Chapter 17
Women Principals' Career Paths:
Difficulties, Barriers

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ABSTRACT

The managerial career has always been perceived as a man's realm, but this perception is changing. It is the same for schools like other organizations. The number of women principals is increasing, and perceptions are changing in a way that women can also take up such positions. However, women teachers face more difficulties and barriers compared to men when they take up an administrative career. This chapter looks into the career planning and pre-career process of women school principals, their stages of the career development, the barriers and difficulties they encounter during the career development, and the strategies they employ to cope with them within the framework of the career construction theory.

INTRODUCTION

Career is one of the concepts that both researchers and practitioners have explored from past to present. Traditionally, career is defined as individual's moving up to the hierarchical ladder of business life to gain high earnings and status (Baruch, 2006); employees' experiences in organizations and development process as a result of their studies (Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992). Since the middle of 20th century, concepts such as professional identity, career, career planning and career development have been used along with the foreground of the concept of profession (Savickas et al., 2009). An individual's career takes place in an organization in which he or she works. While the individual works within the organization, he both affects the organization and is influenced by its organization. This is very important in career construction. Career construction is a series of stages (Baruch, 2004). While the individual creates a career, he plans his career, manages it and reaches a conclusion. Career planning is the individual career process of a person, such as searching for a job, experiencing work life, having an occupation, and developing professionally on his career path. Career management involves a number of processes, such as identi-

fying career paths providing promotion in the organization in which the individual is working, having and implementing plans for career advancement (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). The theory developed by Super is called as career development theory (Super, 1955). Savickas (2002) has improved career construction theory by examining the previous studies.

The personal factors, such as gender, have a great influence on an individual's career construction because of the social inequality between men and women. Occupations, sex-typed as safe for women by the society, cause women to be more backward-looking, especially when they construct a career. These are called career barriers and prevent women from moving up to executive positions (Wentling & Thomas, 2007). Career barriers are very important factors affecting an individual's career construction and continuation. One or more of these barriers affects individual's getting a job, succeeding in a job and especially moving up to higher positions by demoralizing her. It is obvious that women have risen up in a variety of business lines; but there are a number of difficulties and barriers to their career creation.

In this section, the career planning and selection process before the beginning of the school management career, the stages of the career construction, the difficulties they encountered during the career construction, and the barriers and the strategies for the women principals to overcome the barriers will be explained in the framework of the career construction theory put forward by Savickas (2002).

DEFINITION OF CAREER AND CAREER CONSTRUCTION THEORY

Definition of career refers to an individual's job roles and experiences (Baruch, 2004). In addition, career defines the self-identity, or the path an individual follows to reach his/her goals, the dreams, hopes, fears, frustrations and what the individual wants to do (Goffmann, 1959). In Oxford Dictionary (2018), career is described as "the time spent by a person in a career, an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress." The concepts of career and career development are very widely researched in the literature. Likewise, "Career Development Theory" developed by Super (1980) is also widely employed in career studies. According to this theory, firstly, the skills of an individual should be identified, and then s/he should be suggested appropriate professions. The theory also suggests career consultation. Super (1980) refers to the importance of feature-factor match and states that individual differences should also be considered. Super (1980) subsequently improved his theory as "Developmental Self-Concept Theory" and expanded on the self-concept. He stated that the self has an important role in choosing a profession and the choice of profession reflects the self (Savickas, 1997). Later on, Super (1980) revised his theory and introduced concepts of "life-span" and a "life-space theory".

Super (1980) argues that an individual's career development is a lifelong process and follows 5 life stages; (1) growth stage that begins with birth, (2) exploration, (3) establishment, (4) maintenance (5) decline. These life stages include life roles such as childhood, student life, leisurite, citizenship, professional life, settling in and becoming a parent. These stages reflect the different periods in individuals' life such as childhood, student, being a citizen, getting a job, setting up a home, or being a parent. Environmental, situational and individual factors play an important role in shaping the lives of individuals. These life stages are described below (Gothard, Mignot, Offer & Ruff, 2001; Super & Hall, 1978):

1. **Growth:** It covers the period from birth to 14 year old. This period includes the development of attitudes towards the concept of self and it is divided into three phases within itself; (a) *fantasy*

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