

Report of the European Academy of Work and Organizational Psychology Small Group Meeting

Job Transitions from a Career and Occupational Health Perspective

12 – 13 September 2012, Antwerp, Belgium

Organizing committee

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Background of the meeting

Job transitions can be defined in many different ways. In this small group meeting, we took a broad perspective and defined a job transition as any change in employment status or job content (Forrier, Sels & Stynen, 2009). Given this definition, job transitions can include transitions in and out of (un)employment, transitions between standardized and flexible forms of employment arrangements, horizontal or vertical job changes or other career moves within the same or between different organizations.

Changing jobs has become more common (Arnold, 1997; Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010), most likely because of more dynamic labour markets as well as more specific national and international government policies (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004; Weinert, Baukens, Bollérot, Pineschi-Gapègne & Walwei, 2001). For the individual, this trend has been discussed in relation to risks, such as increased job and unemployment insecurity, but also in relation to a general tendency towards individualization in the world of work (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), and employees' increasing responsibilities for their own working life career (Allvin, 2004).

In research, job transitions have become an important scientific topic in occupational health psychology and in career research, and both the downsides and the benefits of job transitions have been highlighted. Within occupational health psychology, the focus has been more on possible downsides of job transitions. Hence, work stress, working conditions and employees' health and well-being have been central topics in this field (e.g. Berntson & Marklund, 2007; De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte & Alarco, 2008; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). In the career research field, attention has been drawn to individual choices and agency in shaping careers. Accordingly, this field of research more often investigates benefits of job transitions and focuses on antecedents and outcomes of objective and subjective career success (Arnold, 1997; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004; Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010). What is lacking so far is an integration of both fields.

Course of the meeting

The meeting was held at Lessius on the 12-13 September 2012. 19 papers were accepted for the meeting, but with one last minute cancellation, 18 papers were presented. All papers were available to the participants before the meeting.

The papers were thematically grouped with on average three papers in each session of 90 minutes. Each presenter was assigned 20 minutes for the presentation and then 10 minutes for a group discussion, with the chair – always members of the organizing committee - being timekeeper. The discussion was opened by a discussant who was selected from the pool of participants, and who had read the paper and prepared questions in advance. That way, each presenter got feedback from the discussant and , in most cases, also from others in the audience. In addition to the submitted papers, we had two invited speakers. Professor John Arnold from the University of Sheffield accepted our invitation to open the meeting with a keynote entitled “Work role transitions: Some observations about a broad area”. Ben Greeven from Thalentio closed the session with insights from practitioners and possibilities for exchange between academia and the field. In total, the meeting had 32 participants.

Programme

Introduction

Keynote: John Arnold (University of Sheffield): Work role transitions. Some observations about a broad area

Paper session 1: Implications | Risks and opportunities for organizations

Paper 1 | Cécile Tschopp, Martin Gubler, Wiebke Doden, & Gudela Grote. Help, I need Somebody! Career Transition Support Analyzed at Network and Alteri Level (ETH Zurich, Switzerland).

DISCUSSANT: Pascale Peters

Paper 2 | Hilde Bøyum & Sabine Raeder. A Better Deal Elsewhere? The role of organisational support for development in retaining employees. (University of Oslo, Norway).

DISCUSSANT: Monika Hamori

Paper 3 | Eva Selenko¹, Anne Mäkikangas², Saija Mauno², & Ulla Kinnunen³. Investigating the effects of organizational change and changes in job contract on job insecurity and turnover intentions. (¹University of Linz, Austria; ²University of Jyväskylä, Finland; ³University of Tampere, Finland).

DISCUSSANT: Johanna Stengård

Paper session 2: Implications | Risks and opportunities for individuals

Paper 4 | Thomas Rigotti, Sabine Korek, & Kathleen Otto. Still there, but with new responsibilities: Gains, losses and matched moderators related to career transitions within organizations. (University of Leipzig, Germany).

DISCUSSANT: Maximilian Buyken, Ute-Christine Klehe

Paper 5 | Alfred F. Wagenaar¹, Michiel A.J. Kompier¹, Irene L.D. Houtman², Seth van den Bossche², & Toon Taris³. Impact of employment contract changes on workers' quality of working life, job insecurity, health and work-related attitudes. (¹Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands; ²TNO, The Netherlands; ³University of Utrecht, The Netherlands).

DISCUSSANT: Kaisa Kirves

Paper 6 | **Sarah Vansteenkiste, Marijke Verbruggen, & Luc Sels.** *Unemployed becoming underemployed: Examining antecedents and outcomes.* (KU Leuven, Belgium). **DISCUSSANT: Jos Sanders**

Paper session 3: For whom | Workers in their early and late careers

Paper 7 | **Belgin Okay-Somerville & Doria Scholarios.** *A patchy road: Graduate job transitions and career mobility following early underemployment* (University of Aberdeen, UK). **DISCUSSANT: Melissa Marinelli**

Paper 8 | **Ine Willemse¹, Ans De Vos², & Dirk Buyens¹.** *The development of I-deals during the early career: A longitudinal study.* (¹Vlerick Management School, Belgium; ²Antwerp Management School, Belgium). **DISCUSSANT: Thorana Grether**

Paper session 4: For whom | Specific groups

Paper 9 | **Christine Blackie & John Arnold.** *How clergy experience preparing to move jobs in the Church of England.* (Loughborough University, UK; University of Sheffield, UK). **DISCUSSANT: Belgin Okay-Somerville**

Paper 10 | **Thorana Grether & Bettina S. Wiese.** *Predicting mothers' working hours after maternity leave* (RWTH Aachen University, Germany). **DISCUSSANT: Claudia Bernhard-Oettel**

Paper 11 | **Melissa Marinelli.** *Can Kleinman's Explanatory Model contribute to our understanding of women's career transitions in Engineering?* (Curtin University, Australia). **DISCUSSANT: Ine Willemse**

Paper session 5: Conditions | Individual's movement capital

Paper 12 | **Wiebke Doden & Martin Gubler.** *"Yes we can" Are optimism and social support key for success in job transitions?* (ETH Zürich, Switzerland). **DISCUSSANT: Thomas Rigotti**

Paper 13 | **Kaisa Kirves^{1,2}, Ulla Kinnunen¹, Nele De Cuyper², & Anne Mäkikangas³.** *Change profiles of perceived employability: Associations with well-being and work characteristics.* (1 University of Tampere, Finland; ²KU Leuven, Belgium; ³University of Jyväskylä, Finland). **DISCUSSANT: Sarah Vansteenkiste**

Paper 14 | **Maximilian Buyken, Ute-Christine Klehe, & Matthias Baum.** *Career exploration: A meta-analytical review of antecedents and outcomes.* (Justus Liebig Universität, Gießen, Germany). **DISCUSSANT: Alfred Wagenaar**

Paper 15 | **Jos Sanders, Ellen van Wijk, Jan Fekke Ybema, & Ilona Domen.** *Multiple job holding and sustainable employability.* (TNO, The Netherlands). **DISCUSSANT: Wiebke Doden**

Paper session 6: Conditions | Organizational practices

Paper 16 | **Pascale Peters¹, Beatrice Van der Heijden¹, & Lisa van den Berg².** *Employees' actual use of HR-practices associated with new ways of working and boundary management strategy: Consequences for work engagement.* (1Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, The Netherlands; 2Hay Group). **DISCUSSANT: Hilde Bøyum**

Paper 17 | **Johanna Stengård¹, Claudia Bernhard-Oettel¹, Erik Berntson¹, Lars Häsänen¹, Gisela Jönsson¹, & Katharina Näswall^{1,2}.** *Importance of legitimate incentive and sufficient information*

level for displaced worker acceptance and well-being during plant closure process. (1Stockholm University, Sweden; 2University of Canterbury, Christ Church, New Zealand). **DISCUSSANT: Cécile Tschopp**

Paper 18 | **Jie Cao & Monika Hamori**. *On-the-job-development practices after job transitions*. (IE Business School, Madrid). **DISCUSSANT: Eva Selenko**

Discussion & goodbye

Insights from practitioners (30'). Ben Greven, Thalentto
Transition to research agenda (30')

The meeting was characterized by inspiring discussions on the papers and on the general theme of the meeting. We see four main reasons that promoted interaction. First, we made all papers available to all participants about one month before the meeting. Second, each participant was assigned the role of discussant of a paper, and prepared questions for discussion following the paper's presentation. Third, participants came from different fields: occupational health and career research. The implication was a lively exchange of ideas. Fourth, participants came from 11 different countries, which stimulated discussions on institutional and contextual differences. A further implication was that a relatively new network could be formed. Also the informal time at the meeting (e.g., breaks, lunch, dinner) was organized so as to stimulate the development of this network.

A particular feature of this Small Group Meeting was that three practitioners from the talent management organization Thalentto also participated. The meeting was partly funded by the company. The practitioners took part in an active way, contributing with questions and comments on the presentations, and introducing yet another viewpoint. In addition, the meeting was closed with a presentation from Thalentto with their view on research and practice in the field.

Scientific results

The aim of the Small Group Meeting was to formulate a research agenda for the topic of job transitions based on insights from both – the occupational health and career research – fields. In the call for papers, we suggested that the contributions should relate to one or more of three main topics:

1. *What aspects (outcomes)* can be identified as beneficial or disadvantageous in a short-term and long-term perspective?
2. *For whom* are job transitions beneficial or disadvantageous?
3. Under *what conditions* are job transitions beneficial or disadvantageous?

We also wanted the participants to actively try to relate their research to both suggested research fields, through paper submissions and/or discussions.

Professor John Arnold addressed in his opening keynote the width and complexity of the research field, a complexity that is enhanced by the ambition of combining different fields. He discussed the concept of work role transitions, thus including a number of different types of transitions, such as transitions regarding positions, careers, location

and settings. Professor Arnold concluded that what we study, i.e. how we define the concept and from what perspectives we investigate it, as well as how we study it, is of importance when looking forward. Specifically, he emphasized the importance of including contextual matters in studies of job transitions and thus integrating psychological perspective with managerial, macro-environmental and sociological perspectives.

The papers provided the research field with new and interesting research. More specifically, the presentations included in the Small Group Meeting brought more insight for the following aspects of job transitions:

- *What risks and opportunities do transitions have for organizations and individuals?* Gains and losses of career transitions, risks of underemployment, issues such as well-being, employability and job insecurity were discussed.
- *For whom?* Here, papers specifically focusing on older or younger workers and specific groups such as e.g. mothers returning after a leave were presented.
- *What are conditions that hinder/facilitate transitions?* The papers presented at the meeting highlighted individual factors such as optimism, career exploration, sustainable employability. Others focused more on organizational facilitators and presented their findings with respect to the importance of leadership, cooperation, on-the-job-development after transitions and organizational efforts prior to transitions (e.g. providing coach support).

Finally, the meeting was closed with a practitioners view on our research field. Ben Greven from Thamento described their working model and their need of relevant research on the topic. Some important insights were brought forward. For example, he emphasized, like John Arnold pointed out at the beginning, the importance of context, and how practitioners encounter organizational, institutional and cultural differences in their daily work. He also highlighted the importance of recognizing that younger people have different a time-perspective, which may have consequences for career research, but also that organizations have to accept that people will leave more often. One important issue that came up was also the need for better platforms where exchange between researchers and practitioners are possible.

Lessons learned

At a more general level, the discussions generated the following thoughts:

- *The transition process:* During the meeting the notion of context was brought up at several times. There was a consensus at the meeting that the contextual issues of transitions are of importance and should be emphasized more clearly in the research field. Consequently, more focus should be directed towards the process of the transition it self. In this respect, more types of transitions should be investigated, including reversibility of transitions, i.e. taking one step back, and the lack of transitions, i.e. studying individuals who want to make a transition but are not able to. Furthermore, it is also important to distinguish between intentions and actual transitions, implying more research on actual transitions rather than on intentions. In addition, the meeting also found it important to look

at work role transitions (for example new ways of working) as well as more quantitative transitions (e.g changing jobs)

- *Outcomes:* During the meeting it was concluded that it is fruitful to combine outcomes from several different perspectives. One example is when both career success and impaired health are included in the same analysis taking into account both positive and negative aspects of transitions
- *For whom:* One important issue that came up during the meeting was that there is a large focus on high-educated individuals in the research field. Little attention is given to groups in the labour market with lower education. Thus, more research with divers samples were requested, but also, the need for life-cycle perspectives were brought up.
- *Methodology:* More qualitative studies should be made, including narratives exploring how people form their careers and thoughts about their careers. Indeed, the meeting also discussed the importance of multi-method studies, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to the field.

Outlook

Overall the EAWOP Small Group Meeting was very successful, and on the basis of this meeting, one outcome at hand is the development and building of new research networks and co-operation constellations. In addition, the scientific committee has taken the following steps to further co-operation and the spreading of scientific knowledge related to the broad field of job transitions with an emphasize on combining the career and occupational health perspective:

1. We have submitted a suggestion for a symposium on job transitions, entitled "Job transitions, career and employability in Europe" for the next EAWOP congress to be held in Münster, Germany, in May 2013. The suggested symposium brings together five European research teams studying job transitions from a career point of view, as well as through the lens of employability, mobility in combination with individual well-being. John Arnold will be discussant for that symposium.
2. We have started discussions on a special issue regarding the topic of the present EAWOP Small Group Meeting, with the intention of bringing together international contributions on the job transitions. A journal has been contacted in this matter.
3. The scientific committee of the EAWOP Small Group Meeting has started the work on a position paper, where topics from the meeting will be discussed and elaborated upon. The position paper will be submitted to European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology.

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