Transformative Effect of Profession Change: An Explanatory Framework

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Abstract

Career theory regularly discusses the process and dynamics of the phenomenon of "profession change." However, somewhat underrepresented is the transformational aspect of this phenomenon. This paper presents an explanatory framework which draws from the domains of career theory, adult learning, and transformative learning to describe the transformative effects of profession change. Important stakeholders have been identified and practical implications for career planning and management have been discussed.

Keywords: Transformative Learning, Profession Change, Career Change, Adult Learning, Framework

Introduction

Stories of profession change often cause curiosity and reflection. For instance, Astronaut Helen Sharman was an industrial research technologist and a chemist earlier (Sharman et al., 1993). Similarly, a practicing surgeon - Dr. Ronald Kaplan, became an attorney (Kaplan Legal, n.d.). It could further be reasoned that, due to better access to information today, more people may consider changing their profession than before. This paper is based on the thought that such a transition leads not just to change in the profession, but also to change in the person, thereby implying a transformative dimension.

Career theory offers multiple approaches to understanding profession change. For example, studies which focus on causative factors usually mention "triggers" which may lead profession changers to critical reflection and discontentment. After experiencing such a mental state, some decide to switch over to a new profession and some tend to find ways to live with the status quo. Further, it may be argued that studies from this domain are usually focused on vocational behavior and may not lay as much emphasis on the transformational aspect (Carless & Arnup, 2011; Ibarra, 2004; Rhodes & Doering, 1983; Smart & Peterson, 1997). In contrast, this area of adult learning offers numerous theoretical conceptions to build a nuanced understanding of personal transformations. The father of Transformative Learning (TL), Jack Mezirow (1978, 1991) described TL as an emancipatory learning process of personal change which usually begins with a set of disorienting life events, employs critical reflection throughout, and leaves the learner with new mental schemes for meaning making. Interestingly, profession changers have often been viewed as transformative learners in the TL literature, but systematic studies have remained scarce (Snyder, 2011; Terblanche, 2019).

This paper presents an explanatory framework to elaborate the transformative effects of profession change by combining relevant concepts adapted from the work of Ibarra (2004) on career transitions and Mezirow (1991) on TL. In doing so, it serves the practical purpose of informing profession changers and employer/facilitative organizations for better career planning and management.

The rest of this paper has been organized into three sections. The following section presents a review of select literature from the areas of career theory, adult learning and TL. Subsequent section presents a commentary on the explanatory framework (henceforth referred as "the framework") and its

utility for profession changers and for organizations involved in such a transition. The final section presents a summary and lists some directions for future research.

Literature Review

This section presents a succinct review of the extant literature, thereby situating and describing the foundations of the work. The first subsection presents a description of the methodology adopted for search of literature. Subsequently, select insights from the domain of profession change (i.e., concept and attributes of profession, reasons and contributory factors for profession change, identity transformation, and transition support needs) are presented. The next subsection provides a revisit of some relevant ideas from the domain of adult learning like philosophy and practice, learning theories, learning motivation and persistence, meaning making, and the role of educators. Insights from Mezirow's work on TL are presented in final subsection to illustrate the transformative foundations of this work.

Search of Literature

The "scoping review methodology" of Munn et al. (2018) was the methodological inspiration for this work. The search for literature was focused on three domains: (a) career theory and profession change; (b) adult learning and transformative learning; and (c) intersection of domains (a) and (b). Highest preference was ascribed to works located in domain (c), followed by domain (a) and (b) respectively. Hence, many combinations of multiple search keywords (e.g. "career change," "profession change," "transformation," "framework," "model") were used. Internet based meta-search engines (i.e. Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic), research databases (i.e. JSTOR, Emerald, and Web of Science) and libraries (traditional and digital—e.g. Safari Books Online and National Digital Library) were the sites for search. "Journal of Transformative Education" and "Journal of Transformative Learning" were given greater importance as specialty journals. Perusal of search results was also guided by proximity of the work to this study's objective.

Change in Profession

Ideas relating to "morality/ethicality," "specialized training," and "occupation" are dominant underlying themes in various definitions and descriptions of the concept of profession. For instance, Christensen (1994, p. 28) defined profession as: "*an occupation where taking advantage of the customer is against the rules.*" The definition by Cambridge Online Dictionary is another good example: "*any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education*" (Cambridge, n.d.). It may further be argued that the concept of profession, though very old, may still be partly ambiguous. Some of the earlier researchers escaped this ambiguity by describing what does it take to be a professional, rather than defining a profession. For example, Klass (1961) described the *scholarly* and *gentlemanly* requirements of becoming a professional and attached need for legal validity, spirit and the notion of progress with a profession. Moline (1986) seems to have avoided this by comparing a professional with an amateur to argue that a professional associates honor with their calling and enjoys a socially recognized proficiency (Barker, 1992; Flexner, 2001; Pellegrino, 1983). Some of the vagueness around concept of profession may also partially be repelled by examining efforts to characterize profession like that of Greenwood (1957) who took a philosophical approach to list five attributes of a profession (see Table 1).

Table 1

Attributes of a Profession (Greenwood, 1957)

Attribute	Short Description
Systematic Theory	The existence of a supporting body of theory which serves as a base for rationalization of operations.

Table 1 Continued

Attributes of a Profession (Greenwood, 1957)

Attribute	Short Description
Authority	Through education, the professional acquires and exercises authority over (parts of) subject matter (e.g. like a subject matter expert or a consultant).
Community Sanction	The extent to which the community approves (whether formally or informally) of professionals' authority over matters relating to the subject. This, sometimes bestows a form of immunity.
Ethical Codes	Monopoly of a profession can be hazardous; hence, professional bodies often evolve their own ethical codes to regulate behaviors (e.g. the Hippocratic Oath of physicians)
Professional Culture	Every profession entails formal and informal organizations. There are social roles, symbols, artefacts, and jargon. These are signs of emergence of an observably distinct culture.

Insights may also be drawn from the phenomenon of profession change, as it has contributed significantly to the area of vocational behavior. For instance, it has been argued that for a radical career change to happen, one must get dissatisfied with the first occupation and find the second attractive enough to be pursued or tried (Neapolitan, 1980; Rhodes & Doering, 1983; Richardson & Watt, 2005). However, simultaneous existence of these two conditions may not be sufficient to trigger an actual change. This is so because there could be certain "obstacles to change," which when combined with personal, organizational, and environmental factors, could inhibit or delay the transition. It may also be noted here that those who are forced to change (e.g. due to retrenchment or job-automation), are likely to observe less satisfaction in their new vocation than the old one (Carless & Arnup, 2011; Neapolitan, 1980; Rhodes & Doering, 1983; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Smart & Peterson, 1997; Super, 1990).

Ibarra (2004) posits that people change their profession due to three main reasons. First being "self-conception" since it changes with time. Present identity may start appearing inconsistent in comparison to the envisioned identity thereby encouraging and/or triggering action for congruence. The second reason is the prohibitive or supportive "role of social network." A social network may provide role models who play inspirational and/or navigational roles. Further, there is some evidence that higher diversity in one's social network increases the chance of profession change. This is so because a diverse social network is more likely to bring opportunities in terms of referrals and exposure. Finally, Ibarra argues that certain life events can act as "triggers" and stimulate critical reflection. This may eventually lead to a "turning point" or "brink of change." Such triggers could be noticeable or unnoticeable, big or small, positive or negative, and personal or professional. It is not necessary that a trigger should be dramatic to be effective as even everyday interactions have been known to be influential in sparking a consideration (Oleski & Subich, 1996).

It has been argued that profession change leads to movement from one identity to another. The new identity evolves interactively due to demands of role and self. Here, Van Gennep's model may be used to conceptualize the process of *separation, transition,* and *incorporation* (Ibarra, 2004). Such a transition could be long and gradual, and institutionalized approaches are not common. Whether profession changers juggle with both the professions simultaneously to avoid risks or not, the journey may include a 'liminal period'. Such a period is characterized by feelings of being "mid-air" or being lost. Opportunities for such a transition may also emerge from "side bets" like hobbies, amateur activities and voluntary works. The matter of selection of new profession could be determined by factors like "reversibility of exit," "existence of golden handcuffs," "degree of social support" (Gibson, 2004; Higgins, 2001; Ibarra, 2004). Further, early indicators of a possible transition include "thoughts about

leaving" and "actual job search behavior." It has also been argued that people with better education and shorter tenure are more likely to change their profession than ones who came in with lesser education and have longer tenure. There is also some evidence that individual characteristics like extraversion, age, gender, and organizational factors like job security could influence the decision (Carless & Arnup, 2011).

People intending to change their profession rarely begin with a clearly stipulated plan. In some cases, even the act of choosing a new career may not be a straight pick. The effects of such a transition (e.g. psychological and monetary) and subsequent settlement issues (e.g. workplace adjustment) may pose great challenges. It is also known that profession changers do better by increasing control over their career situations, by being committed to change, and by staying confident while keeping an optimistic approach towards future. Hence, it must be explicitly highlighted that instrumental and social support could help profession changers in dealing with stress and strain encountered during transition (Brown et al., 2012; Doehrman, 1982; Super, 1990; Terblanche, 2019).

Clearly, a framework designed to explain the educative dimension of profession change should posit learning as a multi-stage process—which, in turn, may begin due to intrinsic and/or extrinsic reasons. The framework should therefore pay attention to profession changers' personal situations and context. Further, since such a transition may be an uncertain and dynamic experience owing to the likelihood of indeterminate start and non-planning, the framework should highlight the need for assistance and social support.

Adult Learning and Its Transformative Dimensions

An educational philosophy serves as a frame of reference for the educators since it provides the rationale and principles for action. Conversely, thoughts related to purpose, practice and educational outcomes of an educational endeavor reflect underlying philosophical beliefs. Further, from the point of view of practice, any polarization in the dichotomy of *practical relevance* vs *philosophical sophistication* may not be ignored, and work should be practically relevant and philosophically sound. Hence, there is a need for well thought after philosophical frameworks suited for adult education and not copies/derivatives of philosophies originally developed for conventional education (Conti, 2007; Finger, 1990; Paterson, 2010; Tisdell & Taylor, 2000; Zoellick 2009).

It is safe to assume that learning theories are closer to practice than educational philosophies. While situational suitability and effectiveness of a learning theory may be debated, its informative influence may not be dismissed immediately (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2008; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019; Schunk, 2012). The world of adult learning theories is rich and regularly witnesses contributions from various disciplines. A well-formed learning theory would identify and describe the constellation of elements (e.g. actors, contextual factors, resources), relationships, processes and expected outcomes. Further, from a practical perspective, utility of such a theory lies in areas like learner support, instructional design, teaching, and assessment (Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019).

The relationship between learning and motivation is often seen as obvious and a notion of "purposiveness" has been associated with this connection. It therefore is not surprising to find that inquiries into this matter have taken various directions and methods. For instance, it is known that adult learners may get/stay motivated due to factors like self-directedness, responsibility, value of experience, and cultural relevance. Role of motivation as a mediator and as an outcome has also been demonstrated. In the quest of nuances, some have also studied the relationship of learning styles on motivation. Some of this has contributed to the collective understanding of learning motivation being either be intrinsic or extrinsic. It has also been argued that intrinsic learning motivation maybe more sustainable. Quite naturally, all of this has been connected with the matter of "persistence" of adult learners. For instance, "social integration into the institution" and "support from family and faculty" have been found to boost the intention to stay (Alhassan, 2012; Gom, 2009; Knowles, 1973; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Schunk, 2012; Sogunro, 2015).

Construction of meaning has been historically seen as an important activity in adult learning. Largely, people use lenses of their own making to construe meaning of experiences. Such a construal is

contextually situated, and it usually flows like a developmental process with fuzzy beginnings and ends. Unsurprisingly, critical reflection is taken as an important tool for (re)construction of meaning. It may be noted here that the work of Mezirow (refer next section) has been identified as an important connector between meaning-making and adult learning (Brookfield, 1984; Coffield et al., 2004; Cranton, 2006; Gardner, 2011; Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002; Jung, 2014; Merriam & Heuer, 1996; Mezirow, 1991).

Talking of the role of educators, Lindeman (1926) remarked that educators must carefully observe to know what drives an adult learner intrinsically. He lamented against the secondary treatment of learners and against the preoccupation with "subject oriented" approach of adult educators so much so that he declared teachers as seekers of wisdom and not oracles. Since then, new approaches and recommendations have emerged. For instance, constructivists hold that educators could play facilitative roles, and believe that the educator may even need to fill in for family support thereby influencing the intent of staying or dropping out. In contrast, critical theorists reason that "authenticity" in the educator-learner relationship is important and educators should tactfully use power, throw challenges, and be critical. Since Mezirow built his TL work using Critical Theory, naturally, it would safe to assume that a practice informed by his work could consider using distinct roles while working in different epistemological areas (Alhassan, 2012; Brookfield, 2005; Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1973; Knowles et al., 2005).

Sources of informal knowledge are closely linked to culture and learning almost always starts with socially situated experiences and the effect of context on learning is well noted. Hence, educators could expect to be more effective if their practice regularly took a note of it (Hollander, 2004; Illeris, 2009; Jarvis, 2012; Kroth & Cranton, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007).

In conclusion, to explain the educative dimensions of profession change, the framework must posit profession changers as adult learners on a transformative course. Specifically, such a position would yield more only if the framework includes insights from subdomains of adult education/learning, like educational philosophy, learning theories, learning motivation, meaning-making, educator-learner relationship, and importance of social context.

Transformative Learning

The field of Transformative Learning has history of more than four decades and multiple conceptualizations have emerged. With due regard to other conceptualizations, this work draws primarily from Mezirow's writings on the topic from mid-1970s until late 2000s. His processual approach deemed hypothetical mental structures like frames of reference, meaning perspectives as central to personal transformation (Mezirow, 2003: pp. 58). Transformative journeys often have a non-deterministic start, and from a temporal perspective, mostly incremental and not epochal (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1981, 1985, 2000; Nohl, 2015).

Mezirow (1991, 1997) posited TL as a ten-step process which employs critical reflection in almost every stage. He always held that critical reflection is key to meaning making. When compared to other contemporary adult learning theories (like Knowles' take on *andragogy*), TL is characteristically emancipatory, and therefore it requires learners to be critically reflective to improve their self-direction and self-concept. Further, it is not necessary that TL must be experiential, but it is prerogative of those who play adult roles. TL may also not entirely be a solitary journey since discourse with others with similar journeys offers avenues for corroboration and consultation (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1981, 2003). Finally, from the perspective of measurement, the constructivism inherent in TL poses challenges for quantitative measurement. Naturally, primary studies often employ qualitative research designs, and in case of quantitatively oriented studies, indirect measures are seen common (Cheney, 2010).

Since this paper relies on Mezirow's conceptualization of TL, the framework should therefore adapt his TL process for the case of profession changers. Naturally, this means critical reflection would play a major role in meaning making and in transformation of mental structures. Furthermore, the framework should stipulate the possibility of corroborative and/or consultative role of others in such a transition.

Transformation Due to Profession Change: An Explanatory Framework

The case of profession change almost always involves multiple types of learning: formal, non-formal and informal. It also features commonly in the stories of TL. However, studies which keep profession changers at center and pay systematic attention, are scarce (Cheney, 2010; Cranton, 2006; Snyder, 2011; Taylor, 2008; Terblanche, 2019).

The following subsection describes the methods and tools employed for synthesizing the framework. The next subsection introduces the framework, comments on the underlying TL process, and elaborates the journey and role of profession changer as a transformative learner. Subsequently, results of a survey are reported to inform the readers of some empirical observations made regarding the underlying TL process. The final subsection discusses practical implications for profession changers and organizations involved in such a transition.

Origins and Process of Synthesis

The framework was synthesized using a multi-step process specially designed by authors for this purpose. This process consumed insights mainly obtained from published literature, interactions with profession changers, feedback, and critical thinking. Readers may note that the initial idea and description of TL process of profession changers emerged before the framework.

The first step was to review extant literature and combine the perspectives so obtained. This activity led us to following theoretical propositions (TPs) which provided the conceptual ground for the emerging framework:

TP1: Profession change is a multi-stage process
TP2: Process of profession change is initiated and influenced by internal and external factors
TP3: Critical reflection is instrumental to sustainable personal change
TP4: Mental structures for meaning making may change due to change in profession
TP5: Resettlement of the profession changer is intertwined with their learning
TP6: Effort to change one's profession may fail due to internal and/or external factors

The second step was to obtain empirical insights for expansion of conceptual understanding. For this, six exploratory interviews were conducted: three interviewees had successfully negotiated the change, two were contemplating to change, and one admitted to have failed and quit the pursuit. Interestingly, preceding steps led to the thought that Mezirow's (1991, 1997) work should be adapted in a manner which is more accommodating of case-to-case variabilities to the extent possible. In the third step, the combined understanding of previous steps was presented to a peer group of researchers to seek critical and creative feedback. This led to the first articulation of the process describing the transformative journey of a profession changer. Subsequently, twelve profession changers were identified and interviewed in a semi-structured manner (interviewee selection criteria in a later subsection). During these interviews, a schematic and a description of the TL process was presented for critical feedback. The response was mostly encouraging; hence, the conceptualization of TL process was expanded to create a framework which drew from all the conceptual understanding so far (Ibarra, 2004; Mezirow, 1991). In the final step, the framework was presented to a peer group of researchers (same group as described in third step above) for critique. The feedback so received was employed to arrive at the final version of the framework—better illustrated and better described.

The Framework

The framework views profession changers as transformative learners, and therefore, at the heart of it is a multi-stage Transformative Learning Process (TLP) (refer Figure. 1). This also rhymes well with Mezirow's (1991: pp. 26–27) commentary on Transformative Logic. Every stage in this TLP has a main theme and every stage is intricately fused with preceding and/or succeeding stages.

Consequently, it may not be possible for learners to clearly point out their graduation from a stage to another, even in retrospect. It is also quite likely that learners branch-out, regress or even abandon their pursuit due to appearance of variety of reasons like financial, medical, or familial exigencies.

Figure 1

Framework to Explain Transformative Aspect of Profession Change
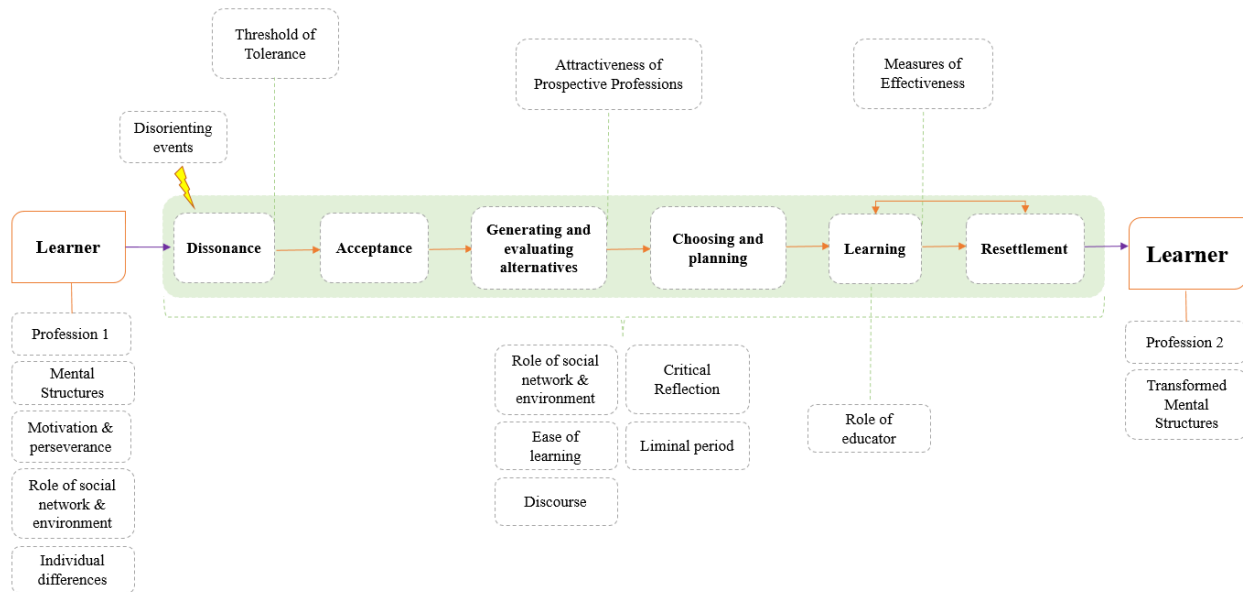
The following section presents a description of the TLP and of directly linked concepts. The subsequent section comments on the journey and role of the profession changer when viewed as a transformative learner.

Transformative Learning Process of Profession Change

The TLP typically starts due to a set of life events with disorienting influence. Such an event, whether sudden or anticipated, exerts unique effect on every learner (Negi & Akhilesh, 2018). The stress caused by such events may not be ignored as it could moderate the progress of a learner during the TLP. The effect of these events (whether direct or indirect), usually manifests as a "dissonance" in state of mind wherein one starts to observe: (a) inconsistencies in the trusted ways of meaning making and/or (b) fundamental internal misalignment/dysfunction in the way one looks at certain aspects of life. The dissonance puts the learner at discomfort and triggers critical reflection to help understand and/or to justify the inexplicable. Normally, acceptance of disharmonious mental state is gradual and taxing as learners tend to stay in denial unless a subjective "threshold of tolerance" isn't breached. Sometimes, this breach is partly fueled by imminent maturity of side-bets, and sometimes, it is a strong sense of urgency due to perception of risk or loss (Doehrman, 1982; Ibarra, 2004; Mezirow, 1991).

Only after the existence of dissonance is accepted from within, learners start thinking of looking for ways to reduce or alleviate the mental discomfort (Cranton, 2006). A lot of times, these ways are not clearly stated or thoughtfully considered. But every learner does a create unique mental method to evaluate and rank order the alternatives in terms of their attractiveness. Learners' subjective assessment/impression of factors like "ease of resettlement," "entry barrier type," and "sophistication or novelty of the profession" contribute to the degree of attractiveness. This mental scheme subsequently feeds into the decision of choosing a set of alternatives for pursual and planning of a course of action. Such planning may very well be vague and/or tentative (Ibarra, 2004; Richardson & Watt, 2005)

Learning to perform acceptably and settling well in the new profession may prove to be a fluidic experience for many. In fact, it isn't uncommon to see learners swinging in between these stages until they become comfortable in the new life. The unfortunate possibility of learners reverting to their earlier profession in special circumstances may also not be ruled out. Support and assistance by significant others during these stages could help the learner sustain and thrive (Cranton, 2006; Ibarra, 2004; Terblanche, 2019).

Since learners' social network and environment provides the social context for the transition, it is reasonable to believe that TLP may not entirely be a solo journey. For instance, many learners occasionally engage in a corroborative and consultative discourse with significant others and/or with perceived specialists during such a transition. However, whether the learner is forthcoming and enterprising or not, greater knowledge of his/her individual preferences and differences may certainly help explain some patterns in learner's participation and behavior during a transformative discourse (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991, 2003).

Learners invest in reskilling for the new profession, usually unaware of the fact that personal transformation is a latent outcome. Naturally, a frequently occurring impediment is low metacognition of their (ongoing) transformation. Therefore, people in educative roles must find ways to foster critical reflection to raise self-consciousness (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). This requirement becomes even more pronounced during "liminal period" considering chances of abandonment (Ibarra, 2004). Learner's pursuit could also be aided by educator's competence in instructional strategies because learners tend to prefer: (a) learning journeys which are not very complex; (b) appropriate mix of formality/non-formality and informality in learning methods; (c) judicious use of time; and (d) tolerable inconvenience and ambiguity (Cranton, 2006).

It is hardly any surprise that every profession changer's journey is unique. The constructivism inherent in the TLP could partially be credited for this. This means there may not be a simple and straight walk to measurement of indicators like achievement of personal objectives, development across multiple learning domains and satisfaction with resettlement. Therefore, mixed method studies employing longitudinal designs may be appropriate (Fullerton, 2010; Snyder, 2011; Terblanche, 2019).

Profession Changer as a Transformative Learner

Early motivation to change one's profession usually originates from meaning and strength of disorienting experiences (Laros, 2017; Negi & Akhilesh, 2018; Nohl, 2015). Along the journey, as the learner transforms, this motivation starts changing its form and strength. For instance, the causative influence (whether intrinsic or extrinsic, or both), may lose its value with time and the learner may require external support or assistance to wade through the liminal period (Cranton, 2006; Ibarra, 2004). Yet another way of guessing the intent and direction of a learner could be through the set of learning objectives or desired outcomes. However, unfortunately, it is not uncommon to meet learners who haven't articulated down their learning objectives explicitly. Sometimes, this is so because many don't even recognize that they are transiting let alone identify as a learner. Therefore, as an experiment, it would be interesting to see if profession changers persevere better if they were required to write and review their learning objectives regularly (Ibarra, 2004).

Even when the disorienting events were experienced by many together, it is unlikely that two (potential) learners would have the same response. Everyone has a unique way to acquire and process information - partly due to their mental structures. Mental structures are employed in everyday life and for special purposes to make meaning of experiences. The absence of fully developed structures or inconsistency in these structures becomes the ground for formative and transformative learning – respectively (Mezirow, 1991; Negi and Akhilesh, 2018).

Given the premise that development of a learner is socially situated, their social networks and environments play an important role in their journey. In fact, learner's influence and skill in using his social network and environment is crucial in bringing relevant resources and opportunities. Considering

the stakes involved, it is also natural to assume that the social network usually exerts a mixed influence as some forces push for the transition and some against it (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Hollander, 2004; Jarvis, 2012).

Some Empirical Observations

After synthesizing the framework, in order to sense the practical worth and relevance of the TLP described above, a structured questionnaire was created and administered to a group of profession changers. However, this endeavor should not be taken as conclusive evidence in favor or against the hypothesized TLP. Rather, it should be viewed as an additional curious effort to expand the understanding. The following criteria was used to locate and invite potential participants is presented below:

1. Indian adult national engaged in legally valid profession
2. Minimum tenure in previous and current profession: one year
3. Superannuation not the cause for change of profession
4. Compensation expressible in monetary terms
5. Cases involving natural career progression to be excluded
6. Side bets, part-time and amateur work to be excluded
7. Job-roles from same or similar job family to be excluded
8. Transitioned from employee to entrepreneur to be included

Guided by the criteria above, a list of more than 750 potential respondents was prepared by approaching sources like professional social networking websites, organizations which frequently employ or support profession changers. All listed were emailed a copy of the questionnaire and invited to participate in the study. Of those, 335 chose to participate and return the questionnaire; however, 16 questionnaires had to be discarded as those were incomplete. Data from remaining 319 questionnaires was scrutinized, transcribed, and prepared for analyses using guidelines discussed by Hair et al. (2017: pp, 56–62).

In the sample, 224 participants identified as males and the rest as females. Average tenure in previous profession was 7.5 years. From the point of view of professional history, 266 participants did not change the economic sector; however, 272 admitted having entered a new industrial sector. Only 10 participants could transition into a new career while staying with the same employer; 20 started a (new) business and the rest had to move to a new employer. 104 participants reported witnessing a change in their marital status and only 40 participants saw a change in their socioeconomic class, i.e. 37 climbed up and 3 slipped. Precisely 179 participants witnessed no change in their monthly family income group; 117 reported upward movement and the remaining 23 slipped. From an educational point of view, 78 reported earning a higher degree, 132 gained new professional qualifications. Further, 156 participants claimed that it takes more than a year to be comfortable in new profession.

The survey questionnaire had five questions to understand the way participants saw the TLP in the light of their own journey. Approximately 70% of the participants agreed that their transition was similar to the hypothesized TLP. More than 76% of the participants found the description of various TLP stages appropriate. From the perspective of progress, about 34% participants claimed to have noticed whenever they transitioned from a stage to another. Hence, it is no surprise that more than 73% participants admitted having felt lost at some point during their transition. Further, quite interestingly, about 27% participants don't see value in coaching in the context of profession change while 24% had mixed thoughts.

Recommendations for Application

At the highest level of abstraction, the framework could be used to explain and characterize the process of profession change with due regard to preferences, choices and context of profession changers. However, when employed properly, the information derived from the framework may be used in many

ways. Notably, there are direct practical implications for three groups: (a) profession changers; (b) organizations where profession changers may be commonly employed (e.g. BPO Contact Centers and Training companies); and (c) organizations which offer assistance and support to prospective/in-transition profession changers (e.g. soldier resettlement organizations and trade schools). The following description would use this categorization to explain possible approaches for practical application.

Primary utility of the framework for the first group is almost obvious, with information to better understand one's (forthcoming) journey leading to practical insights for career planning and management. In contrast, organizations or institutions belonging to groups (b) and (c) may assume educative, consultative and/or administrative roles. This conjecture is based on examination of scenarios in which (prospective) profession changers are likely to interact with the other two groups frequently. Unsurprisingly, such scenarios are embedded within routine organizational activities like recruitment and selection, job placement and training, and coaching and career counseling. What stand outs in these interactions is the focus put on factors like "transferability of skills," "work efficiency," or "need for support." This, in turn may partially be related to the "potential" that organizations or institutions see in (prospective) profession changers.

The logical step for group (b) described above should therefore be to create special policies, provisions and programs to address the needs or aspirations of (prospective) profession changers. Such an endeavor may manifest internally as policies and processes for managing "internal job postings" or externally as programs like Genpact's Career 2.0 and Amazon's Rekindle (Amazon, n.d.; Bidwell, 2017; Mehta, 2016). At the same time, since the nature of primary function of group (c) is assistive/facilitative, it would be prudent for them to run transition assistance programs (e.g. assessments, trainings, and counseling), create/join network of employers and similar others, build/collect resources, or sometimes even act like an employment bureau. Hence, it is only reasonable to believe the framework could provide nuanced insights for matters like policy making, process design, program and resource management, and outreach all for the goal for improving the efficiency of the assistive/facilitative function (Career Transition Partnership, n.d.; Sofat, 2015).

Concluding Remarks

This study was motivated by three observations: (a) scanty literature on transformative effect of profession change; (b) greater media visibility and discussion of cases of dramatic profession change in recent times; (c) social apathy towards challenges and needs of profession changers. Insights were drawn from the domains of adult learning, transformative learning and career theory, and from the experiences of profession changers to synthesize an explanatory framework using a systematic approach. The framework visualizes profession changers as transformative learners and illustrates their journey through a transformative learning process. Empirical insights from a short survey on the transformative learning process were added to expand the understanding regarding the transformative learning process. Further, possible application areas for profession changers and for employer and facilitative organizations were discussed.

In addition to practical utility, the framework could provide theoretical grounds for conceptual and empirical studies. For instance, considering the uncertainties involved the journey of a profession changer, it may be valuable to take a longitudinal, multi-method observational study. Similarly, it may also be worthwhile to conduct comparative studies to bring out the contrast between similar journeys situated in different contexts, or the contrast between similar journeys of different genders. Further, practical insights may be drawn from studies which describe and critique the organizational/institutional efforts on the matter. All of this could contribute significantly to a more nuanced understanding of the TLP of profession change.

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