

Chapter 1

Entrepreneurship-Professionalism- Leadership as Dimensions of Career Space: Career Agency in the Macro Context of Boundaryless Careers



Kim-Yin Chan, Jeffrey C. Kennedy and Regena Ramaya

Abstract The emergence of the boundaryless career paradigm in the 21st century has triggered new approaches to career guidance that aim to strengthen individual agency in the context of a wide variety of work arrangements and career forms. A divide has emerged between the person-centered, psychological approach to careers versus the sociological approach that focusses on macro structural factors in society that shape individuals' careers. While the former has focused on examining within- and between-person factors like personality traits, skills, new career mindsets and attitudes, the latter has focused on studying different forms of boundaryless careers. Chan et al. (2012) offered an alternative approach; drawing on Kanter's (1989) ideas, they reframed Entrepreneurship, Professionalism and Leadership (EPL) as the dimensions of subjective career space with which individuals may envision or think of their careers. This chapter discusses how Chan et al.'s EPL framework for subjective careers complements recent career education and guidance approaches such as Arthur's Intelligent Career Theory, and the vocational psychologists' focus on certain traits, attitudes, and psychological resources. We suggest that the EPL framework presents individuals with a conceptual tool to envision and describe their career journeys in context of the structural dimensions of work and careers that exist in nations and societies. We also discuss the implications of a multidimensional approach in relation to Intelligent Career development.

Keywords Entrepreneurial · Professional · Leadership · Boundaryless careers · Agency · Context · Intelligent careers

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Introduction: Psychological versus Sociological, Contextual Views of Careers

With the rise of the post-industrial age and the knowledge economy, the start of the 21st century has witnessed a paradigmatic shift in the fields of career theory and the science and practice of career development. Just over a century ago, the world witnessed the rapid rise of the industrial age which brought with it a proliferation of occupations and a wide range of paid employment in organizations. This spurred the field of vocational guidance and its underlying science of vocational psychology, which initially adopted a “person-job fit” model (cf. Parsons, 1909) that assumed that higher levels of job performance and satisfaction could be achieved via the empirical matching of individual characteristics to job requirements.

By the middle of the 20th century, Donald Super (1953, 1957) proposed a career development model which portrayed a career as the sequence of an individual’s job experiences unfolding over a life span, in the context of a broader “life space”. Super’s early career development ideas were aimed at helping youths to achieve career maturity or “readiness”. Implicit in early 20th century psychology-based career guidance was an assumed predictability of individual vocational choices and growth based on an assumed stability of person and job characteristics and fixed stages of human development. Until the 1980s, the field of career development also assumed that most careers would unfold within single organizational settings and was largely silent with regard to the macro-level societal, economic and political forces and dynamic contextual factors that affect individuals’ careers over a lifetime.

While the science and practice of career development had roots in the psychological sciences, the study of careers (career theory) had roots in macro social scientific disciplines such as sociology and organizational studies. Like their psychological counterparts, these macro social scientists also tended to focus on careers in the context of paid employment in organizations at least until the 1970s (cf. Schein, 1978; Van Maanen, 1977). However, they saw career development as an interaction between personal and environmental factors with outcomes for both. For example, Van Maanen and Schein (1977) defined career development as a “lifelong process of working out a synthesis between individual interests and the opportunities (or limitations) present in the external work-related environment, so that both individual and environmental objectives are fulfilled” (p. 36).

Several changes surfaced in the 1970s and 1980s that challenged the traditional paradigms in both career theory and career development. Tams and Arthur (2010), for example, highlighted four factors: (1) the reconfiguration of large organizations to focus more on core activities and the related flattening or delayering of organizational hierarchies and outsourcing of non-core functions; (2) increased efforts to privatize previously state-owned enterprises (e.g., utilities, transport and communications sectors); (3) popularization of a “regional advantage” view of industrial economies (cf. Porter, 1990) where work was envisioned to be more project-based, and jobs less permanent; and (4) introduction of a psychological concept of protean careers—a view that individuals can and should take charge of their careers (based

on personal values and relationships) to respond (or “change shape” in response) to opportunities or changes in the external environment (cf. Hall, 1976).

With these shifts, the boundaryless career paradigm (Arthur, 1994) emerged in the 1990s whereby careers were now seen as “owned” by the individual (an agent) existing in a broader social context beyond that of any single organization. Correspondingly, vocational psychologists and career counsellors realized the need to distinguish between (1) *vocational guidance* which aimed to help individuals to establish person-job fit (as an “Actor”) for employment success within a job or kind of work; (2) *career education (and/or development)* which aimed to help individuals to strengthen their career adaptability (as an “Agent”) for more sustained employability in context of work and career possibilities over a life time; and (3) *career counseling* which would employ interventions like Life Designing to help individuals to construct their careers in a broader context of their life space in the form of narratives or stories (like an “Author”; cf. Savickas, 1997, 2013; Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Therefore, in the 21st century, individual career development is recognized as driven by the need to adapt to the changing external context and requires individuals to construct their careers by identifying new opportunities and directions, and by acquiring new skills, relationships and mindsets for a future context.

Separately, organizational scientists recognized the breaking of traditional psychological contracts between employing organizations and employees (cf. Rousseau, 1995, 1996), and called for new approaches that emphasized individual agency and ownership of their careers and career development (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). One approach that has captured much attention is Intelligent Career Theory (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995) which frames career development in terms of the individual’s investment in one’s own career capital or competencies— independent of organizational boundaries. Intelligent Career Theory is particularly relevant in the context of the post-industrial, global knowledge economy because it calls on individuals to nurture their career capital or knowledge capital in terms of three ways of knowing: (1) *knowing-why*, i.e., one’s career identity and motivation, (2) *knowing-how*, i.e., one’s knowledge, skills, expertise or human capital, and (3) *knowing-whom*, i.e., one’s social networks and reputation in such relationships. Interestingly, this approach also portrays a somewhat person-centred, individualistic approach to career agency that appears to emphasize within-person factors largely independent of external, structures that also influence careers.

To Focus on Personal Career Agency or Career Forms/Structures?

Despite the alignment of both career theory and career development/vocational psychology fields toward a more boundaryless perspective where careers are decoupled from the organizational context, some (e.g., Gunz, 1989; Evetts, 1992; Collin &

Watts, 1996) have raised concerns regarding the divide between the mainly psychological (within/between-person) approach to careers and career development—one that focuses on strengthening individual agency, self-directedness/ownership of one's career and development and subjective criteria of “success”—versus the sociological approach that recognizes careers as shaped by social structures e.g., the economy, labor force, education and employment and employability support policy and systems, etc.

In 1989, Kanter attempted to bridge the gap between individual careers and the macro-level structures and outcomes. She examined the sociological literature on different “logics” of work and suggested that entrepreneurial, professional and bureaucratic careers are the three “principal career forms” that have emerged across societies to affect national economies. Subsequently, the emergence of the boundaryless career perspective also led to the examination of more specific boundaryless career forms. Tams and Arthur (2010) for example cite research that has examined contingent workers, skilled contractors, project workers, interim managers, entrepreneurs, and global itinerants as examples of boundaryless career forms. Looking at this list, one observes an unevenness in what qualifies as a career form. For example, contingent, contract and project work are descriptive of (non-standard) work arrangements, while managerial and entrepreneurial careers focus more on the kind of work that is actually performed. “Global itinerants” on the other hand focuses on the locational/mobility aspect of a career rather than the kind of work or task that is actually performed in a career.

Concerned, Tams & Arthur (2010) argued against the apparent proliferation of studies focusing on different boundaryless career forms by highlighting the risk of ignoring overlaps and similarities across different forms; and of ignoring variations within particular forms. They called on researchers instead to examine the “career dynamics that apply *across* a range of career forms” (italics added for emphasis). They defined career agency as “a process of work-related social engagement, informed by past experiences and future possibilities, through which an individual invests in his or her career” (p. 630; note: the idea of “investing” linking career agency to Intelligent Career Theory). They also called on researchers to recognize both independent and interdependent perspectives to career agency, which one can regard as the personal factors and psycho-social factors that shape one's career dynamics.

Implicitly then, career development (including education and guidance) for the 21st century context of boundaryless careers requires (1) a focus on the independent and interdependent aspects of the dynamics of career agency; (2) some way to represent the resources, capacities or capital in the person or the career agent; and (3) some way for individuals to understand or conceptualize careers in relation to the wide range of possible career forms, work arrangements and locations that exist in society. While it may be problematic to focus on different career forms or to assume these are fixed in some way, one cannot ignore the structural realities of the socio-economic space in which careers take shape. To avoid the problems of overlapping career forms and the proliferation of variations within career forms, a different approach may be needed for individuals to envision or describe their careers—one that allows for a wide range of possible career forms from linear to non-linear, from unidimensional

to multidimensional. This is where EPL expressed as the defining dimensions of career space provides a possible solution, enabling a diverse range of career forms to be captured with a parsimonious set of common dimensions.

EPL Framework: Reframing from Principal Career Forms to “Dimensions of Career Space”

Chan et al. (2012) adapted what Kanter (1989) had identified as principal career forms and re-expressed them as the “dimensions of subjective career space”. They wrote: “Although Kanter described the career forms as three separate types, each with its own logic, we conceptualize entrepreneurship (E), professionalism (P), and leadership (L) as dimensions of career space such that all individual careers can be defined as vectors in a three-dimensional subjective career space. This career space is conceptualized as independent of Holland’s (1959, 1997) RIASEC vocational interests” (p. 79). They therefore sought to propose a model that would allow for the possibility of multidirectional as opposed to simple linear career paths or trajectories (cf. Baruch, 2004); specifically, they proposed that individuals could think of their careers in terms of vectors that could move in any direction and intensity or speed over time. They argued: “our career framework can be helpful for young people who face many options among which the pursuit of expert knowledge and skills (i.e., a professional career path) is only one alternative. Instead of thinking of E, P, and L as competing career paths, students can take a more holistic view of their life-long career development by considering a three-dimensional EPL career space in which their careers may evolve over time” (p. 74).

Figure 1.1 illustrates Chan et al.’s (2012) metaphor of careers as vectors in EPL space. By reframing Kanter’s (1989) principal career forms as dimensions, Chan

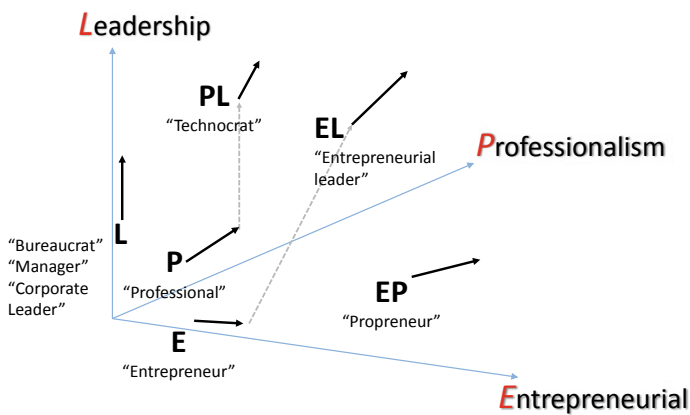


Fig. 1.1 Conceptualising careers as vectors in EPL space

et al. (2012) have provided a framework that allows individuals to envision and enact the unfolding of their careers in a space that has dimensions based on the socio-economic reality of work, while avoiding the limitations of having too many different or overlapping career forms. It also does away with the assumption of fixed career forms. To the extent that Kanter's principal career forms were derived from fundamental logics of work, the EPL dimensions relate directly to matters of career motivation and identity (i.e., knowing-why) and are not confounded with the nature of work arrangements or mobility.

One way to appreciate Chan et al.'s (2012) reframing of Kanter's typological approach is to consider this analogy: Imagine asking an architect to design a building in 3 dimensional space by identifying the 3 dimensions (e.g., length, breadth, height) versus asking the architect to design in relation to a set of well-established building forms (e.g., highrise apartments, bungalows, terrace, houses). The dimensional approach would allow for a greater range of possible building designs that can include established forms, but are not limited or bounded by them.

Career Agency and Dynamics in the Context of Multidimensional Career Space

Today, psychological and sociological/organizational approaches to careers and career guidance recognize the importance of career agency in the boundaryless paradigm. Savickas (2013) wrote: "Career education, from the subjective perspective of individual development, views clients as agents who may be characterized by their degree of readiness to engage developmental tasks appropriate to their life stages and who may be helped to implement new attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that foster their vocational adaptation" (p. 648). However, as Tams and Arthur (2010) highlight, it is also important to recognize both independent and interdependent perspectives to career agency.

Career development in the 21st century context of boundaryless careers therefore requires attention to both (1) *the independent psychological dynamics* (or the within-person interplay) between personal factors and the nurturing of what has been variously referred-to as career capital (cf. Inkson & Arthur, 2001), movement capital (Forrier & Sels, 2003), career competencies (Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006), career resources (cf. Hirschi, 2012), and meta-competencies (Hall & Mirvis, 1995); and (2) *the interdependent psycho-social dynamics* between the career agent and the social environment (from global to national, societal to firm/organization/institution environments) in which one's career may unfold in the world. The latter includes the career space that is defined by the principal dimensions or logics of work (e.g., EPL), the variety of work arrangements and psychological contracts (e.g., full/part-time, outsourced work, etc.), the accessibility of locations (local/global; urban/suburban/rural) and physical/geographic mobility available to the individual.

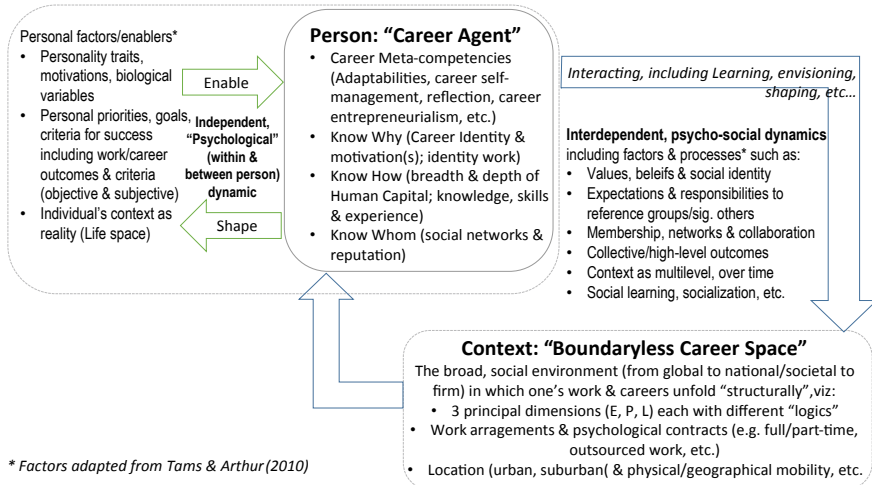


Fig. 1.2 Career education/development for agency and dynamics in boundaryless career space

Figure 1.2 incorporates Tams and Arthur's (2010) ideas regarding the independent and interdependent perspectives of career agency; it also situates Chan et al.'s EPL framework as part of the *interdependent dynamics of career development* for the 21st century context of boundaryless careers. Presented in this way, Chan et al.'s (2012) EPL framework does not replace or contradict Intelligent Career Theory. Instead it amplifies and expands the scope of the ways in which individuals can make career investments in dimensions that contribute to the wealth of nations, and is consistent with Van Maanen and Schein's (1977) definition of career development, which focuses on both within-person factors (e.g., traits, interests, values, goals, priorities) and opportunities or possibilities as they exist or are constructed in the external work related environment.

Implications: EPL and Intelligent Career Development

Intelligent Career Theory is a framework generic enough to articulate individual career development in a manner that is decoupled from organizational structures. However, the three ways of knowing (why, how and whom) still assume a person-centered view of career agency and career development and do not take into account the structures of careers as they exist in society. In a boundaryless career context, one may have to move away from assuming only fixed career forms like entrepreneurial, professional or bureaucratic careers. Instead, one could adopt more dynamic perspective suggested by Chan et al. (2012) where EPL are seen as principal dimensions of a space in which multiple career forms may be constructed or unfolded.

Table 1.1 illustrates how Chan et al.’s (2012) EPL framework amplifies and expands the scope of ways in which individuals can make career investments with respect to the different dimensions. By cross-tabulating the three ways of knowing with the E, P and L dimensions of career space, we are able to see new dimensions along which individuals may consider expanding or evolving their career identities and motivations (knowing-why) over a lifetime—either in pursuit of new opportunities or as a reaction to changes in their work/employment circumstances. Individuals whose career identities have primarily been defined vocationally or professionally may consider expanding their knowing-why along entrepreneurial and/or leadership dimensions. Similarly, individuals who have cultivated vocational/professional career networks may wish to consider building entrepreneurial and/or bureaucratic

Table 1.1 How the EPL framework amplifies and expands intelligent career theory

3 ways of knowing (Career investments or capital)	3 macro/contextual dimensions and logics of career space			Implications for 21st century career dev: People need to cultivate/manage
	Entrepreneurship (logic of value creation)	Professionalism (logic of expertise and reputation)	Leadership (logic of org. advancement)	
Why (career identity and motivation)	The value-creating and creative side of one’s identity and passions	The deep/technical expert side of one’s work identity and motivation	One’s identity and motivation to lead, organize, influence, control	Multiple identities and motivations, varying in prominence over the course of a career
How (human capital: knowledge, skills and expertise)	Breadth viz. alertness to opportunities and the market; innovation; business planning; marketing of ideas, securing funding, etc.	Depth/specialization, currency/relevance, experiential basis underlying one’s unique technical and vocation-specific knowledge skills and expertise	Breadth viz managing resources; influencing people through task, relations and change skills, styles, behaviors	Requirement for breadth and depth of human capital, complementarity of E, P, and L skills. i.e., importance of being “T-shaped”
Whom (social networks and reputation)	Investors, funders, shareholders, mentors, customers	Vocational or professional peers and community, societies, associations, etc.	Co-workers, subordinates, bosses, board, organizational regulators, etc.	Multiple functional networks, need to diversify to open up additional career options
Desired outcomes (in pursuit of)	Product, process, organizational innovations; translation from ideas to innovation	Technical excellence/Quality (standards)	Order, efficiency, direction, alignment and commitment (of people in the organization/team)	Multi-dimensional outcomes of one’s work efforts

networks at some point in their careers. Finally, individuals who have only mastered professional/vocational know-how may wish to become more “T-shaped” by cultivating more transferable leadership and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

Table 1.1 also suggests some new research questions that may reflect the realities of career agency and development in the 21st century. Increasingly, it may be that individuals will need to develop meta-competencies to manage multiple career identities over a career life-time. Research is needed to validate if being more “T-shaped” in one’s know-how or having more E, P and L networks translates into higher degrees of employability or career agency and dynamics.

Conclusion

This chapter responds to Tams and Arthur’s (2010) call for “more systematic understanding of career agency and its interdependencies” (p. 630). It also attempts to relate Chan et al.’s (2012) subjective, person-centered articulation of the EPL framework to career structures as they exist in the working world. By connecting the EPL framework to Intelligent Career Theory, we also hope this chapter provides new ideas for career development and stimulates research aimed at greater understanding of the expanding range of novel work and employment contexts confronting employees in the 21st century.

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