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Satisfying Career – Considerations about Subjective Sense of Career

KEY WORDS

satisfying career, subjective sense of career, individual's activity, proactivity, professional success

ABSTRACT

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The subjective dimension of career development involves and connects career planning with private models of human life, professional aspirations and with the way they perceive their experiences. It should be noted here that Theory of Work Adjustment (R.V. Dawis) is the theoretical orientation, which attempts to explain satisfaction with career development by reference to the dynamics of the relationship between the subject and the environment. , is the theory of employability. The theory is rooted in the tradition of individual differences in the professional behaviour. This perspective links the career choice and development, seen as a permanent process, with the cycles of work adaptation, the source of which lies in the feeling of dissatisfaction. Unmet need of satisfaction is seen as a state of insatiability. Individuals aim at meeting this need through adaptation, which means seeking professional organizations and communities to meet their expectations (in the context of quality of meeting needs). The result of the search for determinants of job satisfaction is to draw attention to the following relationship, namely: commitment to a career increases the level of satisfaction resulting from career development.

In the considerations about career you cannot forget about the questions of subjective sense that is put on the career by agents in the context of its satisfactory experiencing. According to E. Ginsburg, "career-making process is open, and its goal is to find a job giving as much satisfaction as it is possible." (Szymański, 2010: 82). The process of career development has a decisive impact on the qual-

ity of perceived job satisfaction and commitment practiced in the career. Moreover, the results of B. Adekola's research show that the career development has stronger connections with the satisfaction that individuals feel about their jobs than with their career commitment. (Adekola, 2011: 108). The majority of approaches is focused on emphasizing the importance of the personality variables in shaping the attitudes towards career¹. However, it is worth noting that, in the eighties scientists studying job satisfaction, among other things: Hackman and Oldham (1976), Salancik and Pfeffer (1978), Griffin (1983), O'Reilly and Caldwell (1979), as well as White and Mitchell (1979) focused on the analysis of external determinants. Forces external to individuals were highlighted in the comparative values of the two types of explanations: models of work features and of social information processing. Proponents of the first approach claimed that an individual's attitude towards work is largely shaped in relation to the characteristics of a given task, its importance and diversity of skills required for its implementation. The approach referred to as a model of social data is concentrated on the social guidance and social sources of information which are crucial to make important decisions about the quality of attitude towards work (Bell, Staw, 2004: 233). The adopted point of view, emphasizing external motivational processes and information, introduced a significant limitation for a cognitive perspective highlighting the importance of an individual's activity.

The reference to the category of proactivity, which can be seen among others in research done by E.W. Morrison, enables us to notice another field dependency, indicating the existence of a relationship between an individuals' activity and their successful careers. Its exemplification may include: obtaining a job, commitment, job satisfaction and a satisfactory rating of "human capital assets" or "market value" units (Bańka, 2005: 32). A similar line of thought can be found in the deliberations presented by J.B. Barney and B.S. Lawrence. In the context of the economy of individual career strategies, the authors made "a distinction between the general (having economic value in virtually any working environment) and specific (having value only in a particular company) dimension of the human capital. These two dimensions are primarily to explain individuals' behavior in their career. Individuals identify themselves and invest in

¹ The problem of the subjective sense imposed on career constitutes a section of the multi-contextual way, in which the author presented the topic of career in the world, where „career makes career” (both, in theoretical and research aspect) presented in the monograph, *Młodzież akademicka a kariera zawodowa*, Kraków 2013.

human capital valued by the organization in which they hope to succeed" (Barney, Lawrence, 2004: 422–424). Treating individuals as active "sculptors" of their own behavior and attitudes means directing reflection on the model of purposive activity and individual autonomy. Generally speaking, an individuals' autonomy "in the context of the surrounding world means implementing their goals, which are not only a response to the occurring and anticipated events, but above all an expression of their life aspirations" (Obuchowski, 1977: 78). Among other things, the belief that the degree of job satisfaction is proportional to the degree to which individuals can realize the concept themselves, allowed Savickas to handle the concept of a role, which is an important issue for a career construction. Nevertheless, the author claimed that "job satisfaction depends on the creation of situations, both at work and in their lifestyle, that present opportunities for individuals to play roles, they think they are appropriate for them" (Patton, McMahan, 2006: 63).

The subjective dimension of career development "involves and connects career planning with private models of human life, individuals' personal development, professed system of values, professional aspirations and with the way they perceive their experiences" (Paszowska-Rogacz, 2009: 113).

This view, though treated as dominant in contemporary theoretical perspectives when you consider a holistic approach to the career domain, has already had a long tradition. Early literature in the subject of careers was clearly oriented towards individuals. Stressing the topic of individuals' attitude to their career, Münsterberg wrote as early as 1913, that the feeling of monotony depends not so much on the specific type of work, but rather on the affective availability of individuals, understood as a general tendency to positive or negative assessment of life stimuli (Bell, Staw, 2004: 233). It is self-evident that individuals' satisfying career will update and promote feelings of professional fulfilment and it will have uplifting influence on their well-being. This current of discussion fits into views of D. Super, who is the creator of the career development theory. The researcher says that the career satisfaction is possible when individuals pursue their interests and abilities, find their own values "and if their career is not contradictory to their personality" (Miś, 2006: 483). However, in addition to general assertions, Life Cycle Theory of Human Space and Life presented by Super relates in a holistic way to the issues of career satisfaction and this fact determines the attractiveness of this approach. The researcher, assuming that the degree of maturity to pursue a career affects the quality of job satisfaction, and the chances

of professional success are proportional to the degree of completion of the self-image, helped to reinforce the idea that "the satisfaction of the individual life and performed work depends on the extent to which individuals find a right market for their skills, needs, values", interests, personality traits and self-image on determining individuals' position in their profession, the situation in the workplace and lifestyle consistent with the roles implemented in the phase of growth and exploration, which given individuals consider to be adequate and appropriate" (Cossette, Allison, Donald, 2007: 13–14). E.I. Meir, S. Melamed and C. Dinur (1995), undertaking the study of the quality of satisfaction, made "the division and distinguished three components: satisfaction with the career choice, job satisfaction and self-esteem. Based on their research they concluded that job satisfaction and the increase of well-being are the result of the convergence of different spheres: professional convergence, convergence of recreation (non-professional) and the ability to use skills. Thus, one should not expect that the degree of correlation to one aspect of convergence (eg. the professional convergence) with a worker's results will be high" (see: Meir, Melamed, Dinur, 1995). According to J.L. Holland, individuals experience more job satisfaction when it is consistent with their personalities, when the type of professional environment corresponds to the type of individuals' personality, which in turn promotes stability in professional choices (see: Holland, 1996). J.L. Holland himself argues that "individuals feel more comfortable, and work better in a profession that «matches» them psychologically" (Allison, 2007: 2). There is empirical evidence of the fact that compliance of individuals' interests with their career choice has an impact on job satisfaction and maintaining a permanent job. In the distinguished approach, it is the convergence of personality types with the environment types that results in a high level of wellbeing. Essentially, the convergence refers to the degree of matching or the interaction of individuals' personality types and the type of their practiced profession. In addition, the research conducted by L.S. Gottfredson and J.L. Holland (1990) specified that the highest level of job satisfaction is acquired by individuals who represent the following three types: social, enterprising and conventional. It should be noted, however, that J.L. Holland also expressed his doubts about the connection between the types of convergence with satisfaction. Research conducted by Carson and Mowesian (1990) pointed to the fact that the sense of professional identity constitutes a more adequate predictor of job satisfaction than the convergence of interests and work environment. However, studies carried out in the coming

years, such as the one presented by Meir and Navon (1992), confirmed the thesis that individuals tend to seek and remain in convergent work environments. Not without reason, Ch. Allison calls J.L. Holland's theory "the theory of fulfilment. Whereas, researchers are described as "logical positivists" because they prove theses on the road of empirical cognition (Allison, 2007: 1 and 12–13).

The essence of the phenomenon of job satisfaction as a special state of mind, is interpreted in different ways. Strong postulated that individuals' job satisfaction is linked to the similarity of their interests to the interests of people of the same profession (Betz, Fitzgerald, Hill, 2004: 30). T. Gregson (1987) defines job satisfaction as "a positive state of emotions which results from individuals' assessment of their jobs or experiences" (Adekola, 2011: 103). Exemplification of satisfactory experiencing one's own careers may constitute needs, competence, experience and values "that are realized in the process of its updating and which are identified as essential from the individuals' perspective". H.L. Chay and N.T. Bruvold (2003) pay attention to this system of dependence as they define job satisfaction as "an individuals' emotional response to specific aspects of their work" (Adekola, 2011: 103). Similar capturing of the semantic meaning of the "job satisfaction" term can be found in the considerations presented by R.A. Noe (1996). The researcher defines this state of emotion as a pleasant feeling which results from individuals' sense of conviction that work brings fulfilment in the area of "important professional values" (Adekola, 2011: 103). R. Davis, G. England and L. Lofquist (1964) indicate that the level of job satisfaction is derived from the relationship between the needs and expectations of the company and the accepted bonus system (Szymański, 2010: 87).

The theoretical basis of this approach can be found in E.H. Schein's considerations, referring to the eight individual priority groups which call them career "anchors". The model "career anchors" or of Schein's career determinants, ingrained in the twelve-year study of MBA graduates from the Sloan school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, constituted the basis for grasping the quality "of self-perception of talents, motives and values "that served to develop, reduce, stabilize and integrate individual careers" (Dalton, 2004: 93). For E.H. Schein the conceptualization of the determinants of career (specific career "guides"), understood as "a set of individual talents, interests, motives and values "that make up the individuals' image of the profession that is appropriate for them" (Miś, 2006: 480), was to show the possible areas in which individuals can construct their own careers and thus increase their chances to achieve success.

The term individual career "anchor" is a process – and only then it can constitute a form of specifying the coherence between the ideas and individual choices (Miś, 2006: 480). Moreover, in E.H. Schein's works one can capture the conceptualization of the changing roles "with some form of separation from the old role to the transformation and the incorporation of a new one" (Trice, Morand, 2004: 397), which has been mentioned rather occasionally while discussing the subject of careers.

Professional competence may represent the first "anchor". First and foremost, individuals care about being competent "experts" in their chosen field, aspiring to be promoted. Individuals belonging to this group "organized their careers around specific areas of technical or functional competencies, and their moves at work were to maximize their ability to face new challenges in the chosen field" (Dalton, 2004: 93; Paszkowska-Rogacz, 2009: 107–110; Miś, 2006: 481). Managerial competence is the "anchor" for individuals with interpersonal skills, ability to integrate operations and decision-making and interested in acquiring new experiences in management, enlarging the area of influence and the possibility of exercising power and striving for financial success. Three types of competence that may coexist in an individual are particularly noteworthy: " (a) *analytical competence*, the ability to solve problems in uncertain conditions; (b) *interpersonal competence*, the ability to influence people and lead them so that organizational goals are achieved, and (c) *emotional competence*, the ability to be stimulated, rather than exhausted or weakened by crisis" (Dalton, 2004: 93; Paszkowska-Rogacz, 2009: 112; Miś, 2006: 481). Autonomy and independence constitute another group of values. They are accompanied by the desire to broaden the scope of self-reliance (the purpose is usually to get to the position of independent experts) and to take responsibility for the areas of professional agency. A motivating factor is the ability to make independent decisions about the qualitative and quantitative elements of work, and that means being free from organizational structures, rules and restrictions. People presenting values such as the *security and stability* have a goal to get stable and secure employment. Being interested in having predictable and clearly defined future generates a sense of loyalty to the organization, and an emotional attachment to it, determines the need to be promoted, which is also associated with one's wish to have secured future. Individuals who value creativity show a creative approach to reality and the development of their professional career. They focus on identifying and solving problems, on introducing innovation. They are mobile, enter-

prising and cognitively interesting. The factor that motivates them is the need to create new things, a high level of "being free" to decide and to be promoted. Among the values that individuals value the most there may be these kind of jobs where you can *serve* others and where you want to sacrifice yourself for others. In this kind of jobs, the main driving force and the source of satisfaction is constituted by the desire to help others or even the value of sacrifice for others, social involvement (often voluntary activities) and the implementation of humanistic values. The value of a *challenge* manifests itself in the desire to search for novelties, to face difficulties and tendencies to take risks and to compete. The motivating factor is constituted here mainly by a challenge, rather than the context of promotion opportunities or obtaining financial bonus. Career "anchor" can also mean a *life style* in the situation where individuals are focused on keeping balance, harmony and maintaining the right balance between different spheres of life, and in particular in the family – work – career relationship (Paszowska-Rogacz, 2009: 112). Professional success is a component of success in life showing individuals' satisfaction in many spheres of life. The Author of *Career Anchors. Discovering Your Real Values* (1993) within three years of research revised this statement, emphasizing the importance of linking individual and organizational aspects of career development. As a result, he singled out the following career "anchors": a) professional competence, b) managerial competence, c) independence, d) security and stability, e) creativity. While distinguishing these anchors, he made an assumption that the one that a given individual chooses will be permanently visible (Paszowska-Rogacz, 2006: 481).

The implications of decisions in the subject of job satisfaction and the sense of professional success, including the axiological aspect for career development is also presented in the works of C.B. Derr (1988). The main feature of his considerations is an indication of five dominant orientations in relation to the career that are characteristic for given individuals at different stages of "building" their career. C.B. Derr believes that they prove that given individuals are possibly on their way to develop a rewarding career. The orientation to "go forward" is characterized by the development of a career in the vertical system. Individuals particularly appreciate social status, power and financial aspects. Being focused on success, achievement and competition makes the job the top priority. On the other hand, concentration on safety shows that given individuals value the sense of belonging to their organization and they want to be loyal. Adopting the "local" point of view in favor of the "global" one means that individuals are interested in

being promoted (something they care about) which is characterized by patience. This state, however, is achieved when individuals reach the optimum level of security, which remains the top priority. Orientation towards freedom means aversion to the conformist and dependence behavior. It also means acceptance of independence and autonomy in the area of professional activity. Individuals who exhibit this orientation are hard-working, creative, entrepreneurial, imaginative and they set high standards of work for themselves and for others. Others usually see them as restrained and thus it is difficult for their work partners to get to know them. Orientation to balance constitutes exemplification of the search for harmony and balance between various dimensions of life: professional work, family life and quality leisure time. Individuals face challenges that they set for themselves, they plan their career development path, they are hard-working and demanding of themselves and others, as well as willing to act in a spectacular way when a given situation requires it. Orientation for success may relate to success in the whole career, or it may refer to selected components of career. Financial issues are not the main driving force. The main driving force here is the opportunity to use talents at work that we consider interesting and that gives us satisfaction. Another important aspect that individuals value a lot is the possibility to take innovative action (Paszowska-Rogacz, 2009: 112).

D.A. Jepsen and H.B. Sheu (2003) show in their considerations about the nature of attitude to work conditions and aspects, what is this special peculiarity of satisfactory experiencing our own biography in the context of a career. These two theorists assuming that liking or not liking the work is a universal and essential aspect of career development and that almost everyone looks for satisfaction in their practiced work, found out that if individuals engage in work that suit their professional choices, it is highly likely that they will experience satisfaction. On the other hand, the theory presented by F. Herzberg (1959) suggests that only motivating factors can lead to a feeling of job satisfaction. K.M. Bartol and D.C. Martin (1998) name the following things: achievements, responsibility, seeing work itself as a value, a sense of recognition and visible progress (Adekola, 2011: 103). According to M. Morgan, the sense of job satisfaction corresponds to the ability to articulate mutual opportunities and negotiate expectations between the subject and the organizational structure (Morgan, 1980: 65). It should be noted here that TWA (Theory of Work Adjustment) by R.V. Dawis is the theoretical orientation, which attempts to explain satisfaction with career development by reference to the dynamics of the relationship between the subject and the envi-

ronment. , is the theory of employability (TWA – Theory of Work Adjustment). The theory is rooted in the tradition of individual differences in the professional behaviour. This perspective links the career choice and development, seen as a permanent process, with the cycles of work adaptation, the source of which lies in the feeling of dissatisfaction. Unmet need of satisfaction is seen as a state of insatiability. Individuals aim at meeting this need through adaptation, which means seeking professional organizations and communities to meet their expectations (in the context of quality of meeting needs). On the other hand, organizations and working environments look for individuals who have the qualifications and skills to meet "requirements" set by a given organization. The term "satisfaction" refers to the degree of individuals' satisfaction with their work environment and the work environment with the individuals' commitment. For most organizations what counts the most are the skills that are required in a given work environment. As a consequence, the degree of an individual's satisfaction and the degree of satisfaction of an organization is a predictor of the length of their employment in a given work environment. Achieved and maintained compatibility between individuals and the work environment can take four different styles of adaptation: flexible (referring to the level of tolerance and ease that individuals exhibit when they are discontent with their organization seeing there is a disagreement between them and their work environment), active (referring to personal tendencies to introduce changes and impact on the work environment in order to eliminate the lack of agreement and dissatisfaction), reactive (referring to individuals' adaptation without making a reference to active changes or attempts to influence their work environment), persistent (persistence refers to the degree of determination and an individual's sturdiness to adapt to the environmental conditions before making a decision to look for a different job) (Leung, 2008: 116–117).

The result of the search for determinants of job satisfaction is to draw attention to the following relationship, namely: commitment to a career increases the level of satisfaction resulting from career development. Hall (1971) identifies career commitment with "dedication" and he adopts a definition, which shows that it is a force of motivation to individuals' work chosen as their career path.

Career commitment is characterized by development, attachment, identification and commitment to personal career goals. Moreover, which is important from the perspective of individuals' participation in the "culture of uncertainty", their commitment in the internally defined career and developing specialized

skills, can become a significant source of employment (at least in selected areas and dimensions) stability and continuity in the "fluid-modern" world (Zygmunt Bauman), which is less capable to guarantee employment security (Adekola, 2011: 103–104). According to Ch. Handy (see: Handy, 1994), the construction of a career path gives individuals satisfaction in the following terms: financial (it guarantees financial security), intellectual (it stimulates and it poses challenges), emotional (it gives a sense of belonging and it imposes meanings) and practical (it meets pragmatic needs, such as: how far is the work place located from home) (Piotrowska, 2006: 11). Individual well-being is another crucial aspect. The research conducted by Meir, Melamed and Dinur (1995), emphasizes the following factors: stability, achievements and satisfaction (Allison, 2007: 12). Thus, career commitment plays a crucial role in the career development and it makes individuals conscious authors of their own biographies.

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