired, and succeeds - better than financial rewards - in improving performance, motivating and retaining employees.

It is therefore a question of the company's need to retain - or not - certain employees, the retention of some would therefore coexist with the flexibility of others (Pralong, 2013, p. 239). "One retains executives with high-performance management or rare expertise, but one also wants to retain less qualified personnel, whose availability (helpfulness and ability to maintain the atmosphere) are judged to be essential factors of local adaptability or collective involvement" (Louart, 2013, p. VIII).

Conclusion

The field of career management, and of human resource management in general, are characterized by the scientific production presenting very fragmented knowledge, as there is no Body of knowledge relevant to practice, not even specific to the field. One of the main causes, we guess, are related to the fact that there are very few systematic reviews that are conducted. Most of researchers rely on narrative reviews that can fail to be objective, and so, it makes it hard to capitalize on research findings of the anterior research works.

One of the relevant subjects that had led to a lot of discussions, is about the modern careers and whether their presence mean the end of the classical pattern. Through our critical review, we have come to the conclusion that what we are going towards the co-existence of all career paradigms, while the traditional one stays "the norm".

As a future research perspective, we think that it would be interesting to conduct qualitative studies in order to comprehend what employees (in different countries, different industries, different ages …) are interested in when it comes to career patterns.

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