

Entrepreneurship–Professionalism– Leadership Framework for Lifelong Career Development and Research

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ABSTRACT: Chan et al. (2012) proposed entrepreneurship, professionalism, and leadership (EPL) as dimensions of subjective career space. Measures of individuals' EPL motivations revealed that all three motivations are associated with more protean and boundaryless career attitudes. This conference proceedings paper presents the theoretical and research background of this multidimensional framework for careers, related psychometric measures, and their application at a university in Singapore. We summarize prior research and propose future research directions and lifelong career development applications—particularly relevant for rapidly aging societies and knowledge-based, innovation-driven economies.

INTRODUCTION

Soon after the 2008 global financial crisis, Singapore's government established an Economic Strategies Committee, which published its report in early 2010 (Ministry of Finance, 2010), calling for skills, innovation, and productivity to drive Singapore's economic growth and raise living standards for all citizens. In response to the call for a stronger spirit of innovation and enterprise within Singapore's workforce, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) funded research to assess the career aspirations of its largely professionally or technically inclined undergraduates. Recognizing the boundaryless (Arthur, 1994) and protean (Hall, 1996) nature of 21st-century careers, Chan et al. (2012) drew on both Kanter's (1989) three "career logics" (entrepreneurship, professionalism, managerial)—which link "careers and the wealth of nations"—and Schein's (1978)

three dimensions of organizational careers (hierarchy, functional/technical, inclusion vs. exclusion) to propose a new theoretical framework and vision for careers in the 21st century: that individuals could conceive of their careers as developing over a lifetime across three dimensions of subjective career space—entrepreneurship, professionalism, and leadership (E, P & L).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES: DEVELOPMENT OF EPL MOTIVATION SCALES

After pilot studies to develop self-report scales measuring E, P, and L motivations, efficacies, and career intentions, Chan et al. (2012) presented, in a large empirical study involving 10,326 Singaporean undergraduates, that EPL career aspirations could be measured independently and that EPL career dimensions were distinct from Holland's (1959; 1997) RIASEC vocational interests. More importantly, individuals who were concurrently high in E, P, and L—or in E

and L—career motivations also exhibited the highest levels of boundaryless and self-directed career attitudes. In contrast, those primarily motivated by professional careers held the most traditional career attitudes (e.g., low organizational mobility preference or low self-directed career attitude).

Further validating the EPL dimensions, Chan et al. (2015) reported that individual EPL motivations exhibited different patterns of correlation with personality traits (Big Five, proactivity, and risk aversion). Specifically, entrepreneurial and leadership motivations were associated with the Big Five personality traits, low risk aversion, and a proactive personality, while students more motivated by vocationally based professional work tended to exhibit high risk aversion. In a separate study utilizing Savickas and Porfeli’s (2011) Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)—a global measure of career adaptability that is more strongly related to boundaryless mindset and protean career attitudes than their measure of career maturity, the CMI-C—Chan et al. (2015, p. 21) also reported that “EPL career motivation profiles showed that the CAAS is more strongly related to boundaryless mindset and protean career attitudes, while the CMI-C appears to relate to more traditional (professional and leadership) career motivations.”

Recognizing that entrepreneurship tends to appeal to non-organizational employees, Chan et al. (2018) adapted their self-report measures of E, P, and L career motivations for use with working adult organizational employees. Using their new intrapreneurial motivation scale, they found that individuals with high E, P, and L motivational profiles had the highest intrapreneurial motivation scores, while those low in E, P, and L motivations were the least intrapreneurially motivated. They concluded that “The potential for intrapreneurship is not unique to only

entrepreneurial employees. Instead, one can find intrapreneurs among employees with strong leadership and professional motivations as well” (p. 1). Separately, Setor and Joseph (2018) validated the EPL framework with objective career data by applying sequence analysis to coded job roles (categorized into E, P, and L) and residence location data for 2,836 individuals over 26 years from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 dataset. They identified eight prototypical career paths—single-dimension E, P, or L paths were commonly observed across geographic locations, while multidimensional career paths (involving two or three dimensions, e.g., EP, EL, PL, or EPL) were more likely to occur mid-career, when careers tend to become more boundaryless. They concluded: “Objective career success associated with prototypical career paths is more a function of human capital accumulation and career choices than geographic locations” (p. 1).

FURTHER ADVANCES IN EPL THEORY AND RESEARCH

In 2020, Ho et al. published an edited book entitled *Entrepreneurship–Professionalism–Leadership: A Multidimensional Framework for Human Capital and Career Development in the 21st Century*. Chapter 1 (Chan et al., 2020) extended individual-level EPL theorizing by integrating Chan et al.’s EPL framework with Arthur et al.’s (1995; 2016) Intelligent Career Theory. Chapter 2 (Kennedy et al., 2020) explored multilevel extensions by examining the EPL human capital capacities of teams, organizations, cities, and nations. Other empirical studies examined the development of EPL motivations and efficacies over time, as well as the application of EPL framework measures across a range of contexts—from research–innovation–enterprise (Chan, Lim,

& Uy, 2020) to adult healthcare workers (Ho & Chan, 2020) and STEM Ph.D. students (Tan, Uy, & Sam, 2020).

Career development practitioners may be interested in Chapter 7 (Chan, Ho, & Ramaya, 2018), which empirically demonstrates how E, P, and L efficacies contribute to the prediction of self-perceived employability in a sample of 5,874 university students. This suggests that the EPL framework can be represented using the “T-shaped” metaphor commonly referenced in the human resources literature (e.g., Guest, 1991; Hansen & Von Oetinger, 2001), where “T-shaped” describes the need for both breadth (i.e., transferable skills) and depth (i.e., specialized or technical skills). Based on this premise, a Career Assessment System was developed to provide “boundaryless” career developmental feedback to NTU students in order to enhance their employability, as reported in Chapter 12 by Chan, Ramaya, and Ho (2020). Unfortunately, this initiative—along with broader dissemination of the EPL framework and research—was disrupted by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Having a job is fundamentally not the same as having a career. Inherent to any career is a lifespan-oriented, unfolding, temporal perspective (cf. Super, 1957, 1990; Arthur & Lawrence, 1984), which is not associated with having a job. Sociologists (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985) have also distinguished having a job from having a career as different ways or contexts in which work is subjectively experienced, with vocational researchers establishing this empirically (cf. Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Today, most employers are no longer inclined to provide workers with lifelong job security through organizationally managed careers; therefore, individuals must take charge of

their own careers by investing in their employability in relation to the broader job market.

Chan et al.’s (2012) EPL framework and measures provide individuals with a multidimensional structure for conceptualizing how their subjective careers may unfold, grow, or develop across the E, P, and L dimensions over a lifetime. We encourage researchers in the Asia-Pacific region to adapt, validate, and use our psychometric measures. Future research could test our proposed links between EPL and Intelligent Career Theory, explore the multilevel ideas suggested in our book, or apply other methods to alternative forms of data (e.g., analysis of career sequences using secondary CV data from LinkedIn) to further validate this model. Career practitioners may also choose to adapt the EPL framework for career development and life design from a more lifelong, lifewide perspective (Reischmann, 2014) that incorporates both paid and unpaid forms of work in their clients’ lives.

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