Chapter 2
Career Patterns and Developmental Tasks in Career Development

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ABSTRACT

Each of the capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition dimension is a career pattern which allows an individual to adapt to his/her changing work environment, work, and occupation. Career patterns are the tools enabling an individual to adapt to his/her environment during the career construction process. Career stages involving developmental tasks reveal how an individual construct his/her career based on his/her self-concept during a certain stage of the development. The goal of this chapter is to describe career patterns, such as capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition, and influences of career patterns on each career stage. It is argued in this chapter that the career patterns can enhance entrepreneurship skills of employees and ensure the establishment of intra and inter-organizational connections and give rise to new business partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Career Construction Theory describes interpersonal and interpretive processes through which individuals construct themselves, choose a direction for their professional career behaviors and attribute meaning to their careers. This conceptual framework, designed for a multicultural society and a global economy, offers a contemporary explanation of careers. Career Construction Theory (Sharf, 2010) explains how individuals construct their careers through individual constructivism and social constructionism (Savickas, 2013). The theory involves the theoretical explanations regarding vocational personality development, occupational characteristics, person-environment fit and life themes. It also consists of the application of Super’s occupational preferences and occupational choice approaches and career adaptability conception which focuses on the process of person-environment fit (McMahon, 2014).

In the same way, the theory derives the concept of career pattern from Super’s works. The concept of career pattern originated in industrial sociology. It was defined, objectively, as the number, duration,
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and sequence of jobs in the work history of individuals. In addition, Super identified a subjective type of career pattern, which reflects personal needs and concerns that form the plot in an individual’s career history. These patterns differ according to the number of developmental tasks a worker engages within career stages (Savickas, 2001). At this point, it is essential to mention the process of imprinting to analyze the effects of career patterns and developmental tasks on an individual’s career.

The process in which individuals acquire or develop certain talents, confidence and understanding through their work experiences is called career imprints. In other words, a career imprint is career-beginners’ capabilities, connections, confidence and cognition fed by the culture, system, structure and strategy. Capabilities, connections, confidence and cognition are crucial in searching of what an individual learns in an organization (Higgins, 2005).

Patterns, such as capabilities, connections, confidence and cognition, developed by employees of an organization through their career experiences and imprints of their organizations can be a guide for employees when they decide to leave their organizations to start up new businesses. Indeed, the institutionalization approach prescribes a similarity between structural and functional features of an organization functioning within a certain environment and the environment’s features. This similarity, called isomorphism, asserts that organizations at the same field are subject to similar environmental pressures, and they develop similar structural and functional features in parallel with expectations and pressures of the environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). At the same time, it can be said that organizations from a certain field with similar structures and functions are required to develop certain capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence.

Their carrying these imprints to their new organizations can help to understand why an imprinting organization has an important influence in the sector and why entrepreneurs previously working in an imprinting organization display similar characteristic features. The term career imprint implies observable patterns, such as capabilities, connections, confidence and cognition developed by a group of individuals as a result of their shared career experiences (Higgins, 2005, p. 7). For example, connections include types of social capital, intra and inter-organizational relationships, and power and structure of such connections. Mentorship and networks can be cited as examples for these connections (Higgins, 2004, p. 8). Network structures can be enriched by openness to career supporting activities such as visibility, sponsorship and protection as well as psychosocial supports, such as friendship, counseling, admission and verification. (Higgins & Kram, 2001). The classic mentorship concept, which has been evaluated within the context of connections, is about old mentors who are at maintenance or disengagement stage of their professional developmental tasks and mentoring the youth living through their establishment stage (Finkelstein, Allen, & Rhoton, 2003). The fact that workers at their later years transfer their work experiences to workers at the beginning of their career paths can be cited as an example. In addition, it can be said that a young worker with high confidence in his/her learning is a factor that improves performance of the work environment. It should also be mentioned that young workers who have benefitted from their mentors’ experiences and successfully completed challenging tasks assigned to them by their seniors can adapt to various changing organizational contexts to develop new capabilities. As you can see in this example, Savickas and Super’s (1993) theories on career stages that involve developmental tasks reveal how an individual constructs his/her career based on his/her self-concept during a certain stage of development. Career patterns can be seen as tools which allow an individual to adapt to his/her environment during this construction and spiral learning process. Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is to describe career patterns such as capabilities, connections, confidence and cognition, and how their reflections can be observed upon developmental tasks within each of these career stages.