

Consequences Career Transition of Lecturers and Education Personnel at Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia

(A Grounded Theory)

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ABSTRACT

The career transition of lecturers and education staff has brought several organizational role changes, resulting in difficulty adapting and overcoming the impacts that arise from career transitions. The purpose of the study is to explore the adaptation experience and impact of the career transition of lecturers and education staff in Indonesia. This research uses qualitative methods with a grounded theory approach. Informants are recruited using the snowball sampling method. The number of informants interviewed was 18 people from 7 state universities in Indonesia. The results of the interview were coded with NVIVO software. The analysis results indicate that the consequences of a career transition consist of two phases, namely: adaptation and change, consisting of 23 dimensions and 50 indicators. The adaptation phase consists of 4 main categories, namely situation, self, support, and strategies. Schlossberg's Transition Theory can explain the adaptation process. The change phase includes four categories: behavior, role, learning, and perception. The findings show that during the change phase, informants use two career anchors, in contrast to Schein's Anchor Career Theory which states that individuals only use one main career anchor. This research enriches the theory of career transition in the context of higher education institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords: adaptation, career transition impact, grounded theory, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The career transition research literature offers a variety of concepts of organizational and individual involvement in transitions within the organization. Most studies have looked at it from the perspective of organizational needs instead of individual needs. Previous research searches have shown that there needs to be more discussion about career transitions in the context of higher education organizations. This research focuses on the context of the career transition of civil servants (PNS) in state higher education institutions, considering that the government already has various regulations governing the careers of civil servants. Lecturers can become campus leaders according to organizational needs. However, when serving as campus leaders, they still carry out their duties as lecturers, so those two roles are carried out at once. The pre-research results show that lecturers who become campus officials feel that their focus has shifted from classrooms to meeting rooms. Therefore the performance of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education tends to decline. In addition to lecturers, on campus also employs administrative personnel called Education Personnel. The structural career of education personnel changed due to the bureaucratic reform policy in the form of trimming echelons III and IV nationally from the government. This policy needs to be clarified because of the incompatibility of the work taken today with the functional position held. The mismatch of education and competence further complicated the transition process which ultimately gives rise to the perception that the careers of Education Personnel are currently unclear.

A search of the results of previous studies showed that lecturers who served on campus would change their attitudes. The change in focus of work from teacher to public servant demands making adjustments and is required to be patience, have a good sense of humor, and have a strong drive to make improvements (Palm, 2006). Academics who serve on campus have difficulty making adjustments (Jacobs, 2015) and even sacrifice their academic careers to advance the organization of higher education (Palm, 2006). Difficult challenges facing leaders in educational institutions include demands for greater accountability, rising campus operating costs, declining state financial support, and debates about campus safety (Jenkins, 2017).

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The credibility and competence of lecturers is considered to disappear when lecturers move to administrative roles and are often assumed in a “dark side” perspective (Glick, 2006; Palm, 2006; Willis, 2010). The dark side of academics is seen as a period where campus academics cannot optimally carry out their main duties as lecturers because they are more focused on administrative work. The dark side also seen as a period which academics sacrifice an academic career in favor of the more significant task and responsibility of advancing the institution. Lecturers who switch to the “dark side”, need to consider the perspective of lecturers who have moved to administrative positions (Wicks, 2017).

Several researchers (Palm, 2006; Glick, 2006; Willis, 2010; Jacobs, 2015; and Jenkins, 2017) have reviewed how the career transition of lecturers in educational institutions. Research has yet to discuss the adaptation and impact of career transition events. In contrast, research on the career transition of education personnel to date has not been found in the literature. Wicks (2017) suggests reviewing the transition of lecturers to administrative roles from the perspective of lecturers who have already experienced a transition before. This research was conducted to fill the gap. Previous research on career transition adaptation in educational institutions used Schlossberg’s theoretical framework as a theoretical lens. The complexity of the 4 S factor consisting of situation, self, support, and strategies has not been equipped with adequate indicators so it is difficult to measure with quantitative research (Evans et al., 2010). Exploration of variables, dimensions, and indicators of career transition adaptation will close the gap in the literature, opening up opportunities for quantitative testing in future research. In addition, Schlossberg’s transition theory lens has yet to be widely used to analyze career transitions, particularly in higher education institutions. However, Schlossberg has more to analyze the transition of high school students to university students.

The results of the literature review show that various studies use different theories in explaining career transitions in traditional linear organizations, including Career Stage Theory and Anchor Career Theory. Schlossberg’s transition theory lens has yet to be widely used to analyze the career transitions of lecturers and education personnel, especially in higher education institutions. This study does not intend to test these three theories but explores the experience of informants to build theories/concepts that can explain career transition behavior. This study aims to analyze the career adaptation of lecturers and education staff during career transitions and the impact of career transitions on lecturers and academic staff in higher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Careers are considered a sequence of work experience that develops over time and career transitions were

first introduced by Louis (1980a). Career experience is associated with positions within an organization’s social space (Feldman, 1988). Adaptation becomes an important factor in the career transition period because the ability of individuals to adapt gradually over time becomes the main focus of the career transition adaptation perspective (Sullivan & Ariss, 2021). Schlossberg’s famous model (1981) is an example of a framework detailing the factors influencing the transition. Four main factors were labeled 4 S to analyze the capacity of adults to transition (Goodman et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 2008; Schlossberg et al., 1989). The four Factors labeled 4 S are situation, self, support, and strategies. The balance of assets and liability in each of the four factors/categories makes it possible to predict how individuals will cope with adaptation (Schlossberg et al., 1989), as shown in Figure 1.

Higher education is one of the contexts in which transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1989) is applied. His work provides a stepping stone for Champagne and Petitpas (1989) to recommend that student affairs staff perform eight functions to support adult learning. Furthermore, Evans et al. (2010) suggest that Schlossberg’s theory can be used to analyze organizational employees, resident assistants and help understand and respond to one’s own experiences. Research has explored the transition of high school students to become college students using the lens of Schlossberg’s transition theory. The experience of the organization’s employees has not been analyzed much using the same lens. Given that students are not the only individuals on campus experiencing transition, research into the transition of faculty, administrators, and staff can also provide an understanding of how to manage change. Given that Schlossberg’s transition theory is built around adult transitions and has been successfully applied in various settings, it can easily be applied to lecturers who have moved to administration and administrative staff who have moved to functional areas.

Information about the experience of the lecturer’s transition to administration is still very limited and important to study. When future campus leaders are

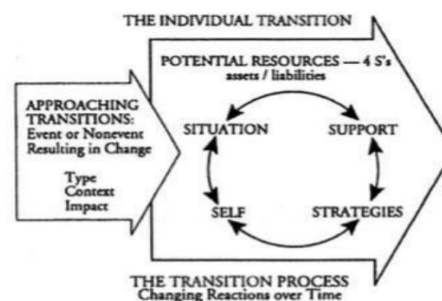


Fig. 1: The Transition Framework: Individual Transition
Source: Schlossberg (1995)

looking for information on what to expect in transition, the only information available is practical advice. Bright and Richards (2003) state that preparation for a change of role and nomination of a campus leader will face real challenges. Accepting the need to change can be a very difficult mental change; it is better to face the facts with good information (Bright & Richards, 2003).

Lindstrom's study (2019) seeks to understand transitions through the lens of transition theory. This research addresses the need for a greater theoretical understanding of the individual that is urgently needed in higher education. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory is used as a theoretical framework to explore the perceptions of community college lecturers who switch to campus administrative positions. The application of the theoretical framework under study can help understand the transition experience of campus leadership groups to ensure a strong leadership path in higher education.

Research on careers gave rise to 2 main theories: Anchor Career Theory and Career Stage Theory. Career anchor theory (Schein, 1978) focuses on internal career dynamics throughout adult life. Schein defines career anchors as patterns of self-perceived competence, motivators, and values that guide and limit career choices. Schein (1978) is adamant about two points. First, everyone has only one career anchor at the heart of all career decisions to be made. Secondly, those career anchors are formed by early career experience. Schein argues that career anchors are formed when the self-image before entering the job market is faced with real-life work experience. Once formed, a person's career anchor will remain stable throughout the course of life.

Anchor Career Theory and Career Stage Theory have been the subject of empirical study worldwide. Although, in general, the main assumptions have persisted over the years, some gaps remain. Whereas career stage theory, the idea of 'recycling' through career stages, is rarely the object of empirical research. Schein has drastically changed the paradigm used in career counseling practice. Compared to seeing career choice as a one-time decision, it is now considered a continuous journey of exploration and self-construction. The theory of the career stage began to emerge in 1957, namely Donald Super's career development theory, which laid the foundation for life-span and life-space theory, as well as a theory that went beyond the traditional focus of career counseling on job suitability to see what people really want from a career (especially, Schein's career anchor theory). The traditional linear career stage model, for the most part, makes sense in the context of traditional careers, such as the bureaucratic organization of higher education institutions. Although many organizations worldwide are abandoning this type of structure, more and more individuals are enacting the career stage across organizational boundaries, and this theory continues to dominate the literature on careers.

METHOD

The research paradigm for exploring and interpreting career transition events is an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm emphasizes the involvement of researchers with the aim of understanding and explaining the social world from the perspective of the actors involved and to provide opportunities for the voices of informants (Tracy, 2020). This study explains the experiences and views of informants during adaptation and explores the impact of career transition events using qualitative methods with a grounded theory approach. This approach aims to build on emerging theories through the identification of analytical categories and relationships. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that the purpose of grounded theory is to produce a theory and not verify a theory. More importantly, it generates the theory and underlies the theory in the data. Data were collected and analyzed systematically to generate inductive theories about substantive areas (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Research informants are lecturers and civil servant education staff in higher education institutions who are undergoing a career transition and are currently undergoing dual roles: roles in the primary position (lecturers or functional positions of educational personnel) and roles in additional duties as campus managers. The population of lecturers and education personnel who have undergone career transitions is so difficult to identify, that such a population is said to be a hidden population. The sample technique for reaching hard-to-access or hidden populations is snowball (Tracy, 2020). The determination of informants using snowball techniques starts by determining several informants who meet the research criteria. The informant will then show the next potential informant. These informants are called key informants who are considered to know the most about the research topic and have authority in the area under study (Myers, 2013). Snowball samples at the time of rolling can tend to point to one particular point; this possibility is anticipated using providing maximum variation to key informants. The maximum variation of informants is carried out by determining a key informant of two people consisting of one lecturer and one education staff of state universities' legal entities (PTN BH), public service agencies (PTN BLU), and work units (PTN Satker). So the number of key informants is six people.

The data used are qualitative and quantitative data in the form of data classified by attributes. The qualitative data in this study are job title, education, agency, work unit, and verbatim transcripts of interview results. The quantitative data in this study are related to civil servants in higher education institutions, such as length of service, age, and rank/class. Qualitative researchers serve as research instruments. Researchers absorb, screen, and interpret the world through observation, participation, and interviews (Tracy, 2020).

The main instrument of the study is the researcher himself. The researcher's subjective power shapes how research approaches, conducts analysis, and builds relevant theories. Researchers were assisted with interview guidelines, recording devices, and stationery in conducting the study. Data Collection was conducted through in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview techniques.

The interview process is carried out using interview guidelines in the form of outlines of problems that will be asked to remind researchers of the relevance of the aspects that must be discussed. Preliminary interviews are conducted with potential informants by asking screening questions; candidates who meet the criteria and are willing to be interviewed are designated informants. The researcher explores the career transition experience during the interview based on the compiled interview guidelines. At the end of the interview is asked about civil servants who have experienced a career transition and meet the criteria to be later designated as potential informants. All interview results are transcribed verbatim for further analysis. Document Observation is also a method of collecting data, including career history documents from informants and relevant data. Meanwhile, audio-video materials are audio and visual materials in the form of photos and recorded interviews.

Data analysis refers to the qualitative data coding procedure Tracy (2020), that coding is an active process for identifying, labeling, and synthesizing data representing several phenomena. The interview data was processed with NVIVO 12 Pro software. The data analysis process uses an iterative approach in which data analysis is carried out in conjunction with data collected from other informants. The raw data is read several times carefully verbatim to capture the meanings and concepts the informant conveys. A fragment of a verbatim transcript that is viewed as containing a view related to research in the coding process through the NVIVO 12 Pro application. The process of analyzing transcripts follows dynamic and lancer coding procedures, namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

The iterative phronetic approach (Tracy, 2020) was carried out throughout the research process using repetitive analysis questions (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 78). Phronetic iterative analysis approaches can produce rich examples, artistic representations, conceptual models, and textual analysis. The phronetic approach is iterative as an umbrella that benefits various people. Throughout the study, researchers used a variety of theories and conceptual lenses as guidelines to help spot the most important and enlightening symptoms.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Phronetic qualitative research always comes down to data analysis with sensitive research concepts and questions that serve as lenses throughout the process. The concept was put aside for a while and chose to engage in what grounded theory experts call "open coding". Empirical material (not past theories or predetermined concepts) drives the emic process. Any rich data set can be analyzed in various ways, so it is important to stay open to different meanings. The question is not "What is the story" but rather "what the story means" (Weick, 2001, p. 461).

Open coding begins by identifying key sentences that informants say about a concept. The open coding process produces nodes in the form of a collection of informant statements that have similar concepts. However, these nodes are still broken between one concept and another and are not connected. The initial stage generates nodes based on important substance citations submitted by informants. The nodes are then rechecked; if there are similarities in the concepts presented by the informant, the nodes will be merged.

The next stage is to group based on the similarity of relevant concepts or theories. The results of the initial category formulation are then drilled down and broken down based on concepts or theories that are considered in accordance with the results of data processing. The content nodes filter process reduces the number of nodes that were originally 119, then grouped into 89 for further finalization to 50 nodes. The concept formulation at the open coding stage resulted in 23 sub-category nodes and 50 content nodes.

The axial coding stage is done by reassembling the data broken down during open coding; this process is called hierarchical code (Tracy, 2020). This regrouping includes systematically grouping various codes under a conceptually appropriate hierarchical umbrella category. This stage might also weave the code into a network or map. The axial coding results of 50 nodes of open coding content resulted in a grouping of 23 nodes of sub-categories. Selective coding is carried out by grouping conceptually hierarchically 23 nodes at the axial coding stage into eight main categories: situation, self, support, strategies, behavior, role, learning, and perception. Selective coding is done by assembling eight main categories that have been identified into a theoretical framework map

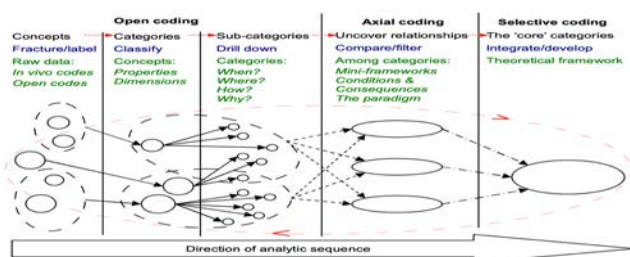


Figure 3.3 The grounded theory analytic process (Adapted from Warburton, 2005, which was adapted from Harwood, 2002: 76)

Fig. 2.: Research Data Coding Process

Source: Harwood (2002)

based on two theories that have been successfully built. Those are transition theory and anchor career theory. Two topics of categorization of research findings were found: adaptation and impact in the form of change on individuals.

DISCUSSION

Career Transition Adaptation

Research on change shows that people who change have strengths and weaknesses. The main factor of adaptation was put forward by Schlossberg (1981) and called the 4 S to analyze transition ability in adults (Goodman, 2006 et al.; Schlossberg, 2008; Schlossberg et al., 1989). The four elements, called the 4 S's, are situation, self, support, and strategies. A person's behavior can be predicted by the balance of assets and liability in each of the four factors/categories (Schlossberg et al., 1989). The results of data analysis succeeded in finding four new dimensions in the 4 S factor, namely new tasks on the situation factor, strengths and weaknesses of the self on the self-factor, and organizational support on the support factor.

The 4 S relationship in the adaptation of civil servants is reciprocal. The informant will look at the situation when occupying a new position. Mapping the situation is continued by looking at weaknesses and strengths from being a form of self. Informants see support from 3 support systems, namely family, colleagues, and organizations, to map who can help informants during adaptation. Strategies will be formulated after analyzing the previous 3 S's. The strategy of seeking information if the informant feels that the situation in the form of a new task that has not been mastered. Informants who are already familiar with the new task tend to choose another strategy, namely directly taking action.

Impact of Career Transition

The results of the analysis showed that adaptation brought changes to the informant. Career transition situations in the form of new tasks bring about behavior changes. Career

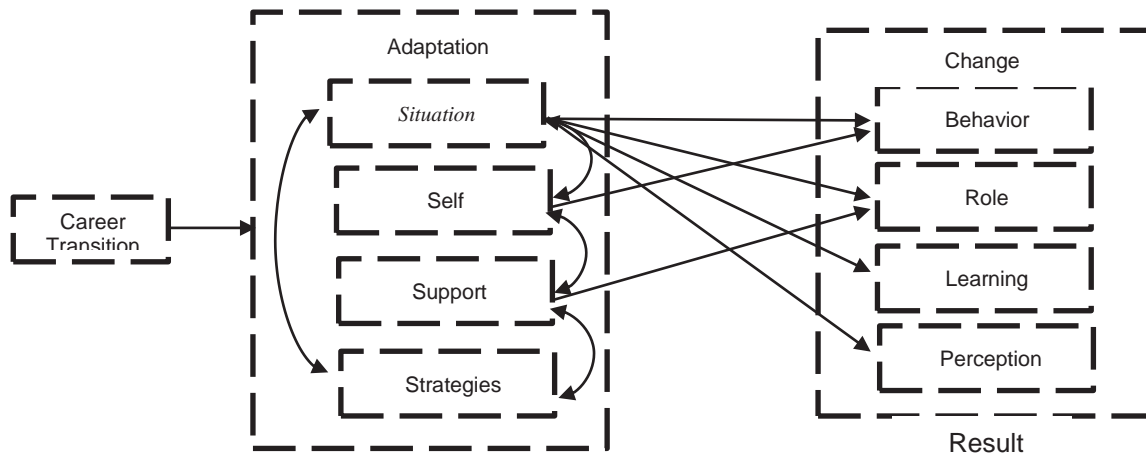


Fig 3: Career Transition Adaptation Model for Lecturers and Education Personnel

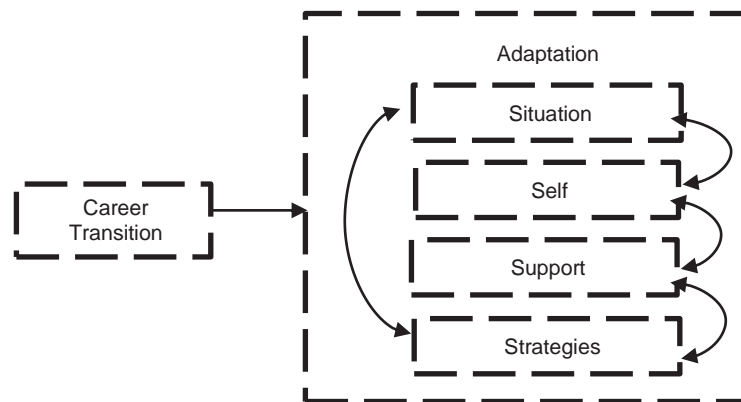


Fig 4: Career Transition Adaptation Model for Lecturers and Education Personnel

transition situations that make several behavioral changes are burnout, motivation, competence, self-discipline, and new identity. Managing time is the most important record in behavior change, self-discipline is seen as the primary key. The career transition situation brings about a change in the roles. Before the career transition, both lecturers and education staff each only served one role on campus. The new duties as campus administration leaders have made lecturers and education staff undergo dual roles, namely roles in leading positions and roles in additional task positions. New roles have also brought changes to roles in society and families.

Weaknesses and self-strengths make behavioral changes in informants. Competence is an important record of the changes that occur. Additional duties make lecturers and education staff carry out two different roles simultaneously. Roles in lecturer positions and functional positions demand high competition as a foundation for doing work. On the other hand, a job as a campus official demands qualified managerial abilities because managing resources in higher education institutions requires a managerial art with a different approach considering that the position of college leader is an additional task with a short-term duration. Informants during the adaptation learned a lot (*learning*). One of the most important lessons is the career transition experienced by dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world. The career transition gives rise to the perception that being a campus leader not only carries out campus administration but must be able to excel in his field of duty is the most important reflection of this change of viewpoint.

The findings of this study are different from Schein's Anchor Career Theory (1978) which states that individuals have one major career anchor during the course of their career. This research found that lecturers and education staff use two career anchors when undergoing career transitions: competence and managerial.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Schlossberg's transition theory has historically been applied to students pursuing higher education. This research adds to the application of Schlossberg's theory to campus groups other than students, namely lecturers and education staff. Another potential implications for this theory are the opportunity to apply Schlossberg's transition theory to other groups on campus. For example, the transition of educational personnel who switched to lecturers, from off-campus civil servants who switched to lecturers, and from lecturers who held structural positions in the government so that they had to temporarily stop being lecturers. Its wide application will make Schlossberg's theory present many application opportunities to better understand the transitional experience on campus.

The government can adopt the pattern of managing the additional duties of lecturers if it will formulate and

reevaluate the bureaucratic simplification program by transferring and equalizing structural officials to functional officials. Competence and educational background must be the main anchors when determining the functional position to be awarded. The limited number and job descriptions of functional positions need to be developed so that all tasks performed on additional tasks can become performance points. Individual and organizational preparation needs to be done very carefully because the transition from structural positions to functional positions is much more difficult than transitioning from functional positions to structural positions.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Schlossberg's transition theory is mainly on the 4 S factor being the informant's reflection in explaining the adaptation of career transitions. The research findings show that the relationship between situation, self, support, and strategies is reciprocal. The situation is the most difficult factor to control. The transition to new roles is happening faster and needs to be optimally supported by the organization as civil servants expect. However, informants found deep and meaningful support from colleagues and family. The impact of the transition is in the form of a phase of change consisting of behavior, role, learning, and perception. In the change phase, the dual role makes the informant have to sacrifice one of the roles. The choice between public choice and individual choice is a difficult choice to face. The tendency to choose public choice because it bears great responsibility for organizational performance. The decline in individual performance in the leading positions (lecturers and functional positions of educational staff) is the most felt impact in the results phase.

The study looked at narrower perceptions of transitions as limited to transitional mechanisms within institutions. A broader study is needed on were lecturers and education staff transition across institutions. This research is qualitative research, so it cannot be generalized. Another limitation of the study is that it does not take into account demographic characteristics such as race and gender. An additional limitation of the study is the researcher. As the main data collection instrument, the researcher's experience conducting research interviews is limited. Researchers design a process that will result in unbiased studies. However, the fact that researchers are also part of the educational staff who enter the informant group can cause the reader to question the unbiased nature of the study and the interpretation of the informants' responses.

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