

Keynote Noloc 150219

I am happy to be able to share some ideas on the importance of career management in the light of the theme of today; quality assurance.

My name is Judith Semeijn and I represent the chair in career management for Noloc at the Open University and amongst others, I serve as the coordinator of the professional Master in Career Management (MLM) at the Open University.

**In this contribution I will show how career management is in fact a strategic asset for sustainable organizations and how career professionals play a crucial role in the future of work.**

### **New world/new choices**

The world of work is changing; *technological innovations, robotisation, the energy transition and the process of digitisation* require new skills and competencies from people. As some jobs disappear, others emerge and many change in several ways, people have to seriously adapt and innovate their skills as well.

**In fact we are all creating a whole new world together, and this new world is of course meant to be a better world to live in, a more human world, which also requires human responsibility and: responsibility for humans (!)**

Meanwhile the working force is also aging; there are more older people than younger people now, more diverse ages than ever are working together. And we get older as well, which means there are more costs and more work-life balances issues for everyone to deal with, also during working life.

But the good news is: although we become older, we look younger than our age, as compared to earlier generations! Maybe this is also because we are thriving to work in a more happy and vital way, using and developing our talents as a key and creating room for our individual contribution to the new world. At least this is what happens, as career satisfaction and more subjective outcomes have grown in importance as compared to more objective outcomes such as salary and hierarchical promotion.

**So we develop new views and new horizons; our own horizon is longer because we get older, but we need to explore more options and variety in the creation of our careers as well. We are literally and symbolically extending our expiry date...**

Career theory and research is addressing these latest developments, by emphasizing the self-responsibility of individual workers, but also the responsibility of organizations and society. We seem to rather agree on a shared responsibility in the literature, and in line with attention for (other) sustainability issues, career theory has put focus on the creation (co-creation) of sustainable careers.

**A key driver for this interest in sustainable careers is the growing complexity of the issues we have to deal with in careers, and the fact that short term and unidimensional knowledge and solutions can no longer provide what we need.**

**Sustainable careers are characterized by De Vos and colleagues by the following elements:**

**Social space >> both the institutional context and the more private social context play a role**

Self-responsibility >> the individual owns the career and is the key agent

Meaningfulness >> it is important we can work according our values and experience meaning in what we do

A renewed role for organisations >> how is the new shared responsibility with the individual realise? This is an important challenge of today

And in all, the importance of dealing with the larger complexity that we encounter, which is in essence the new element that is steering and pushing further theory development

## Sustainable development

Organizations and society acknowledge the need for a more sustainable development in general and for the co-creation of sustainable careers. But it is still hard to find out how this is done effectively and handle this responsibility in the light of all developments.

As we argued in our article of 2017 (in COSUST), the attention for sustainability in terms of people planet profit is still skewed, not in favour of the people aspect. Profit is still an important goal for many organisations (it might be rebalanced to viability), the planet has gained attention, sometimes in terms of window dressing and not convincing enough yet (according to some but not all people), but people are actually lagging behind when it comes to serious attention for their sustainability and wellbeing, or so to say, for humanity in general.

But hope is on the way, light is shining from the end of the tunnel (is that a beacon...?) as organizations become conscious that some issues are not only a matter of a business case in classical sense (profit), but more a matter of reconsidering their value case (planet and people!)

In the current situation, an HR department is often handling the career management, in practices such as recruitment and selection, career development, performance management and salary and benefits. The point is that career management has to level up, it has to **claim** its position as a strategic asset. Why?

- 1) People still have only **one career** (possibly in different tracks in a longitudinal perspective – think of second careers- , as well as a simultaneously- think of the hybrid teacher.
- 2) We are aware there are **more stakeholders** to satisfy, and more agents that are affecting career management
- 3) Organizations need to **cooperate** to remain viable for the future (do they already feel a sense of urgency..?)

And what we know on careers today requires the *independent knowledge and expertise of career professionals* to serve all those stakeholders and bring back in **the human factor** in work, to rebalance the sustainability skew! And thereby contributing to sustainable careers...

So

## Career management...

Career management in literature is mainly described in two types: OCM and ICM. It can be provided by the organization, or acted upon by the individual in many different colourful forms and types...

And I like to share some interesting studies in the light of being a strategic asset...also related to the career profession...

**First** of all one of my favourites from 2007 by our colleagues Verbruggen, Sels & Forrier, published in the Journal of Vocational behaviour, on the different and complex interactions between OCM and external career counselling.

- OCM reduces the need for external career counselling by enhancing career satisfaction.
- OCM reinforces the need for career counselling by encouraging employees to invest in their external employability.
- OCM and external career counselling are complementary as well

It would still be wonderful to follow up with a longitudinal design to gain more insights!

**Second** a more recent study that was presented on the Academy of Management Conference in Chicago last summer, on a large database including many waves, indicates that contrary to the expectation building on the increased self-responsibility of individuals for their careers, the use of more than the half of the OCM practices has increased, employees identified formal and informal activities and that ICM and OCM work in partnership.

**And finally** some studies that are in different stages 'on their way' (in the pipeline...) that might hopefully contribute to this field, and that show the importance of career management as well, especially putting focus on shareholders and actors who are involved in the process of career management:

- a) the shared function of HR
- b) the returns of career management involving three parties in a longitudinal design
- c) and the possible importance of organizing CM in networks of several stakeholders and parties, at different levels of geographical reach (city, region, country, even international)

Thus, career professionals are of strategic importance themselves...and play many **different roles** in the process of career guidance, career counselling, career management

According to NICE, the network for innovation in career guidance and counselling in the EU, career professionals have 5 different roles within their larger professional role, that is called CGP (the career guidance profession)

As we can see, there are roles involved that are more aimed at the individual (for example *counsellor*) but also possibly at groups >> *educator, assessment and info expert*, and also at the broader levels of organisations and society, as reflected in the *social system intervenor* role

The question is of course; are we complete, do we not forget any further role that might be of importance, or is all covered by the five roles? Let us keep a spot open for new developments that require reconsideration....These are issues that are interesting to deal with in the light of

**quality assurance**.....(also a role for the CGP, by the way!)

Quality assurance for the career profession is ensured in the Netherlands by the Career Management Institute (CMI) and Noloc together. They are working together for one new quality framework that will be ready in 2020 >> there will be a workshop in the afternoon on this topic by Jeroen Bregman of Noloc.

Careful alignment is sought with international frameworks for qualification (NICE, Cedefop >> European centre for the development of vocational training) as well as with innovations in the field

to remain flexible and up to date for the profession. Roles will be translated to the skills and competences that are needed to fulfil the roles for the profession, taking into account that professionals may also specialize in one or two roles in their further professional development.

That brings us to the importance of education and development possibilities that are available to career professionals, to be able to fulfil the roles.

### **Education and development**

From an interesting book on career practices, services, credentials and training, we learn that the career profession is addressed all over the world, at many levels, from South Korea to the US, and from Venezuela and India to....the European Union??

Well, luckily enough today there will be more specification and attention for countries within the EU, as there are also some interesting differences and examples to consider. >> which will be dealt with in the later keynotes of for example Dr. Neary and Dr. Haug.

In the Netherlands we have many opportunities for career professionals to further develop, formally and informally. And I think both are important. And it is a luxury we have both.

As regards the formal education we also have several possible routes that lead up to and through bachelor education for the career profession. We also take people's professional expertise into account when giving them access to further education, for example when they want to enter the Open University.

At the Open University, career guidance is dealt with in one of the master courses of the program of Psychology (Msc in PSY). Moreover, we offer a professional master program in career management (MST) especially for career professionals (from different backgrounds) who want to extend their societal and organisational impact and act in more strategic roles when it comes to the developments in careers and work that we are experiencing now. It therefore can strengthen especially the social system intervenor role (!).

The program can be followed in small pieces, and also be used to gather professional education points such as is necessary and accredited by the association for psychologists in the Netherlands (NIP)

However, what we really would like to do is to make this program NVAO accredited to serve many interested students that need to have an NVAO accredited master program and want to be active in our field. Let's hope we can start soon now.

So, exciting times ahead of us!

**Let's make the career profession a beacon of light for a humane future in work together!**