

CAREER MANAGEMENT DETERMINED BY FLEXIBLE MODEL OF EMPLOYMENT: EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Dr. Aleksandra KULPA-PUCZYŃSKA Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Institute of Pedagogy Department of Pedagogics of Work and Andragogic POLAND

ABSTRACT

Flexibility of employment promotes maintaining motivation to continuous learning, especially when it comes to increasing interdisciplinary knowledge and, the so called, key abilities. However, employees often bear high costs of extra training, performance improvement and retraining. It is so, because employers are rather unlikely to invest in people who have less chance of being employed, part-time employed or employed temporarily. Paradoxically, the flexible model of employment favours people with better qualifications and professional competencies, innovative and knowledgeable people, who provide economy with *know-how*. It is them, who receive support in the process of career planning and professional development.

The conclusions of theoretical analysis, supported by own experience and the ongoing research demonstrate that the approach of Polish people towards the problem of flexible employment is evolving. It is resulting from many changes occurring in the labour market, technology, organization of work and increased awareness, mobility and resourcefulness among workers.

Key Words: Flexibility of employment, professional career, continuing education.

INTRODUCTION

The variety of modern forms of employment and the multitude of their categories arise mostly from a complex developmental source of their origin, determined by economical, social, cultural and demographic phenomena. Among many different factors, accounting for current changes in the field of employment, there are some that should be highlighted: popularization of technologies (especially information and telecommunication technologies); expansion of the service sector, increasing value of knowledge and professional skills, being the most important company assets; new solutions in the organization of work, types of management, types of assigning and handling different tasks (Kryńska, 2003) and changes associated with the potential of employees and people looking for job which are triggered by extending life expectancy, higher level of education, different family model and increasing ratio of employment among women (Orczyk, 2004).

In consequence of fragile stability of businesses and constant pressure of competition, employers are unwilling to invest in the expensive model of permanent employment (characterised by complex standardisation concerning labour law and place and time of work) and choose the alternative model, being cheaper and more flexible. According to U. Beck, pluralist forms of underemployment and forms allowing greater flexibility in handling space and time are becoming more and more popular. Although this process does not eliminate the traditional model (permanent full-time employment in one workplace and working for one employer) – but



only disturbs its framework – it is nonetheless accompanied by a new apportionment of the salary, social benefits, professional position and career perspectives (Beck, 2004; Bąk 2006).

For the purpose of the discussed subject, most attention has been put on the broad concept of career, perceived as "individual property of people who use their activeness, needs and expectations in order to project a sequence of such professional roles and positions which would stimulate their development and expand their scope of professional experience." (Arnold, 1997, p. 16) This definition of career is of subjective character – an individual takes responsibility for their life decisions and their career, in this sense, is unique. According to the proposed approach, career applies also to people who spend their time searching for employment or educate themselves in order to get ready for new challenges. Moreover, career building (defined as career capital) shapes other life areas which consequently influence the career progress (Bańka, 2006). In the constantly changing world of labour, educational and professional decisions are most often determined by market conditions. Therefore, people must be ready to perform more than one type of job, they should be prepared to go along various career paths and should understand that a professional role is now an integral part of a constellation of other roles in life (Paszkowska-Rogacz, 2009).

Commitment to work does not always guarantee career continuity in one place, nor does it guarantee one's professional success. The best job candidate (ready to perform certain amount of work in a specified time) is a person who is, at a given moment, the most effective from a company's point of view (i.e. a person who will generate profit). When planning one's professional, social and institutional development, an employee should diversify the risk and engage different career-developing strategies, depending on his/her social potential and personal qualities (Bańka, 2007). Supporters of the "new", flexible model of employment – who are open for changes and ready to take responsibility for their actions – tend to choose a strategy focusing on future profits in career understood as "harmonious set of various life domains: life, entertainment, family, and social activities." (Bańka, 2007, p. 82).

METHOD

This paper attempts to confront the opinion set by the subject literature and the Polish media on flexible forms of employment, work organization and career management in non-classical employment environment. Its further intention is to present selected results of individual research, conducted as part of a lecture titled: "*Changes in the model of employment and their importance for the quality of human life*." The starting point for discussing the selected problems is a thesis saying that flexible forms of organizing time, place and work – if they have fulfilled certain conditions – can be beneficial to employees and can favour combining professional life with education, family life and social activities. They can also contribute to enhancing activeness, mobility and entrepreneurship among working people.

The reflections following the contents of this paper constitute the continuation of some of the areas discussed in article: "*Organizational innovations in company practice and their influence on adult vocational education. Selected problems*" (Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2011). In order to obtain broader outline of the discussed phenomenon, focus has been put on the opinions of employees – people who have taken advantage of flexible form of employment and organization and who are on different stages of their professional and personal life. In the pilot study a qualitative method (case study) has been used. Data that served for the analysis includes, among other things, transcripts of 45 interviews. Taking into account the volume limit, only selected replies have been quoted in the paper. Nonetheless, they allow to present and understand the discussed problem.

FINDINGS

1. Flexible Model Of Employment – Possibilities And Limitations From Employees' Perspective

Due to the variety of forms of flexible employment, it is not easy to give an explicit answer, whether their positive aspects (in employees' perspective) outweigh negative ones. It is necessary to point out that both advantages and costs, associated with a given form of employment or work organization, depend most of all on legislation determining the shape of employment and its security – and also on the nature of work and a



personal situation of an employee (Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2011). What is equally important – despite a common opinion, flexible forms of employment and work organization can be beneficial not only for employers, but also employees. The system of working, adjusted to employees' needs, makes their work more efficient, because less energy is consumed for organizing their own lives (Giddens, 2004). So what do we call a modern model of employment? What is it characterised by? The attempt to answer these questions has been widely presented in this chapter and in charts no 1 and 2.

Chart I: Selected qualities of a flexible model of employment

	Model of employment		
Analysed quality	flexible, changeable		
Form of employment	Type of contract often depends on employee's position in the company's structure:		
	basic employees (management contracts); non-basic employees (temporary and seasonal contracts);		
Place of employment	Working tasks performed at home or other non-office places (e- centres), mobile work (nomadic) – contact with the employer maintained via the Internet or a mobile phone.		
Working time	Possibility of part-time employment and working irregular hours; possibility to adjust working time and work schedule with regard to days, weeks and months – according to labour supply.		
Duration of employment	Lack of stability and continuity in case of part-time employment or working on a single project; increased risk of being bound to work in conditions other than initial conditions.		
Employment costs	Maximum benefits and minimum employment costs (quick and easy contracting, cheap and easy contract termination) lower level of social security.		
Payment for work	Based on profits and efficiency; various forms of remuneration, depending on the company and type of work done, for example, work focused on results, basic remuneration plus bonuses for results, participation in company's profits.		

(Source: own elaboration on the basis of the literature by: Sekuła, 2001; Kryńska 2003; Bąk, 2006)

The most popular criterion concerning the flexibility of employment is working time. Flexible forms of employment (e.g., reduced working time, individual scheduling, teleworking from home or alternative teleworking) meet the companies' demands regarding adjusting work and time organization to family duties, including the need to be co-responsible for those duties (Jacukowicz, 2005). It is of crucial importance, because in well-developed countries most families function on the basis of partnership, therefore, organization of work must take into account the duties of both parents. Changes of the model of a modern family include the fact that next to a balanced commitment among husbands and wives to increase household income, we can also notice their active participation in non-professional activities (Bańka, 2005).



The lack of rigid time frames in professional activity and a broadened scope of responsibilities among today's employees can eventually lead to workaholism. Nowadays, many people work also in their spare time – engaging themselves in additional work, or doing certain tasks and unriddling company's problems at home. However, the problem of being a work slave, according to the author of this text, refers not only to the flexible model of employment, but also to the traditional model of contract work. This problem may result from inappropriate organization of work or multi-shift work. Nevertheless, flexible organization of work means a huge change in existing ways of playing social roles, which used to be more dispersed and now co-exist on the same territory (Borkowska, 2004). An example of such teleworking has been described in Chart 2.

Chart II: Selected advantages and disadvantages of teleworking in terms of the development of a modern employee

From the point of view of:	Advantages of teleworking	Disadvantages of teleworking
An employee	Flexibility in terms of selecting place of residence and place of work, (access to larger labour market and educational services); Adjusting the pace and time of work to one's own capacity; Direct influence on working conditions, which contributes to enhancing one's motivation to work; Working at home – more time for the family and for one's own personal development; Reducing costs associated with commuting and possibility to export work abroad; Facilitated access to employment for people with disabilities or people from low-urbanized areas; Increased satisfaction when working for a company which implements new solutions in work organization and HR management.	Melting of borders between work and personal life – risk of workaholism; Fatigue due to routine and working at home only; Possible problems with effective communication with employer or co- workers; Transferring the burden of professional training to employees; Treating teleworking as an opportunity to employ overtime; Teleworking lacks possibility of performing all types of work.

(Source: own elaboration on the basis of the literature by: Machol-Zajda, 2003; Nilles, 2003; Bąk, 2006)

When speaking about the flexible model, one of the concerns is lack of employment stability – this problem is often raised during debates in the media. In Poland, people performing atypical work usually perform low-



profit work that does not provide full social benefits and does not give access to professional training. Thus, in the subject literature "atypical employment" is often accompanied by the notion of "precarious employment". Nevertheless, does a full-time regular job guarantee secure employment? What does "employment security" mean today? According to the author of this paper, a worker should be afforded possibilities to obtain such qualifications and professional competencies which will facilitate finding the best working conditions possible – and that, according to her, is more important than being granted a permanent job (Kulpa-Puczyńska, 2009). Therefore, she agrees with the view that today's employment security depends on creating possibilities of adjusting to the constantly changing labour market – and not on the stability of the working place (Kalina-Prasznic, 2009).

2. Changes In Work Organization And Their Value For Career Planning And Development - Case Studies

Increasing responsibility for performing working duties and product quality stimulates today's workers to be more creative and venturesome. It also makes them believe in their own abilities and encourages to develop their skills. Thus, it is a key prerequisite to expand the scope of self-control and empower employees to make their own decisions, and also provide them with resources that will facilitate reaching their goals. On the other hand, planning modern organization of work requires accounting for both workplace criteria (reliability, cost-effectiveness, company efficiency) and personal criteria, i.e.: creativity, people-to-people communication, workload and use of employee's qualifications (Penc, 2000). Here, it is worth to mention that people with high qualifications and professional competencies are in a good starting position on today's labour market and represent a strong basis for seeking favourable employment conditions. It is assumed that the concept of flexible forms of employment will, in the future, be based primarily on workers who care about their professional development (Drozdowski, 2002). Respective examples – case studies – are presented below.

Jakub (30 y.o.) – a beginning entrepreneur operating in the IT sector. He employs people to perform particular tasks.

When his company receives many orders (e.g., developing applications, designing web-sites, computer hardware servicing), he requires extra staff. Thus, he cooperates with entrusted IT specialists, who support permanent employees, in case of problems with fulfilling orders. Seasonal workers (employed on the basis of commission contracts) perform specific tasks that they are paid for. Remuneration is set upon contract conclusion. However, the young businessman is more and more often refused to cooperate with him. When he asks about the reason, he is given the following replies: lack of permanent employment (and thus, lack of stability and security), lack of social and economical security, limitations associated with taking credits and purchase instalments. He himself also recognizes faults in flexible forms of employment. "*I understand that taking advantage of the above-mentioned measures can undermine my credibility among my business partners. My company's image may deteriorate. However, I prefer to prioritize advantages of flexible forms of employment, i.e.: no obligation to give severance payments, increased adaptability to market changes and cost efficiency associated with creating new working places.*

The modern labour market, being more flexible and offering more atypical work, generates demand for a "new" model of time organization. The emerging model also consists of 5 phases (life stages), but its structure is much more parallel. Breaks between employment periods are reserved for upbringing children, but also for taking advantage of supplementary education or retraining courses. Work life expectancy is longer and the retirement age is moved further in time (European Foundation ..., 2003). The described model is also characterised by the following tendency: employees change their working place more often; they also change their functions, acquire new abilities and present an increased level of individual activity. It is quite specific for the middle career stage, a period when people want to work more independently and decide themselves about the time and organization of their work. It seems that the below-mentioned cases reflect this image.

Piotr (40 y.o.) – a car mechanic (learnt occupation). For 4 years, after changing his former working place, he has been taking advantage of flexible forms of employment.



He has worked in his profession since graduation. After a time, work became routine and he started to suffer from professional burnout. He made a risky decision and quit his job. Taking into account high unemployment rate on the local market, he could not be sure of his professional future. After several months of seeking for a job, he received a proposal from the Labour Office. If was an offer with flexible working hours. Initially, he was not convinced whether he should accept the offer, but after consulting the decision with his family, he began working as a security guard. Now he has more time for himself and his daughter, when his wife is at work. He is saying that he sometimes takes also other job offers, which he is able to reconcile with the current employment and his family life. These include hourly contracts (commission contracts and contracts for specific work), which improve home budget. His current schedule looks so fine that he does not want to quit flexible forms of employment. He points out that his work is diversified and he does not suffer from performing routine activities. Each day is different but he knows how to plan it. "*I don't regret the decision I made several years ago. Many people in my age would never quit a job with permanent working hours. My way of working gives me more time for my family and my hobbies. I recommend taking advantage of flexible forms of employment, because every day I face new challenges and learn something new."*

Beata (28 y.o.) – working for two years as a real estate agent's assistant. She works part-time.

She works 4 hours daily, 5 days a week. She has decided for such a form of work organization, because she is a single mother raising two children. When she has a day with no business meetings, she can work outside the office and in case of a real estate presentation, she can go there directly from home. She runs a daily calendar of her work. After each week she reports all her activities she has done over the week. The value of her remuneration is connected with her results. She is happy about this form of work organization, because she can reconcile the role of a mother with performing an interesting job. Moreover, she can also attend part-time studies. According to the respondent, *"full-time work at any working place must be excluded, because little children need mother's care."* She continues: "thanks to flexible forms of employment I can study and gain professional experience at the same time. I've also learnt how to manage my time. It is possible that in the future, when my kids grow up, I will work on my own account. Starting an own business is quite easy, if you have a good idea for business, you know your potential market – it is worth a risk, provided we do something we really like".

Flexible forms of employment is also a way of gaining first experience, necessary for developing one's professional career. It is a basic pillar for building self-confidence and a belief in one's own capabilities (Bańka, 2008). The discussed forms facilitate better understanding of actual working conditions and one does not need to wait for a long time to become employed. It is noteworthy that especially young people are boundaryless and treat their careers very individually – with no strict categorization of jobs and working duties, production and services sectors or specialist and non-specialist activities. New opportunities (melting borders, increasing mobility), often set up by integration processes, encourage them to develop their careers in a broader perspective – an international and intercultural space (Bańka, 2007).

Anna (23 y.o.) – student of pedagogy. She has been taking advantage of flexible forms of employment for the whole time of her studies, now she works in a bookshop.

In order to study she had to move to a bigger city. This was one of the reasons (especially the flat rent) for her to get a job, because she did not want to strain her parents' budget. She found the job by accident, when reading through some job offers published on the Internet. She was attracted by a note saying: "a perfect job for a student", and finally, the salary and the possibility to agree on the working hours helped her accept the offer. Besides, she loves books. Now she works in the afternoons, four times a week, starting at 1–2 pm until the closure. Anna points out: "*I am a student of day courses, so I cannot work full-time from Monday to Friday. I think, many other students think the same and treat their work as an additional source of income.*" According to the student, "*it is better to work part-time and at the same time search for a permanent job, than to do nothing and sit at home. Browsing announcements will not give you money and experience. Work (each job in fact) gives us an opportunity to develop our interpersonal and organizational skills.*"



Unfortunately, people employed on the basis of flexible forms of employment rarely take part in courses and other forms of vocational education, because Polish employers are not willing to invest in people who work for them seasonally. In such a case, according to A. Bańka, we are dealing with the process of transferring the responsibility for personal and professional development from a company to a worker. It leads to substantial antinomies, i.e. expectations that employees should be loyal and devoted, prepared to effective performance of assigned tasks, flexible and innovative – but without being granted any specific training and with no assurance of being at the company for a longer time. The expectations do not match with the individual right to keep distance towards an organization that can at any time resign from worker's services (Bańka, 2006).

FINAL REFLECTION

For some time, in Poland, we have been witnessing a discussion on flexible forms of employment and work organization. It is basically a dispute between two environments: employers and trade unions' representatives. This discussion is crucial, however, it is usually of populist nature. It is a pity, because the discussed problem is important in terms of modern employees' lives. It concerns not only the handicaps of today's employment situation, but also – taking into account the variety of social roles – the dynamically changing needs of workers and expectations associated with professional and non-professional (including family life) activities. Therefore, the situation has to be presented objectively, considering the arguments of all interested parties.

It is worth to highlight that the evolution of flexible forms of employments and work organization is also determined by social changes, such as: moving away from traditional approach to gender roles (today's roles and duties are often settled by life partners and adjusted to their situation), increased level of educational aspirations in the society, higher standard of living. Therefore, employees tend to search for such forms of work organization which will let them reconcile various activity areas (in family and professional life) and adjust them to personal traits of character and individual needs. Thus, one of the most widely disseminated opinions – that it is employers, who are considered to care only about their profits, aim to popularize flexible forms of employments – has been called into question.

Nevertheless, it is care and attention that should be given most: the country should care about the quality and diversity of "new" forms of employment (by introducing clear order to the legislation system), employers should use these forms wisely (i.e. by taking advantage of modern methods of making work more flexible), and employees should be well prepared to perform their duties within flexible forms of employments (they need education on flexibility, mobility and readiness to continuously raise their qualifications). One of the obstacles that makes it more difficult to use flexible forms of employments and work organization is the traditional approach to employments – both by Polish employers and employees, who are also directly responsible for planning and developing their professional careers.

The purpose of this paper was to present selected professional and educational implications associated with career management in the environment of flexible employment. Further analyses and research can also include social and cultural conditions. In fact, cultural diversity can be discussed with regard to age subcultures, supporters of specific systems of values or communication codes. It would also be useful to answer the following questions: How do the people employed in the so called companies of the future – learning, network and intelligent organizations – manage their careers? Do the employee's position in the organizational structure and the specification of his/her job influence the process of career planning and professional development? Taking into account the multi-aspectual nature of this paper, we can raise more questions concerning the problem area.

IJONTE's Note: This article was presented at 5th International Conference on New Trends in Education and Their Implications - ICONTE, 24-26 April, 2014, Antalya-Turkey and was selected for publication for Volume 5 Number 3 of IJONTE 2014 by IJONTE Scientific Committee.



BIODATA AND CONTACT ADDRESS OF AUTHOR



Aleksandra KULPA-PUCZYŃSKA has worked at the Department of Pedagogics of Work and Andragogic at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz since 2003. She focuses mainly on problems connected with vocational education as well as changes in the form, content and organization of professional work and flexible forms of employment. Her academic achievements include publications (articles in magazines and chapters in monographs) mainly in the spectre of pedagogics of work and andragogic. She is also the co-editor of the book titled *Wybrane problemy pedagogiki pracy w aspekcie przygotowania do zatrudnienia*

(Selected problems of labour pedagogy in the aspect of preparation to employment), 2008. She is an active participant of academic conferences (both national and international) on vocational education and labour market.

Dr. Aleksandra KULPA-PUCZYŃSKA Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Institute of Pedagogy, Department of Pedagogics of Work and Andragogic, Chodkiewicza 30, 85-064 Bydgoszcz- POLAND E. Mail: <u>olakulpa@ukw.edu.pl</u>

REFERENCES

Arnold J. (1997), *Managing careers into 21st century*. London: Chapman, after: Z. Ratajczak, A. Bańka, E. Turska, *Współczesna psychologia pracy i organizacji (p. 66)*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Bańka A. (2005), Jakość życia a jakość rozwoju. Społeczny kontekst płci, aktywności i rodziny. In A. Bańka (Ed.), Psychologia jakości życia (pp. 48-49). Poznań: Stowarzyszenie Psychologia i Architektura.

Bańka A. (2006), Kapitał kariery – uwarunkowania, rozwój i adaptacja do zmian organizacyjnych oraz strukturalnych rynku pracy. In Z. Ratajczak, A. Bańka, E. Turska, Współczesna psychologia pracy i organizacji (pp. 67-68). Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Bańka A. (2007), Psychologiczne doradztwo karier. Poznań: PRINT-B.

Bańka A. (2008), Otwartość na nowe formy doświadczania pracy i codzienności a procesy integracji osobowości, in R. Gerlach (Ed.) Praca człowieka w XXI wieku. Konteksty – wyzwania – zagrożenia (pp. 63-64). Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

Bąk E. (2006), *Elastyczne formy zatrudnienia*. Warsaw: Biblioteka Monitora Prawa Pracy.

Beck U. (2004), Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Borkowska S. (2004), *Praca a życie pozazawodowe*, in S. Borkowska (Ed.) *Przyszłość pracy w XXI wieku (p. 59)*. Warsaw: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych.

Drozdowski R. (2002), Rynek pracy w Polsce. Recepcja. Oczekiwania. Strategie dostosowawcze. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2003), A new organization of time over working life, Dublin, after: W trosce o pracę. Raport o rozwoju społecznym Polska 2004 (p. 32). Program Narodów Zjednoczonych ds. Rozwoju. Warsaw.

Giddens A. (2005), Socjologia. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Jacukowicz Z. (2004), *Nowy świat pracy*. In S. Borkowska (Ed.) *Przyszłość pracy w XXI wieku (p. 88)*. Warszawa: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych.

Kalina – Prasznic U. (2009), Wpływ globalizacji i integracji na zmiany rynku pracy. In M. Noga, M. K. Stawicka (Ed). Rynek pracy w Polsce w dobie integracji europejskiej i globalizacji (pp. 8-12). Warszawa: CeDeWu Wydawnictwo.

Kryńska E. (2003), Elastyczność popytu na pracę w Polsce – synteza, diagnozy i wnioski. In E. Kryńska (Ed). Elastyczne formy zatrudnienia i organizacji pracy a popyt na pracę w Polsce (pp. 234-239). Warszawa: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych.

Kulpa-Puczyńska A. (2009), *Rozwój zawodowy telepracownika – możliwości i ograniczenia*. In K. Wenta, E. Perzycka (Ed.), *Edukacja informacyjna. Neomedia w społeczeństwie wiedzy (pp. 323-325)*. Szczecin: PPH ZAPOL Dmochowski, Sobczyk, sp. j.

Kulpa-Puczyńska A. (2011), Innowacje organizacyjne w praktyce przedsiębiorstw i ich wpływ na edukację zawodową dorosłych. Wybrane problemy, *Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych*, No 2 (pp. 66-74).

Machol – Zajda L. (2003), *Telepraca – nowa forma zatrudnienia*. In K. W. Frieske (Ed.) *Deregulacja polskiego rynku pracy*. Warsaw: Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych.

Nilles J. M. (2003), *Telepraca. Strategie kierowania wirtualną załogą*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Naukowo – Techniczne.

Orczyk J. (2004), Zmiany zakresu pojęcia "praca" a zatrudnienie. In Z. Wiśniewski, A. Pocztowski (Ed.) Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w warunkach nowej gospodarki (p. 124). Cracow: Oficyna Ekonomiczna.

Paszkowska-Rogacz A. (2009), Doradztwo zawodowe: wybrane metody badań. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Difin.

Penc J. (2000), Menedżer w uczącej się organizacji. Łódź: Wydawnictwo "Menadżer".

Sekuła Z. (2001), Planowanie zatrudnienia. Cracow: Oficyna Ekonomiczna.