

Exploration of career planning activities and short-term retentions of junior scientists

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Conditions, paths and risks of scientific careers are increasingly in the spotlight of science policy and public attention. In particular, the development of the number of vacant professorships in relation to the number of junior scientists heightens the risks of scientific careers. In the period from 2005 to 2014, the number of German professorships raised from approx. 38.000 to approx. 45.000, i.e. by 18 percent. In the same period, the number of research associates increased by 38 percent (up to approx. 178.000) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015). It can be noted that there is no structural enhancement of target positions in academia corresponding to the expansion of qualification trajectories and junior scientists. This leads to limited perspectives of long-term retentions in the academic system. Studies on career aspirations of junior scientists (e.g. Briedis et al. 2014) revealed a shift of career objectives towards options outside of the scientific field. This applies in particular for doctoral candidates. Furthermore, long-term observations indicate that a large part of junior scientists move to non-research related working fields within five to ten years after obtaining the doctorate (e.g. Enders & Kottmann 2009). Due to differences in qualification requirements in the diverse fields of work, there is a need of career planning. Although there is no uniform definition of "career planning", it may be thought of as active and strategic efforts to achieve individual professional goals (Presbitero 2015). Remarkably, there is only little research on how scientific careers are actively and strategically planned. The present research aims to fill this gap by investigating active career planning of junior scientists at the Freie Universität Berlin. With a longitudinal design, it shall be examined to what extent careers are actively planned and which types of career planning activities are practiced. Based on the Social Cognitive Career Theory by Lent et al. (1994), relationships among psychological constructs (e.g. self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations regarding career planning), career decision making and contextual influences shall be considered. The study includes online surveys at two times of measurement with different waves. The first survey started in June 2016, another one is planned for the summer term of 2018. For further information concerning the short-term retentions of the respondents, there are follow-up surveys planned. The statistical population includes all research associates at the Freie Universität Berlin (n = 2.060; wave 1 in June 2016). Depending on the data quality, structural equation modelling is planned to analyze relationships between the examined constructs and to explain the relationships' impacts on active career planning. Due to the recent start of the study, the poster will focus on the theoretical framework, questions derived as well as the design and potential of the present study.

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