Career re-engagement after maternity leave

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• Career development models
• Case study on career re-engagement after maternity leave
• Discussion
Changes in Modern Careers

• **Traditional careers**: Linear career progression
• **Modern careers**: protean and boundaryless
• Generational differences in values and expectations
• Legislation: Equality Act, Maternity/Paternity Leave
• Women quota discussions
• Flexible working – right to request for all in sight
• Career breaks (parenting/care related, sabbaticals)
• Abolishment of default retirement age
Career theories/models summary

• Life Stages/Transitional perspectives
• Career types
• Kaleidoscope
Life stage career theory -
O’Neill & Bilimoria (2005)

- Idealism
- Endurance
- Reinvention
Transitional perspectives
(Bussell 2008, Coaching MA dissertation)

• Career is the primary focus
• Career remains primary focus
• Working Contortionists
• Realistic Pragmatism
• Realisation that the professional brakes have been applied
• Disengagement and disenchantment
• Reflection and re-invention
Career Types-

• Navigators
• Achievers
• Accommodators
Kaleidoscope theories - shifting parameters

   - challenge
   - balance
   - authenticity

   - happiness
   - achievement
   - significance
   - legacy
### What is special about women’s careers?

**Patterns & Paradoxes** *(O’Neill & Bilimoria, 2008)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Paradox</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career embedded in life context</td>
<td>Career is separate, need for ‘wife’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families and careers are central</td>
<td>Families are liabilities to women’s career development</td>
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<td>Varied range and pattern of career paths</td>
<td>Linear, upward career paths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human and social capital critical</td>
<td>Glass ceiling prevails</td>
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Women’s progression to senior positions in English universities (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010)

• The higher the grade the lower the number of women
• Lower research profile of women
• Women put themselves less forward for promotions, acknowledge less their achievements
• Women perform well in application and interview process
• Work-life balance important
• Career structures for support staff underdeveloped
Agenda

• Career development models
• Case study on career development re-engagement after maternity leave
• Discussion
Case study summary

- Private law firms in London
- Maternity coachees, who returned at least 6 months ago
- Semi-structured interviews
- 360 view/triangulation: coachee, coach and HR interviewed
The key factors that influence women’s re-engagement with career development (Filsinger 2012)

1. Workflow
   • Availability
   • Being Pro-active

2. Relationships
   • Partners
   • Peers
   • Clients

3. Role Models
   • positive
   • negative
The psychological contract on career development after maternity leave: MA research (Filsinger, 2012) *Slowing down and gearing up*

1. Understanding of mutual obligations unchanged

2. Women’s expectation changed
   - Mismatch between linear career paths offered & flexible career paths wanted
   - Equal opportunity approach speeds career up when some women want to slow down
   - Higher expectation of work quality because away from child – challenge still important.
   - Issue of volume versus quality of work and quantity based performance measures

3. Career success definition
   - Mismatch of firm’s (partnership, billed hours, input based reward) and women’s (holistic, dynamic, going beyond current role and work life)
What is maternity coaching?
How does Maternity Coaching influence re-engagement with career development? (Filsinger 2012)

1. Emotionally
   - Increasing confidence
   - Feeling valued as firm invests in them
   - Providing realistic role models

2. Practical level
   - Handover, preparing return
   - Sourcing appropriate work, communicating expectations
   - Decisions on working patterns
   - Balancing needs of all parties involved (women, teams, clients, family)

   Improved communication is an underlying factor of achieving these.

3. Long-term level
   - Career reflection
How can coaching contribute to closing the gender gap? 

• Confidence, Knowledge of strengths
• New roles: Sounding board and coping, resilience
• Navigating organisational culture
• Networking, Mentors, Sponsors and Role Models
• Values and goals (including personal ones)
• Making an impact
• Work life balance
• Transition from managing/doing to leadership
• Coaching men too
• Line manager as a coach can be an issue
• Career path/development opportunities
• Coaching appropriate to career stage/life stage
Summary

• Workflow, role models and career reflections influence career re-engagement after maternity career break
• Communication before, during and after career breaks critical
• Emotional and practical aspects to career re-engagement
• Regulatory pressure from EU expected to increase women in leadership positions
References


