Prominence of Legacy in Career Choice: An Indigenous Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Legacy creates a mental frame work and mind-set for a deeper attachment towards a career. Individuals enter a career which enthuse in them a sense of obligation .The obligation may be family driven, societal driven or culturally driven .Legacy ensures a fuller participation in the work one does. It transcends personal aspirations to create a zone of mind-set tying one to a particular way of thought and life perspectives. The paper makes a genuine attempt to understand the concept of legacy in shaping career from an indigenous perspective.

Keywords: Career, indigenous, legacy, Obligation, Brahmin Priest, Kerala.

INTRODUCTION:

Career is a person's representational passage through various facets of life, learning and work. Choosing a career is not easy .People equate a career to the money or materialistic rewards which would be received if opting a particular choice of job. To a few others the aesthetic, internal satisfaction and happiness which could be acquired becomes a criteria for choosing a career. Career represents an important milestone of growth and progress in a person's life .Why does a person choose a particular field of work? Is it because of individual skill, aptitude, talent? .Or is the choice based on something else? .And how does these skills, aptitude and talent get nurtured? This is a difficult question to give a fixed answer. Choosing a field to work is a complicated life-long process. The process of choice differs based on geographic setting, culture, environment, life goals, the nurturing from family, genetic factors, skills, abilities, talents, one's personality, earlier experiences, social and economic conditions.

Legacy is a footprint on the sands of time, a shortcut experience for future .Legacy is the reminiscent of the past, forwarded to the present and to be once again handed over with minor changes of perception to the future. The concept cannot be studied without delving deep into childhoods, family conversations, beliefs, values and backgrounds of individuals .Legacy framework is very much glued with past memories .Legacy can take the form of organisational, socio-cultural and family traditions and norms. It's a blueprint of traditions, values, culture and norms to provide an easy walkover in the present without a time lag .It's an inter link across time, "anything handed down from the preceding times, as from a progenitor or ancestor." A gift or an inheritance handed down or transmitted from a person to another. An organisational or a familial legacy usually comes tradition wrapped. Legacies are vital to what it is to be a social being. People lose meaning in life if they abstain from working to create legacies. It's a glue which one tends to hold as one's own and feel a certain pride when it is transmitted to others down the line to help bind human relationships, families, communities and societies. It ignites a human spirit among individuals.

The concept of legacy is slowly gaining ground in the world of business. What the organisational senior or the top personnel will be leaving behind for the employees and the business they serve is what legacy is all about. Legacies often reflect the philosophies of founding members too. The core beliefs, values, experiences of seniors are transmitted to new comers ensuring a sense of continuity.

But there is a scarcity of work on legacy and also its prominence while choosing a career has not been researched.

This qualitative work intends to answer questions on:

How do legacies evolve? And how do such legacies reflect in a career choice?

For finding answers to the above questions the researcher selected a sample population of employees working in religious institutions –the Hindu temples with special reference to the Brahmin priests of Travancore Devaswom Board, Kerala.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The choice of career which an individual makes determines how he defines himself and how others identify him. But what makes a person identify himself with a particular vocation and how he makes his choice is a very intriguing question.

Career theories have been rooted in the context of traits, social, psychology, cognitive and self-concept .The five major theories comprise of the theory of work-adjustment, Holland's theory of vocational personalities in work environment, the Self-concept theory, the theory of circumscription and compromise and Social cognitive career theory.

John Holland's Theory of Career Choice (RIASEC) supports that people when selecting career, choose employments where they can be around others who are similar to them. People often lookout for environs which would let them use their skills and abilities, and express their outlooks and tenets, while taking on affable problems and roles.

The Work Adjustment theory by Dawes and Lofquist (1984) postulated the individual and the job or the organisation fit. It stated that individuals keep trying to adjust to their environment before they give up and finally when they reach a stage where further adjustments are not possible, they leave the job on their own or are asked to do so.

Super's Developmental Self-Concept theory states that vocational growth is the process of developing and implementing a self-concept. Vocational choice and behaviour become accurate when one's self-concept is realistic and constant. People choose occupations that permit them to express their self-concepts. Work satisfaction is related to the degree that they've been able to implement their self-concepts.

The Social Cognitive theories of Krumboltz and Lent, Brown et al speaks of self-efficacy. The theories delve on social, culture, gender, genetic and environmental influences on career choice and how rewards and reinforcements occur through these influences. Lent, Brown et al put forward the notion of decisions on career to belief system which has developed through learning from others, through social persuasion, psychological conditions and reactions.

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise stated that career choice and progress was a process of elimination or circumscription. Gottfredson espoused that "the person is still an active agent who could influence or mould their own environment" so, career development is a self-creation process wherein individuals viewed ways or vocations to express their hereditary inclinations within the boundaries of their own cultural environment. The theory also shares the view that one's self-concept is culture reliant and based on experiences. These create urges within a person pulling him in a particular direction though surrounded by different kinds of restrictions making it easier to glide towards a shift for a specific work.

The above stated theories provide some understanding about the foundations on which career development is concentrated around. But these theories have been used widely in a western setting, its application, adaptation or modifications has not been widely researched in an indigenous setting. (Enriquez, 1993) states that indigenisation process can take place from within as well as from without. Indigenisation from within discusses the source of career theories, thoughts and approaches from within a specific culture, depending on indigenous bases of information as the principal source of knowledge. This process would result in career concepts that have specific meanings within a culture, and methods that are grounded on specific cultural features, practices, and beliefs .While indigenisation from without would involve changing prevailing theories and practices to make the most of their degree of aptness with local cultural settings. For this integrating cultural adaptations built on local social, cultural and occupational features are required (Repetto, 2001). It is necessary to find specific constructs, trainings and experiences that are very specific to a cultural community or group. This would help to understand concepts which relate to the development of a core ethnic vocation passed down and has been in existence from ages.

India is a country of rich heritage. Historically Indian society was divided into four purely on the basis of profession (Chathurvarnya). The traits of Chathurvarnya exist in Indian Society even now. The legacy of four "Varna" still plays a serious role in the selection of profession at least by the upper cast Hindu.

In order to create a better understanding of the theme of legacy and its reflection on career choice, a qualitative study was undertaken among an ethnic community who has been a major representative of the top slot of the social hierarchy of Kerala. The community on whom the research was conducted was the Brahmin priests of the Namboodiri community in Kerala .The male members of these community has been conducting religious rituals

in various temples of Kerala from time memorial.

(Arulmani, 2011) states that "a given culture has been already prepared in a certain way to engage with work, occupation and career"

A more "indigenous" efforts to develop theories and practice to meet the distinctive needs in diverse geographic regions is needed to help improve career guidance around the world. Indigenisation of career should aim to understand exclusive knowledge, constructs and practice that are obvious to certain cultural groups. Indigenisation of the occupation could take the path of indigenisation from within and indigenisation from without. Indigenisation from within refers to the rooting of career theories, thoughts, and approaches from within a definite culture, banking on indigenous sources of information as the key source of knowledge. The process will help career concepts which would have obvious meanings within a culture like - the effects of familial virtue on career choice in Asian cultures, and methods that are based on particular cultural structures, training, and beliefs. While indigenisation from without would amend prevailing philosophies of career and practice to take full advantage of their adaptation with local cultural situations.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is conducted among the temple Brahmin priests to understand their abilities, preferences and other factors which made them choose a vocation, and also why they choose to do this particular work. Forty-four Brahmin priests from various temples were chosen randomly for this purpose. A qualitative input collection program was carried out as qualitative approach enables theory-building (Eisenhardt, 1989) and the generation of 'thick' knowledge. An interview schedule was developed and self-administered to the respondents. Data collection typically involved a journey to the various temples where the respondents were employed .The interviews were conducted in Malayalam and audio recorded. The audio recordings were first transcribed in Malayalam and then translated into English. The transcriptions were checked by experts who are well versed in both Malayalam and English. Another important source of data was observation and field notes. The field notes also recorded non-verbal communications, for example, the excitement in the individual's voice, body language and so on. The data was analysed to identify themes and aggregate dimensions (Corley and Gioia, 2004) .The data generated through semi-structured, face-to-face in depth interviews (Yin, 1994) were analysed using Atlas.ti software. Along with this the feel perceived by experts was analysed through grading.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION:

The interviews with respondents revealed various facts on how the preference for a particular career and what is forcing them to continue in this work. The respondents spoke about their family system, the cultural nuances within their family and how these helped in developing their self-concept and identifying themselves with particular vocations.

People stick on to their legacy while choosing their profession. There are various factors influencing the choice of one's profession. They are family grooming, social grooming, cultural capital acquired during the years of life, comfort among similar activities and individuals.

From the present study it was evident that family and social grooming play a very crucial role in one identifying his socio-economic group and eventually his profession.

Cultural capital accumulated during the many years of life plays a major role in the choice of profession.

Another result evidenced by the study is that people are comfortable among their own similar people. Similarity is identified from the similarity in socio-economic grooming and family legacy.

Fear of failure was evidenced in the study why another profession is easily chosen.

CONCLUSIONS:

Individuals are distinctive with their customised perceptions, but they never think on the lines of what they would leave behind of their experiences which would be a carryon knowledge for their successors.

People stick on to their legacy while choosing their profession as much as possible. Only a rare brave one opts out of a comfortable profession.

Legacy is unique in this respect as it dispenses customised knowledge for use. The transmission of legacy occurs through stories of childhood regarding familial traditions, cultures, beliefs and values passed down the ages or existing norms and traditions. The stories tend to get reflected through training or nurturing received from seniors .The nurturing transmitted through conversations and actions tend to be either informal or formal.

Legacies are built through the following stages

1. Grooming individuals ideologically also is an important stage of dispensing customised knowledge.
2. Accumulating cultural capital after a strenuous process of filtering unwanted information through a centrifugal process.

The study is carried out among the employees belonging to the Brahmin community of Travancore Devaswom Board. From the study it can be summarised that, given a chance, people tend to stick on to their legacy while choosing their profession. This may be due to the fact that the legacy provides a sort of comfort zone for the employee. Similarly there seems to be inertia among the people to search for an unknown vistas.

This is a first- hand outcome of the research work by the author and the results are to be validated and confirmed using a bigger number of respondents.

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