

The construction of Lithuanian migrants' professional career paths: moving up and down career track

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In this paper we analyse the professional career paths in migration, pointing out the construction of professional career as the modern pattern of social behaviour. The chosen theory of career construction provides the contextual approach to the analysis of career paths. The paper analyses transformations of the professional career path of 89 Lithuanian migrants in European countries. The analysis of the career paths of Lithuanian migrants is performed based on the distribution, which indicates the diverse directions of career moves: (1) negative and positive vertical, (2) negative and positive horizontal, and (3) multidirectional movements of career paths (positive vertical-negative horizontal, positive vertical-positive horizontal, negative vertical-positive horizontal, negative vertical-negative horizontal).

Key words: migration, career, changes in career paths

INTRODUCTION

One of the main focuses of the migration analysis points out the economic explanation of labour force flows as well as implying the understanding of diverse costs and risks migrants are taking. International migration has been studied in terms of economic globalization, technological innovations, new forms of capitalism, economic development and labour market dynamics (Sassen 2000). However, the cultural approach to migration studies has also drawn remarkable attention from different scholars emphasizing cultural, social and political integration of diverse migrant groups, problems of welfare and social services, religious diversity, and other forms of incorporation into the “*new*” society (Massey, Alarcón, Durand, González 1987; Alba, Nee 1997; Smith, Guarnizo 1998; Guarnizo, Portes, Haller 2003; Castles 2008). Finally, the anthropological approach explores the migration processes in terms of transnationalism and transmigration explaining how migrants develop and maintain multiple relations and links with their country of origin and how they create cultural significance and meanings (Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc 1995; Arango 2000; Vertovec 2001; 2008).

Recently, the phenomenon of Lithuanians' migration has drawn attention of scientists, politicians and publicists. In Lithuanian academic discourse researchers have mainly studied the changes of Lithuanian migration patterns (Sipavičienė 2006), the economic consequences of migration (Sarvutytė 2011), the relationship with the family members who live in

Lithuania (Maslauskaitė, Stankūnienė 2007), the brain-drain (Kazlauskienė 2006), the meaning of social networks in migration (Gečienė 2009), as well as other aspects of this phenomenon. However, the analysis of the changes in Lithuanian career paths has not been referred to so far, especially in the migration analysis context. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to analyse Lithuanian migrants' career trajectories (movements up and down the career track) prior to migration and in the destination country.

The chosen theory of career construction provides the contextual approach to the analysis of career paths. According to this theory, the career is understood as a subjective structure that comprises the aspirations of the past, present and future (Savickas 2002). The construct of career reflects how individuals choose what best represents their self-concepts and supports their objectives in the social reality of work roles. The article addresses the following questions: what are the contextual factors influencing individual career paths in the migration context? What kind of career move: horizontal, vertical or multidirectional could be defined as typical for migrants? What is the role of qualification and education in shaping the career paths? How the migration decisions are related to the transformation of professional career moves?

The paper analyses transformations of the professional career path of Lithuanian migrants in European countries. The empirical analysis is based on qualitative research data which was conducted during the period of 2008–2010 in several European countries, including Spain, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Germany. The sample of the research represented the total number of 89 Lithuanian migrants having diverse socio-demographic characteristics.

THE THEORY OF CAREER CONSTRUCTION

The theory of career construction, represented by M. L. Savickas (Savickas 2002; 2005), is a supplemented and extended version of the vocational development theory by D. E. Super (Super 1953; 1957). The theory of career construction examines how the occupational world is composed over the personal constructivism and social constructionism. It states that we construct representation of reality, but do not create the reality itself.

The theory of career construction analyses the career by applying the contextual approach, i. e. from the perspective that the development is ongoing through adaptation to the environment. This context consists of many levels and includes such variables as the historical era, the physical environment, culture, race and ethnic group, family, neighbours and school. Career does not develop; it is constructed because the individuals choose what best represents their self-concepts and supports their objectives in the social reality of work roles. Generally speaking, the theory of career construction claims that individuals develop their career by assigning a meaning to their vocational behaviour and experience.

The theory of career construction states (Savickas 2002) that the career construction process is the one, during which the self-concepts are developed and implemented in the course of professional roles. The individual career model is determined by the parents' socioeconomic level and the person's background, skills, personality traits, self-concepts and career adaptability within the transaction of the social opportunities. The career formation is promoted by the vocational development tasks and developed in response to these tasks. The self-concepts and professional preferences are changing over the time and experience due to the changes in true-life and work situations. Therefore, the professional success depends on how many individuals find opportunities to express their distinctive professional

qualities while performing their work role. And the degree of satisfaction that people experience while working is proportional to the degree to which they are able to adapt their professional self-concepts.

DEFINITION OF CAREER AND TYPES OF CAREER PATH MOVEMENTS

Based on the theory of career construction, the career is understood as a process during which individuals attribute the sense and direction to their vocational behaviour (Savickas 2002; 2005). Meanwhile, the sequence of working experience can be (Palmisano 2001) vertical, horizontal or multidirectional.

Vertical move in careers is defined by the situations, when individuals move up within a single organisation or find a new job in a different organisation in order to advance; or when employees move down the career hierarchy by being demoted. *Horizontal* move in careers is defined by the situations, when individuals move among positions at the same occupational level. “Although the positions may be of the same rank and similar in terms of responsibility, prestige, and income, the actual duties may be different in positions at a single level. They do not necessarily increase status, but, for instance, could increase job satisfaction.” (Palmisano 2001: 77). Career track may be also *multidirectional*, encompassing both horizontal and vertical movements.

In addition, employees may have several occupations throughout their lives. Also, not all occupations have a clear hierarchy of positions and expected career trajectories.

Summarising such a distribution of changes in career paths by J. M. Palmisano (2001), the supplement can be derived that there are (1) negative and positive vertical, (2) negative and positive horizontal, and (3) multidirectional movements of career paths (positive vertical-negative horizontal, positive vertical-positive horizontal, negative vertical-positive horizontal, negative vertical-negative horizontal) (Diagram).

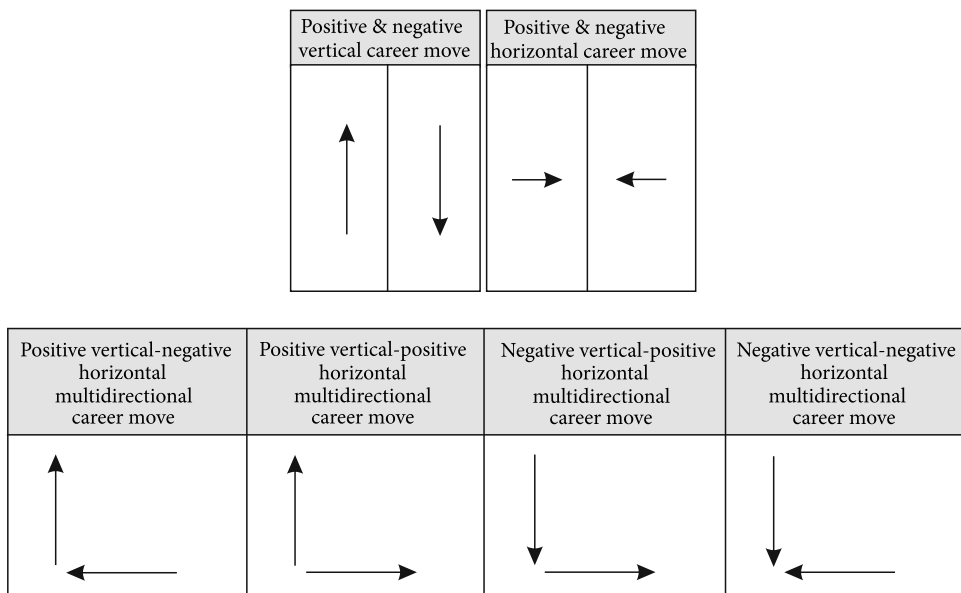


Diagram. Types of career path movements

The analysis of the career paths of Lithuanian migrants will be performed based on this distribution which indicates the diverse directions of career moves. In the empirical analysis we will classify the directions of migrants' professional careers taking into account their experience in the country of origin and abroad.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper deals with the data of the qualitative research "Study of massive observation on motive and absorption elements for Polish and Lithuanian emigrants in Western EU"* , which was carried out in 2008–2010. The research was financed by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, which is under administration of the Ministry of Education and Science of Japan. The main research question was to explore the decision-making of migrants and their motivation to settle down in the destination country and the changes of career tracks to compare with the career in their home countries.

In this paper we analyse the results of 89 semi-structured interviews with Lithuanian migrants, performed in United Kingdom (London, in January 2008, 22 semi-structured interviews), Spain (Valencia, Castellone, Barcelona, in March 2009, 21 interviews), Denmark (Copenhagen, in March 2010, 22 interviews), and Germany (Hamburg, Kiel, Wedel, in September 2010, 24 interviews) with different socio-demographic characteristics including sex, education, age, professional experience and family status. Due to the ethical requirements, the real names of respondents are replaced.

LITHUANIANS' CAREER PATHS MOVEMENTS IN MIGRATION: EMPIRICAL ASPECTS

In this chapter, we analyse different career path movements in migration pointing out the strategies which define individual professional choices.

Further analysis of the career paths is structured according to two criteria: start of the career path (in Lithuania or other country) and the position gained at the beginning of the career (qualified or unskilled work).

As many as 62 respondents out of 89 started their professional career in Lithuania, mostly in positions which require upper or lower qualification – as teachers, businessmen, engineers, interpreters, plumbers, drivers, doctors, graphic designers, journalists, medical nurses, social workers, etc.

The analysis of the career changes due to migration of the *individuals who have started their professional activities by doing unskilled work in Lithuania* has highlighted the trend that the individuals, who have started their working life by doing unskilled or low-skilled work in Lithuania, mostly do not experience the positive vertical career move in the destination country, however, the positive horizontal career moves can be identified. Several typical examples illustrating this trend are provided below:

Inga (40): a shop-assistant in a cosmetics shop (Lithuania) → a dishwasher in a restaurant (Lithuania) → a helper in a flower farm (Sweden) → a singer in a bar (Lithuania) → a painter in a construction company (Denmark) → a cleaner of private houses (Denmark).

The survey data also show slight exceptions of the trend – progress (positive vertical move in career) or progress and regress in the career (positive and negative vertical move in career).

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An example of positive vertical career moves is as follows:

Romas (38): a shop-assistant in a vehicle spare parts shop (Lithuania) → a manager's assistant in a publishing house (Lithuania) → a shop assistant in a printers shop (Germany) → a warehouse manager in a printers shop (Germany).

An example of positive and negative career moves is the following case:

Diana (34): a shop-assistant (Lithuania) → a journalist (Lithuania) → a waitress (USA) → a project manager of public relations (Lithuania) → a receptionist in a sports-club (UK) → an administrator (UK).

On the basis of the survey data, the low-skilled respondents very rarely develop their career in the same occupational area; the path of the professional activities is most often constructed in various sectors, namely, in construction, in sales, in service, in cleaning, etc. Although the positive vertical career move is rare, however, the vast majority of these respondents experience the positive horizontal career move to higher satisfaction with work, higher wages and more savings (as compared to the career developed in Lithuania), etc.:

"I liked it here very much. I used to work in a shop as a shop-assistant. Though I clean houses here, and the physical load is larger, but I feel good. I'm not so young any more – I'm 43. Now, when I clean houses, it is still easier, and I make the schedule myself – I plan work, when I want to" (Daiva, Denmark).

The survey data show that *the individuals who have started their professional activities by doing qualified work in Lithuania* can be characterised by two types of the career changes due to migration: the positive vertical and horizontal multidirectional career move or the negative vertical career move. The typical examples of the negative vertical career move are as follows:

Vida (55): an architect (Lithuania) → a nurse (USA) → a cleaner (UK).

The most often change of the career path among the individuals who have started their professional activities by doing qualified work in Lithuania is the positive vertical and positive horizontal multidirectional career move. The typical example of the positive vertical career move is the following case:

Arūnas (29): an informatics technician in the university (Lithuania) → an assistant in a market research company (Lithuania) → an insurance expert in an insurance company (Lithuania) → a project manager in a market research company (Lithuania) → a research assistant in a market research company (UK) → a project manager in a market research company (UK).

Some typical examples of the horizontal career move, when responsibility, prestige and actual duties are on the same rank or similar, but the income and job satisfaction increases, are as follows:

Viktorija (48) – a general practitioner (Lithuania) in a state hospital → a therapist in a private clinic (Lithuania) → a therapist in a military hospital (Lithuania) → a therapist in a local clinic (Denmark).

"Work in Denmark upheld my expectations, so I'm still not back in Lithuania, because I prefer the Danish approach to work – the attitude and behaviour with each other, between the patients and the nurses. In general, the relationships of the staff to a patient are more responsible. And in Lithuania I had a problem with this" (Viktorija, Denmark).

There is a trend that those who have started their professional activities in skill-sensitive positions in Lithuania already hold the Lithuanian university diploma or are still studying in one of the universities of Lithuania. It is also noted that the individuals who continue a successful career in migration retain a solid career direction in the same occupational area – IT, medicine, etc.

The representatives of the positive vertical or the positive horizontal multidirectional career move most often have employment agreements in the destination country prior to the migration. Those who do not have any employment agreements experience a temporary negative vertical career move, until they adapt themselves to a new market and gain the required qualification, for example:

Kristina (39): an interpreter in various organisations (Lithuania) → a cleaner (Germany) → a waitress (Germany) → a project assistant in a university (Germany) → a freelance interpreter (Germany) → a German teacher (Germany).

Only 27 respondents out of 89 have started their careers not in Lithuania, and most often in unskilled or low-skilled positions.

The analysis of the career path of the *individuals who have started their professional activities by doing unskilled work in migration* has highlighted the trend that these respondents often take extra jobs apart from their studies in Lithuania, and do the unskilled work in the summer season, namely working as shop-assistants, waiters / waitresses, cleaners, farmer's helpers, cook's helpers, etc. This also includes nannies under the *Au-pair* programme or unskilled students' jobs during the study period abroad. The majority of these respondents have started their career in the UK, USA, Germany or one of the Scandinavian countries.

There are three trends that emerge, while analysing the career movements of these respondents.

Those who are still studying in the higher education institutions of the destination country, continue their careers by doing unskilled work and changing work-places considering the features of the horizontal positive career move, when working positions are changed not by their status, but taking into account satisfaction with work, a bit higher salary, etc.:

Žygimantas (23): a helper in a farm (Sweden) → a distributor of newspapers in the streets (Denmark) → support staff in a shop (Denmark) → a waiter (Denmark) → an assistant of the Students' Matters Division in the University (Denmark).

The respondents that have lived in the destination country for a longer time or those respondents who have international working experience are characteristic of the positive vertical career move:

Antanas (27): an administrator in an internet cafe (Russia) → a shop assistant in a photolaboratory (Russia) → a photographer in a photo-gallery (UK) → a lecturer in the university (UK).

There are typical cases among those, who have started their professional activities in migration by doing unskilled work. When young people (whether qualified or not) emigrate without high working ambitions, once they start their professional activities by doing unskilled work, they continue this path in similar positions:

Monika (32): a helper in a farm (Germany) → a nanny (Germany) → a waitress in a restaurant (Germany).

The research has not revealed many cases of *the career start in qualified positions in migration*. The two typical cases can serve as the examples:

Austėja (30) started her career in Spain as a manager and an interpreter, and Gediminas (27) started his career in Germany as an IT consultant.

In Austėja's (30) case the negative vertical and positive vertical multidirectional career move can be identified: a manager and an interpreter (Spain) → an export manager (Spain) → unemployed (Spain) → an administrator in an embassy (Spain). No horizontal career move has been identified:

"I clearly see that I'm not a career person. Work is not important for me. If work is important, then all the colleagues and the working environment is important as well, isn't it? But for me work is ... I work because I have to. But I prefer my leisure time and ... and the environment surrounding me ... and the country where I live" (Austėja, Spain).

In Gediminas's (27) case the mobility of the career path has not been distinguished either in horizontal or in vertical perspective. After he obtained the Information Technology Degree in Hamburg University, he was employed in the IT company in Hamburg, where he had worked for 7 years as a webmaster and an IT consultant. After he had moved to Spain, he continued working as an IT assistant for six months so far.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the career changes due to migration of the individuals who have started their professional activities by doing unskilled work in Lithuania has highlighted the trend that the individuals, who have started their working activities by doing unskilled or low-skilled work in Lithuania, mostly do not experience the positive vertical career move in the destination country. However, the positive horizontal career moves can be identified from higher satisfaction with work, higher wages, savings, and social status (as compared to their career in Lithuania), etc. On the basis of the survey data, the low-skilled respondents very rarely develop their career in the same occupational area; the path of the professional activities is most often constructed in various sectors, namely, in construction, sales, service, cleaning, etc.

The survey data show that the individuals who have started their professional activities by doing qualified work in Lithuania can be characterised by two types of the career changes due to migration. Most often it is the positive vertical and positive horizontal multidirectional career move, and in some rare cases it is the negative vertical career move. The representatives of the positive vertical or the positive horizontal career move most often have employment agreements in the destination country prior to the migration. Those who do not have any employment agreements experience a temporary negative vertical career move, until they adapt themselves to a new market and gain the required qualification. It is also noted that these respondents retain a solid career direction in the same occupational areas: IT, medicine, etc.

The analysis of the individuals who have started their professional activities in migration by doing unskilled work has highlighted three trends: (1) those who are still studying in the higher education institutions of the destination country, continue their careers by doing unskilled work and changing work-places considering the features of the horizontal positive career move (when working positions are changed not by their status, but taking into account satisfaction with work, a bit higher salary, etc.); (2) the respondents who have lived longer in the destination country or who have international working experience showed positive vertical career move; (3) the young people, whether qualified or not, emigrated without high

working ambitions, once they have started their professional activities by doing unskilled work, they continue this path in similar positions.

The research has not revealed many cases of the career start in qualified positions in migration. Some typical examples revealed these career movements: negative vertical and positive vertical multidirectional career move was identified or no career mobility was noted.

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Migracija ir profesinės karjeros kelias: lietuvių migracijos į ES atvejis

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojamos lietuvių migrantų karjeros kelio trajektorijos prieš migraciją ir migracijos šalyje. Pasirinkta karjeros konstravimo teorija karjeros kelių tyrimui suteikia kontekstinį požiūrį. Remiantis šia teorija, karjera suprantama kaip subjektyvi konstrukcija, kuri apima praeitį, dabartį ir ateities aspiracijas. Straipsnyje analizuojama 89 lietuvių migrantų profesinės karjeros kelio transformacijos. Migrantų karjeros kryptių pokyčiai analizuojami remiantis šiuo skirstymu: 1) karjeros vertikalus leidimasis ir kilimas, 2) karjeros horizontalus leidimasis ir kilimas ir 3) įvairiakryptiai karjeros kelio pokyčiai (vertikalus kilimas – horizontalus leidimasis, vertikalus kilimas – horizontalus kilimas, vertikalus leidimasis – horizontalus kilimas, vertikalus leidimasis – horizontalus leidimasis).

Raktažodžiai: migracija, karjera, karjeros kelio pokyčiai