

Managing Multiple Career Transitions Sustained Over a Long Period

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Abstract

On the backdrop of the spiraling scale of career transition during past few decades this paper presents an outcome of the phenomenological study of multiple career transitions handled successfully by six individuals over a sustained period of more than a decade. These persons were interviewed across several sessions and from the transcription of interviews, a set of forty-two relevant statements are extracted. These statements in turn were perused to yield seven emergent themes of self-awareness, determination, investment of time, sensing the opportunity, planning, preparation and reaping the rewards. Some textural descriptions from the narratives are provided to understand “what” these interviewees experienced, while the structural descriptions are derived providing a context of “how” they kept on managing the consecutive career transitions over a long period. In the end, these textural and structural descriptions are converged offering a composite description that illuminates the phenomenon of sustained career transitions.

Contribution to Body of Knowledge

By tracing multiple career transitions using phenomenological approach, the paper throws light on how such transitions are managed over a long period. It provides an insight to both qualitative researchers and practitioners to help them in informed decisions/actions.

Keywords: Career Transitions, Employment, Qualitative Research, Phenomenological Study, Sustained Transitions

1. Introduction

A career transition is no longer a rare incident for most of the working population. It is not restricted to just a job hop, but involves change in one or more factors like place of duty, line of work, nature of formal arrangement between the two parties. A career transition can thus take several forms like migrating to another geo-political region for work, switching from one line of profession or business to another, changing from full- to part-time or vice-versa, moves across the statuses of employee, entrepreneur, self-employed professional. Whatever the form, the career transition is a major event in terms of its antecedents, process and effects, for the person who goes through it as well as the others close to that person like family members. The career transition at large has been

on rise in the past couple of decades, though it is not the topic of study here. With the changing milieu of globalization, there is adequate room to believe that the situation will remain so and perhaps may be further accelerated.

A career transition for the purpose of this paper is construed as a substantial change in the occupation that takes place after some years have been spent in the erstwhile occupation. It therefore does not include: job hops made by a fresher within a couple of years of career beginning, casual occupation meant to last for a small period that one may take up around the age of superannuation, lateral shifts or transfers as well as vertical shifts or promotions in the same organization and alike. Thus, a career transition is meant to include extensive change in occupation that covers: transformation in occupational constitution (e.g. employment, business, self-employed

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profession, and social work), geo-political shifts (across regions, nations, and continents), change in role (academician, painter, lawyer, accountant, and journalist), etc. For this research the focus is on the multiple transitions managed by each individual over a period of one decade.

2. Literature Review

One of the earliest articulations on career transition is traced about fifty years ago with the development theory³⁵ that depicts a chronological sketch for life and career. Viewing the career development as a life-long process, the theory charts out the stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline, continually guided by the self-concept along the career path. Likewise position is taken subsequently by Levinson²⁹. Career transition types identified by Leibowitz and Schlossberg²⁷ during nineteen-eighties are founded on the dimension of control-or-choice; these categories were: moves onto a new role, lateral moves, job loss and non-occurrence. Traditionally considered as professional progress within a few firms, careers are getting boundary less as can be seen from definitions like “...a sequence of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single employment setting”⁸. In addition, a decreasing influence of organizations in shaping the career paths is acknowledged in the career theory¹. During recent years the globalization has cast its increasing influence on economic, political and socio-cultural matters, fuelling the job churn. A career transition has thus become unavoidable and is seen as desirable, too⁴. It is no longer a simple, unidirectional move up the hierarchical ladder; it has rather become multi-directional event¹⁹.

As pointed out by Fouad and Bynner¹² career transitions initiated with choice, are driven by personal agency, whereas forced transitions are marked with personal and environmental constraints. Agility as capacity to bounce back from career hindrances is treated by them as one of the keys to constructive response to challenges of transitions. Generally the compelled work transitions are considered a negative point, but it can be taken as a chance to reconsider the goals, recast the priorities, hunt for better options, develop new skills, or get rid of a dull job¹¹. Sutcliffe and Vogus³⁶ put forth another model with three resilient responses, viz. broader information processing, loosening of control and utilization of slack that leads to positive adjustment when an individual comes across threat.

At the end of twentieth century, the Career Transitions Inventory was devised¹⁶ to explore the psychological factors that may serve as boon or bane in career transition. Heppner suggests five-factors of readiness, confidence, personal control, support and independence. Strengths survey is helpful in assessment of the strengths of coaching clients and facilitates culling out the information that is otherwise disguised during interaction²⁰. Continual application of strengths brings gratification and authentic happiness as observed by Seligman³⁴. Another research⁶ on loyalty & retention demonstrates that organizations which have a higher proportion of employees indicating ‘they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day’ are more productive, have higher customer loyalty, and have lower turnover.

Latack²⁵ describes career transition as any major change in work-role requirements or work context, however, this project focuses on multiple career changes spanning over a substantially long period of several years. Career change has also been seen as a process resulting in a change of job, profession, or alteration to one’s orientation to work while remaining in the same job³. As per Handy¹⁵ the values have changed and so the people increasingly change work settings looking for more autonomy, life balance and meaning in work. Changes may not always be brisk and tell on time taken for transition, as pointed out by some interesting studies focused on such twilight experience⁹. Careers, treated as a linear and simple and bounded concept for few decades in the distant past are of late considered to be boundary less², one of the reasons being their unfolding outside traditional organizational boundaries²³. On a broader canvas, over and above the discussions centered around ‘demand and supply’, these days organizational behaviour is also a matter of study with spotlight on intermediaries such as recruiting firms contributing to career changes²². Majority of empirical studies supporting conceptual models is related to early stages of career like promotion¹⁷ and transfer⁵. Career changes are explicated by the factors within and outside a person. Such factors may spell an attraction for a new occupation or repulsion from an old job in the mind of that individual²⁶.

3. Method

As I started musing about the approach, an initial and obvious option at hand was a quantitative research. After a careful thought about what quantitative research on this

theme would offer, I realized that theories and empirical data put forth by such a research project, despite their crystal clear logical findings, may not satisfy a curiosity to find out what exactly is experienced by those who sustained multiple career transition. The statistical generalization of quantitative research may not help emulate the wholesome experience of career transition, as the career transition is a highly personal and unique milestone.

Instead of quantitative research, a qualitative approach – and in particular a few cases subjected to a phenomenological study – was therefore finalized. Founded in early nineteenth century¹⁸ and having been augmented with substantial contributions⁹⁴ the phenomenology is a discipline that “aims to focus on people’s perceptions of the world in which they live in and what it means to them; a focus on people’s lived experience”²⁴. Here, a series of interview with people who have passed through career transition would demonstrate some vantage points that go much beyond simplistic numbers of pay and perks in remuneration and days and hours of work. First-hand, warm and reassuring account coming out of such narratives would induce a sense of belonging. Noticeable nuggets of personal yet pertinent feelings, concerns and lines of thinking revealed in the cases as well as analytic generalization figured out with the help of data coding, emerging units of meaning and resultant essence of experiences would be more engaging and beneficial than statistical tables, algebraic formulae and inscrutable logic.

3.1 Epoch

Over a span of past three-and-half decades I have gained experience of career transitions: from employment to business to self-employed professional to sabbatical that was without any organizational support, to job again – across the fields like banking, information technology and education. For some transitions, the trigger was almost conspicuous whereas it got very hard to sense for some others. Some changes were immediate and easy, while some others delayed testing my tolerance. Occasionally it amounted to a shift to another city. Similarly, the outcomes also evinced differing scales of remuneration, maturation and satisfaction. While on one hand this personal experience of career transitions put me in a better position to appreciate the repository of respondents’ accounts and richness of references from the past literature, it had another equally potent problem of getting prejudiced with own encounters. Well, my interpretation

as a researcher has certainly a place, but it is presented in the subsequent section on explication or phenomenological analysis, where I have facilitated bringing out the clusters of relevant meaning that have led to the overarching themes and related contextualization. It goes with the nature of phenomenology as an approach to understand the discrete meanings and essences of an experience¹⁴.

3.2 Bracketing

To bracket out²¹ any subjective points like perception and judgment, I replayed my career transitions before my mental eye with a wealth of particulars like people, positions and places. They have differing shades and sentiments, e.g. an ecstasy I soaked in when I left the bank job to start my own consulting unit, financial freeze during the last lap of my self-declared sabbatical for doctoral studies when I was a self-employed consultant and deep satisfaction at the heart when I entered academics. After a careful and prolonged reflection, I could isolate and discard the curst of personal particulars, as much as possible, to reach to the core meaning and knowledge. Having thus disconnected from priming of all the partiality, I prepared myself to take in my interviewees’ expression in a neutral way.

3.3 Triangulation

With a view to verify the correctness of the narratives, data triangulation³³ has been advanced as one of the opening steps of analysis. This was carried out through various avenues, e.g. print media like weekly ‘Saptahik Sakaal’ giving complete sketch of Kamalesh, publishing house ‘Rohan Prakashan’ for Darpana’s translation work, in-person confirmations for Imran and Omkar from their respective ex-colleagues, website of ‘Dun & Bradstreet’ showing Firoz’s education and experience, URL of the university where Harshada works, etc. It provides sanctity to the transcriptions of interaction with the participants.

3.4 Participants/Interviewees

Having decided upon the phenomenological approach, I started looking for participants fitting the requirement that they have had firsthand experience of whom I could interview. Some of the interviewees in this project have been acquaintances of mine at some point in time. Some others were picked up based on snowball sampling³⁰ where one participant suggests the name of another. Each participant has gone through multiple career

Table 1. Demographics and Career Transition Details of Six Individuals studied

Pseudonym	Gender	Age as on 2013	Career Transitions		Occupations Experienced
			During	Span	
Darpana	Female	41	1996-2013	17 years	Small Business, TV Reporter, Journalism Student, Translator, Immigration Officer
Firoz	Male	62	1982-1995	13 years	Executive Assistant, Forex Dealer, Treasury Risk Manager
Harshada	Female	45	1995-2009	14 year	Finance Executive, MBA Student, Housewife, Business Analyst, Professor
Imran	Male	35	2000-2013	13 years	IT Lab Assistant, Computer Trainer, IT Executive, Business Develop. Manager
Kamalesh	Male	52	1985-2006	21 years	Bank Officer, IT Engineer, Project Manager, CEO, Entrepreneur
Omkar	Male	46	1999-2013	14 years	Computer Trading, Network Consultant, Information Security Consultant

transitions – individual job counts ranging from three to six different occupations – over a sustained period spanning over eleven to twenty-one years. Everyone without any exception holds multiple degrees including post-graduations and few have world class certifications. Age of the respondents ranges between thirty-five to sixty-two years as at the time of this study i.e. 2013. Table 1 provides more details on these professionals like gender, age, etc. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identities.

4. Results

After horizontalization as the starting point, I filtered the narratives looking for the expression of the interviewees depicting their experiences. Their quotes are furnished here without any particular order to highlight a variety of vantage points, preparations for transition and actual transition in the participants’ own words. The textural traits of these statements throw some light on the specific nature of the phenomenon of career transition.

4.1 Interviewee: Darpana

1. This is not a success story. Only positive note I can see is I kept trying.
2. Tried to stick around but I could not. My personal life was also a mess then.
3. And no one was really bothered or interested in my career per se.
4. Did this activity for 4+ years and then I realized I am stuck with whatever orders I have and have no plan to grow.

5. I was told about a scholarship in the UK that was offered by Commonwealth and started preparing for it. Failed two times and got selected the third time.
6. Before leaving to the US, decided to translate books from English to Marathi as I could do this from anywhere.

4.2 Interviewee: Firoz

1. Within a few months I realized that I didn’t want to be a physicist and was then quick to change the gears.
2. I pioneered the foreign exchange dealings for the bank and mentored a few dealers working under me.
3. After a thorough study of the global markets I recognized that to appreciate the real juice of Foreign Exchange treasury it was necessary to get into an open ecosystem.
4. In this dynamic atmosphere I could realize my full potential as a Foreign Exchange dealer.
5. Judicially extrapolating the Indian experience got out of limited playground I experimented with the deals spanning across the national boundaries with substantially larger stakes.
6. It was around this time that India was witnessing the transition into liberalization, privatization and globalization. The opening environment started signalling me as a fertile ground for foreign exchange treasury. Eight years abroad and having crossed the forties, I decided to get back to homeland.
7. Having reached sixty years of age, effective 2011 I decided to taper down time devotion to the company substantially to make a room for other assignments.

4.3 Interviewee: Harshada

1. I spent my childhood initially in Baroda and then at IIT, Bombay campus where my father was professor.
2. In 1997 my husband went to America to join a new software start-up in New York and I experienced a swing to the USA with obviously no job on the cards.
3. Jobless in a developed nation like Americas, I saw an opportunity to further my qualifications and enrolled at Fordham University for MBA in finance and information systems.
4. Another break was in the waiting when in 2001 the family fulfilled two more decisions: One was to return to homeland and the other one to have our second kid. Around this span about three years, I took a complete off to make justice to two daughters and to set up the household.
5. With childhood days spent at IIT, B campus I had seen the academic outfit and experience that culture which had made a mark on my mind. The field of education obviously had been at back of my mind that I decided to get into.
6. Backed with this industrial experience and familiarity of academic life, I finally settled as an assistant professor.

4.4 Interviewee: Imran

1. While using my expertise in programming languages I kept on sharpening telecom and networking and skills.
2. This firsthand conviction and a deep insight of the domain empowered me to take up a couple of training programs for Infosys and the feedback of the trainees was excellent.
3. These training assignments put me in a lime light in this software major that finally got me on board to take care of telecom domain competency development in late 2007.
4. At Infosys, I started spreading my work areas from mere networking & Telecom to the related areas like solution transformation.
5. Working in the teams led by senior consultants, I picked up this new techno-commercial line swiftly within a couple of years and shortly, I became a leading member of the teams.
6. Here also after having worked on a couple of onsite assignments I was assigned an independent charge of a key account.

7. This position [role of business development manager] has taken me up on the corporate ladder, opened new vistas, bringing me to the threshold of the senior management.

4.5 Interviewee: Kamalesh

1. This would obviously invite frequent reprimand from my fuming father and as if to retaliate, I would then pace up the entertainment and trivialize my studies further.
2. My deeply rooted inferiority complex, however, did not allow me to realize the talent I had.
3. Mindful about the weakness in studies I sort of recoiled.
4. The fluent English conversation among students made me further feel low and I started avoiding the fellow students.
5. While I craved to study and interact, my consciousness about language barrier isolated me more and more.
6. The same inferiority complex led me to take up a challenge of improving English.
7. I started reading a lot; spent many sleepless nights. Reading throughout night and then taking a rest during daytime became a routine.
8. I started visualizing himself in CEO's role and as an entrepreneur.
9. I realized that my leadership style was more of mentoring.

4.6 Interviewee: Omkar

1. I relished the challenge of interconnecting a set of heterogeneous computers that were found hard to network by other professionals.
2. Around this time many players were tempted and prompted to resort to wrong practices like unfair accounting, tax evasion, etc. but I determined to keep off.
3. I marked that if I were to create a unique niche I need to invest substantially in the experimentation with various networking devices.
4. I tapered down my involvement in routine business by resorting to heavy delegation to two managers and devoted this time slice to complete CCNA program of CISCO in 2011.
5. So much was the appeal of this program that I went ahead to take this world class exam to successfully become CISA in 2009.

6. This friend helped me study and acquire CISSP in 2012 with a result I acquired the poise of a professional with an ability and assurance to stand out in the crowd with my distinct skill-set.
7. The inner zest for an upcoming profession of network security consultant was complemented with this offer to buy out the computer maintenance business; I was quick at this decision and got rid of the erstwhile business.

These textural attributes help us appreciate the specific nature of the phenomenon of multiple career transitions sustained over a decade.

5. Discussion

At the start all the quotes of the respondents were given equal opportunity to exhibit their hidden significance, if any, having a bearing on the topic of study. On a second perusal it was clear that all these statements were not candidates with rich contents and context. I then sifted through to arrive at some statements as the horizons or textural meanings. After a vigilant and repeated assessment the selected statements were clustered under seven themes, viz. self-awareness, determination, and investment of time, sensing the opportunity, planning, preparation and reaping the rewards. Table 2 shows mapping of these themes and the relevant statements of interviewees through which the themes emerged.

This table also highlights the perceived paradigm of respondents in terms of antecedents, the process of transition proper and after effects of the transitions they underwent.

5.1 Paradigm of Sustained Transitions

I now take ahead the themes that initially show their individual contribution to appreciating different facets of career transition as under. Subsequently, these themes gradually crystallize together giving a cohesive textual and structural description of the overall phenomenon.

5.1.1 Self-awareness

Duval and Wicklund¹⁰ observe that Self-focus increases self-attribution. This trait is evinced by respondents, e.g. Kamallesh is aware that his 'leadership style is more of mentoring', Darpana clarifies that hers is 'not a success story, but positive note is that I kept trying' and Firoz rem-

inisces, 'Within a few months I realized that I didn't want to be a physicist and was then quick to change the gears'.

5.1.2 Determination

Motivated actions are, to a certain extent, self-determined⁷. This trait – combined with the earlier one of self-awareness facilitates a successful transition, as shown by various quotes of interviewees, viz. Omkar asserting that 'many players were tempted and prompted to resort to wrong practices like unfair accounting, tax evasion, etc. but I determined to keep off', Kamallesh states, 'The same inferiority complex led me to take up a challenge of improving English', Harshada recalls, 'With childhood days spent at IIT campus I had seen the academic outfit and experienced that culture. Field of education obviously had been at back of my mind that I decided to get into'.

5.1.3 Investment of Time

Interviewees have heavily invested their time, e.g. Imran recounts, 'While using my expertise in programming languages I kept on sharpening telecom and networking and skills', Darpana remembers that she was told about a scholarship in the UK that was offered by Commonwealth and started preparing for it, Omkar 'went ahead to take this world class exam to successfully become CISA in 2009; and CISSP in 2012'.

5.1.4 Sensing the Opportunity

Respondents were apt at detecting and discerning the career break that came their way. Darpana sensed it ('Before leaving to the US, decided to translate books from English to Marathi as I could do this from anywhere'), so did Firoz ('After a thorough study of the global markets I recognized that to appreciate the real juice of foreign exchange treasury it was necessary to get into an open ecosystem') and also Harshada ('Jobless in a developed nation like Americas, I saw an opportunity to further my qualifications and enrolled at Fordham university for MBA in finance and information systems') and Imran ('At Infosys, I started spreading my work areas from mere networking & Telecom to the related areas like solution transformation').

5.1.5 Planning

Even at the level of students, good planners are significantly more certain they have made the right decision, more comfortable with the process, more satisfied with the information

Table 2. Themes emerging out of Statements of Interviewees

Theme	Interviewees' statements revealing the theme embedded within
Self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I realized that my leadership style was more of mentoring. • This is not a success story. Only positive note I can see is I kept trying. • My deeply rooted inferiority complex, however, did not allow me to realize the talent I had. • Within a few months I realized that I didn't want to be a physicist and was then quick to change the gears. • Around this time many players were tempted and prompted to resort to wrong practices like unfair accounting, tax evasion, etc. but I determined to keep off.
Determination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same inferiority complex led me to take up challenge of improving English. • This would obviously invite frequent reprimand from my fuming father and as if to retaliate, I would then pace up the entertainment and trivialize my studies further. • With childhood days spent at IIT campus I had seen the academic outfit and experienced that culture. Field of education obviously had been at back of my mind that I decided to get into.
Investment of Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I started reading a lot; spent many sleepless nights. Reading throughout night and then taking a rest during daytime became a routine. • While using my expertise in programming languages I kept on sharpening telecom and networking and skills. • So much was the appeal that I went ahead to take this world class exam to successfully become CISA in 2009; and CISSP in 2012. • I was told about a scholarship in the UK that was offered by Commonwealth and started preparing for it. Failed two times and got selected the third time.
Sensing the opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before leaving to the US, decided to translate books from English to Marathi as I could do this from anywhere. • After a thorough study of the global markets I recognized that to appreciate the real juice of foreign exchange treasury it was necessary to get into an open ecosystem. • At Infosys, I started spreading my work areas from mere networking & Telecom to the related areas like solution transformation. • It was around this time that India was witnessing the transition into liberalization, privatization and globalization. The opening environment started signaling me as a fertile ground for foreign exchange treasury. Eight years abroad and having crossed the forties, I decided to get back to homeland. • Jobless in a developed nation like Americas, I saw an opportunity to further my qualifications and enrolled at Fordham University for MBA in finance and information systems.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I marked that if I were to create a unique niche I need to invest substantially in the experimentation with various networking devices. • An interesting opportunity came calling when I was invited by Ghana to set up their national banking college (NBC) on the similar lines of NIBM in India.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group I was working for supported my idea and Nitor Infotech Pvt Ltd emerged out of this association. • I was told about a scholarship in the UK offered by Commonwealth and started preparing for it. • Working in the teams led by senior consultants, I picked up this new techno-commercial line swiftly within a couple of years. • My pro-activeness, positive attitude and sharp focus on contribution put me on fast track. • Judicially extrapolating the Indian experience got out of limited playground I experimented the deals spanning across the national boundaries with substantially larger stakes.
Reaping the Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I pioneered the foreign exchange dealings for the bank and mentored a few dealers working there under me. • This position [role of business development manager] took me up the corporate ladder, opened new vistas, bringing me to threshold of the senior management. • Having reached sixty years of age, effective 2011 I decided to taper down time devotion to the company substantially to make a room for other assignments. • The inner zest for an upcoming profession of network security consultant was complemented with this offer to buy out the computer maintenance business; I was quick at this decision and got rid of the erstwhile business. • Backed with this industrial experience and familiarity of academic life, I finally settled as an assistant professor. • In this dynamic atmosphere I could realize my full potential as a foreign exchange dealer.

they have gathered, more likely to consider future consequences of their decision, and more likely to make their decision based on their overall values or principles¹³. These views are endorsed by various expressions of different respondents, e.g. Omkar ('I marked that if I were to create a unique niche I need to invest substantially in the experimentation with various networking devices') and Darpana ('I was told about a scholarship in the UK offered by Commonwealth and started preparing for it') all vouch for the well-conceived plans each of them individually charted out.

5.1.6 Preparation

Preparation is intimately linked with adaptability²⁸ and is observed to be followed by interviewees as can be seen from their assertions 'Working in the teams led by senior consultants, I picked up this new techno-commercial line swiftly within a couple of years' by Imran, 'My pro-activeness, positive attitude and sharp focus on contribution put me on fast track' by Kamallesh and 'Judicially extrapolating the Indian experience got out of limited playground I experimented the deals spanning across the national boundaries with substantially larger stakes' by Firoz underline the importance of preparation in ensuring the successful transition.

5.1.7 Reaping the Rewards

Respondents ascertained that they get satisfying payoff on their career manoeuvring and that is exemplified with quotes like 'This position [role of business development manager] took me up the corporate ladder, opened new vistas, bringing me to threshold of the senior management' by Imran, 'Having reached sixty years of age, effective 2011 I decided to taper down time devotion to the company substantially to make a room for other assignments' by Firoz, 'The inner zest for an upcoming profession of network security consultant was complemented with this offer to buy out the computer maintenance business; I was quick at this decision and got rid of the erstwhile business' by Omkar and 'Backed with this industrial experience and familiarity of academic life, I finally settled as an assistant professor' by Harshada.

6. Limitations of This Study and Future Research

All the participating interviewees in this project are from one and the same nation. They show heterogeneity in

terms of gender, age ranging between thirties to sixties, occupations as diverse as journalist, executive, student, businessman and consultant, and periods of transitions stretching between eleven to twenty-one years, but their nationality and environment remains the same, viz. India. This fact prompts for a subsequent replication exercise to ascertain the analytic generalization at a still larger scale.

6.1 Practical Implications

In the current era where the career transition has become more of a rule than an exception, the cases presented here will serve as a guiding light to two segments of the society. First is the working class whose members do shift from one job to another. During that liminal stage of actual shift the dry and drab figures, ratios and probabilities are hardly of any help as compared to the rich accounts of the lived experience of the people who have undergone similar transitions. While the quantitative research establishes some point, this qualitative research empathizes the reader by depicting a vivid picture of the perceived phenomenon. Secondly, the practicing human resources managers will also find this study interesting and engaging due to the insights gathered from essence of experience emerging from the textural and structural descriptions that have been in turn derived from the narratives of the interviewees.

7. Conclusion

In the final steps, I took ahead the thematic analysis and looked and re-looked at it, changing my standpoint each time. It continued till I could explore two facets of the respondents' experiences, viz. "What" and "How" clearly demonstrating the textural and structural descriptions.

The textural descriptions of the account given by the respondents categorically point to "what" they experienced. These descriptions come in tandem. The first part was a simplistic realization, e.g. 'I realized that my leadership style was more of mentoring', 'My deeply rooted inferiority complex, however, did not allow me to realize the talent I had', 'Within a few months I realized that I didn't want to be a physicist and was then quick to change the gears'. This was an impetus triggering the action. The second spell of experience came at a later stage of fruition after their plans and perspirations paid a rich dividend, as narrated by them e.g. 'This position *took me up the corpo-*

rate ladder, opened new vistas, bringing me to *threshold of the senior management*, 'Having reached sixty years of age, effective 2011, I *decided to taper down time devotion* to the company substantially to *make a room for other assignments*,' 'The inner zest for an upcoming profession of network security consultant was complemented with this offer to buy out the computer maintenance business; I was quick at this decision and *got rid of the erstwhile business*,' 'Backed with this industrial experience and familiarity of academic life, I *finally settled as professor*,' etc.

Structural descriptions delve essentially into the overarching ecosystem within which the interviewees underwent the career transitions providing a context for "How". Such surrounding factors of long drawn multiple transitions are marked by their statements like '*... my personal life was also a mess then...*,' '*... my husband went to America to join a new software start-up in New York and I experienced a swing to the USA with obviously no job on the cards...*,' '*...many players were tempted and prompted to resort to wrong practices like unfair accounting, tax evasion...*,' '*... so much was the appeal of this program that I went ahead to take this world class exam ...*,' '*... these training assignments put me in a lime light...*,' '*...after a thorough study of the global markets I recognized ... it was necessary to get into an open ecosystem...*,' '*...opening of environment started signaling me as a fertile ground for foreign exchange treasury ...*'. These structural descriptions serve as signposts of juxtaposition of inner and outer worlds of interviewees giving an insight "how" they perceived the career transitions.

7.1 Essence of Experience

In the end, textural description and structural description that revolved around 'what' and 'how' of experience respectively³⁷ are converged together. This ultimate articulation piece of composite description resulted in an illumination about transition as follows. These experiences are viewed from two vantage points; the first one is time and the second one is various entities involved. The timeline could be imaginatively varied around the 'now' yielding three tenses viz. the past for antecedents, the present for transition process and the future for effects. Second aspect of all the entities comprises all the parties connected with the transition. Taken together, it is deduced that behind sustained career transitions is a set of eclectic factors of self-awareness, determination, investment of time, sensing the opportunity, planning, preparation and reaping the rewards. Self-awareness is the starting point for appreci-

ating one's own strength and weaknesses. Determination is then the torque that helps take out time and other resources to invest for future. Continuous monitoring of the opportunities and threats shown on the radar is an incessant task. Well-conceived plan and painstaking preparation are equally important. Timing and intensity of these factors are tuned commensurate with demands of the ecosystem. These interdependent factors are thus maneuvered in an interwoven and iterative manner to sustain the consecutive career transitions.

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