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## **Exploring the Kaleidoscope Career Model in Austerity**

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## **Exploring the Kaleidoscope Career Model in Austerity**

## **ABSTRACT**

The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) has been proposed as a metaphor from which to view careers (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). The model has three parameters: authenticity, balance and challenge. Although it is now a decade old, the model remains highly relevant, and this paper uses it as its framework to examine findings from a qualitative study that analyses the thoughts of thirty-three Hellenic civil servants in order to explore the career needs of the participants in the context of austerity. Findings show that austerity frames and shapes career perceptions, with the context depressing the ambition and expectation of participants. These findings contradict the results of previous KCM studies. We therefore argue that the KCM has limitations and we show how the model can be modified to take account of these new findings whilst remaining true to its traditional purpose.

**Keywords:** Careers, kaleidoscope career model, austerity, Hellenic public sector

## **Exploring the Kaleidoscope Career Model in Austerity**

Over a decade ago, Mainiero and Sullivan (2006) developed the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) which describes an individual's needs for authenticity, balance and challenge. It argues that people build their careers based on these three specific needs. In the intervening years, the model has been extensively researched in a range of contexts, and results have consistently validated the KCM concept and its three parameters. However, to our knowledge the model has not been examined in the context of austerity and this is one of the main aims of the present research.

This paper reports on findings of a social constructionist study, which sought to contribute to research into the KCM. It begins with a brief overview of the KCM itself. This leads into an exploration of the context of this study – the Hellenic public sector – and the importance of acknowledging contextual influences in career perceptions and research is emphasised. The nature of the present study is then outlined, together with details of the chosen methodology and data processes. The results contradict previous KCM studies, because the three 'traditional' constructs of authenticity, balance, and challenge are less relevant in the specific context of austerity. Rather more important are lower-order basic needs (Maslow, 1954). The findings of this study are then integrated into existing theory, and the paper ends by outlining the limitations of the research and identifying key conclusions.

## **THE CONTEXT**

This study investigates the relevance of the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) in the context of austerity. It therefore emphasises the importance of context in understanding career choices, because careers exist in a context and not in a vacuum (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), and

refer to actors' work-related experiences, within-and-outside the organisation that form a pattern over one's lifetime (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Context refers to the external structures and events that create opportunities and difficulties in the way individuals experience their careers (Thomas & Inkson, 2007). One contextual factor which impacts on individuals' career perceptions is the economy and the labour market. A key example is the current financial crisis affecting many European countries. For instance, in Greece, the labour market has stagnated due to pay cuts, severe unemployment, and the threat of the removal of public sector permanency (Bitsika, 2014; Kakouris, 2013). Scholars (Sotirakou & Zeppou, 2006) argue that the Hellenic Public sector is a bureaucratic, inflexible and inefficient system that needs urgent and radical change in order to remain competitive. Furthermore, it is controversial sector within Greece, because it guarantees full-time employment through the constitution, and yet during the financial crisis, people have been dismissed despite this assurance (Bitsika, 2014; Tsitsas, 2014). There is some evidence that political parties influence the way careers are managed in the Greek civil service, via the appointment of directors who discriminate against employees of a different political ideology, via promotions which are based on political manifestations, and via clientelism (i.e. political favours conferred by politically powerful individuals in exchange for votes) (Bourantas & Papalexandris 1999; Spanou, 1999). In spite of this, the provision of a generous pension, benefits, complete job security, and pay increases that are not based on performance means that public sector jobs are highly sought after within Greece (OECD, 2001). This is exacerbated by the country's high unemployment rate, and the low wages offered in the private sector in comparison to other EU member states (Koskina, 2008).

## **THE KALEIDOSCOPE CAREER MODEL**

The KCM is a well-respected, context-sensitive career model. It suggests that there is a universality of career needs: authenticity, balance, and challenge. Authenticity is about being genuine to one's own values. It is, therefore, a person's need to find resemblance between work and his/her personal values. Balance is the 'holy grail of life', combining personal life with work. Essentially, career actors try to balance their lives, either opting out of the workforce or adjusting their careers to fit their personal life. Challenge is about developing, learning, finding stimulating work, and so forth. Challenge is the reason, other than money, that individuals work, and is part of an individual's intrinsic motivation. Together, these three needs form a set of parameters individuals consider when making vital career decisions (August, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). Although a comparatively new theory, the KCM has attracted considerable attention – so much so that it is already considered to be a 'standard' model. In addition, prescriptions and concepts are different in different parts of the world due to contextual influences, and hence it is necessary to fully explore these in order to propose the indigenisation of the concepts (Baruch & Vardi, 2016; Berkema, Chen, George, Luo & Tsui, 2015; Leung, 2008). This is important because research should aim to reconceptualise and build models to enhance knowledge (Sullivan, 1999; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), and it is therefore vital to add to the debate the experiences of careers within particular national contexts (Berkema et al, 2015; Counsell 1999; Leung 2008). It is, therefore, an appropriate choice to underpin the present study (Elley-Brown, Pringle & Harris, 2015; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007a; 2007b; 2008; Woodhams, Xian & Lupton, 2015).

It has been argued that there is a universality of needs common to all humankind across time and space, and that these are hierarchically divided, organically programmed, tendencies (e.g. Maslow, 1943; Sandole 1990). This hierarchy has been present since antiquity; for

instance, Plato argued that the first and greatest need is the provision of food to support existence and life, the second need is the arrangement of a home, the third is a need for clothing, and so on (Plato, 1975). The most well-known authors in the field of needs are Maslow (1943; 1954) and Herzberg, Snyderman & Mausner (1959), who investigated the motivation of individuals in organisations. Maslow's (1943) theory initially had little impact, but gradually it started to become influential in psychological research (e.g. Bernstein & Crosby, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 2000). In recent decades, it has spread to other disciplines such as sociology (e.g. Doyal & Gough, 1984). Gillwald (1990) and Cherrington (1991) argue that needs are 'deficiencies' that people need to rectify, and are therefore important driving forces. This supports the KCM argument, which claims that three specific needs guide the career enactment of individuals (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006). Indeed, the needs within the KCM are located at the top of Maslow's (1954) needs hierarchy.

In spite of Maslow's ubiquity, however, several criticisms have been raised. It has been suggested that the hierarchy of needs is too inflexible, the ordering of the levels is rather arbitrary and that some of the concepts are rather ambiguous (Harrison, Young, Butow, & Solomon, 2013; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013; King-Hill, 2015). Nonetheless, Maslow's work is still relevant today, and is studied across the globe in a wide range of contexts (David & Tobin, 2016; Joyce & Lynch, 2015; Souitaris, 2001). Therefore, we have adopted it as an appropriate lens through which to interpret the findings of this study.

## **THE RESEARCH STUDY**

This study responds to the call by Sullivan and Baruch (2009) for more research into the KCM. One research aim was to ascertain if a qualitative study might further contribute to the



content of the KCM, but an additional aim was to explore the objective and subjective aspects of careers, where the notion of career is an interaction between the individual and society through which the individual travels through time (Burr, 2003).

## **Method**

It has been argued that the career domain is ripe for a social constructionist approach (Blustein, Schultheiss & Flum, 2004). Consequently, we adopted this approach for the present study. A total of 33 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with full-time public sector employees working in two of the largest public insurance companies in Greece. These included 10 men and 23 women from different educational backgrounds and who undertake a range of different roles. Furthermore, because research to date has focused on the career perceptions of professionals and higher-level managers (Baruch, Wordsworth, Mills & Wright, 2016), we chose to follow the suggestions of Baruch et al (2016), who argue that research should explore the career perceptions of non-professionals, in order to advance career theory and to bring forward voices inaccessible to the wider audience, such as the Hellenic public sector (Koskina, 2008). In addition, career theory is in need of further research into white-collar workers (King, 2000; Walton & Mallon, 2004). Given the paucity of accounts of Hellenic civil servants' career experiences, especially within austerity, and the call of scholars who argue for empirical examination of the KCM, this paper adds to knowledge by examining the relevance of the KCM within the under researched context of austerity (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Further demographics of the sample are presented below in the table.

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Insert Table 1 about here  
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All participants entered the sector pre-crisis, since recent appointments in the sector are rare, due to austerity. Participants were recruited via purposive and snowball sampling. A sample of 33 may, perhaps, be considered to be a small sample, but this misses the point of qualitative research which purpose is to obtain a rich explanation of a particular phenomenon and not to generalise (Creswell, 2012). Hence, what actually matters is not sample size but theoretical saturation (Patton, 2002). In the present study, saturation occurred after 33 interviews, at which point as new data were processed, they merely repeated what had already been said by others, and this added nothing to what was already known about the category (Miller & Fredericks, 1999).

As the interviews progressed, the nature of some of the questions changed, because people in one interview frequently raised important issues that were necessary to explore further in subsequent sessions. The first question was general and focused on understanding participants' career paths up to that point. This was exactly the same approach that was taken when the original version of the KCM was being developed (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), and it was therefore logical for the present study to begin in the same way. As the interviews progressed, the questions that were arising from the data were supplemented by questions that emanated from the career literature. Typical examples were questions such as *“how do you understand the notion of career?”* (Walton & Mallon, 2004). This was important, because the way in which people understand their career may differ due to their contextual and situational circumstances. These ‘general’ career-literature questions then led into more ‘specific’ KCM-literature-inspired questions, such as: *“what motivates you in your career?”*, *“how do you understand the notion of work-life balance?”*, *“how do you understand challenge at work?”*, and *“what is your dream job?”* (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007b), and so

forth in order to examine the relevance of the KCM to participants. In this way, the questions were informed by theory and by the emerging interview data, and the study therefore possessed relevance to both (Shaw, 2003). Interviews ranged in length from 35-45 minutes were audio-recorded and the tapes transcribed.

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2006), which describe the process of data analysis through different phases, starting with familiarising oneself with the data through transcribing, reading and rereading and then moving on to generating initial codes, searching for themes and so forth .

Some themes emerged from the data, and others arose from the literature. This impacted directly upon the research questions themselves. The first research question explored the relevance of the KCM, and the literature formed the basis of the analysis. However, research question two explored the individual career needs of the participants, and this could only come from the participants themselves: it emerged from the data. Question three brought everything together to extend the model, and because this flowed from the emergent question two, it is itself emergent. The results are outlined below, together with illustrative quotes from participants to display themes relating the analysis to the research questions (Braun & Clarke 2006).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section describes the representation of authenticity, balance, and challenge (ABC). Quotations from participants are included throughout to illustrate key points.

### **How relevant is ABC?**

#### ***Authenticity***

Authenticity means being true to one's values. As a career need, authenticity may take many forms, but the key idea is to be genuine to one's own needs rather than the needs of the others (August, 2011). In other words, the focal point is the self when making decisions rather than the surrounding context (August, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis & Joseph 2008). Participants, when describing authenticity concerns in regards to their career, considered themselves to be attached to others such as their immediate family. Their career was detached from themselves, as it was seen as a role or a means to an end, which did not provide them meaning and purpose in life. Neither was their job seen as a dream job, something which the authentic careerist would pursue according to the KCM (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer & Platt, 1969; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). This is illustrated by Giannis, male front line employee:

*“No, no, definitely that's another phase [in life], something different. Another thing is meaning in life and another is work; for sure it's outside working hours, that's where I find the meaning, after 3 pm, that's where the real life is, this is just a part or role....”*

For Giannis, meaning in life came outside working hours – his job is merely a role that he fulfils in order to make a living. Scholars argue (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2007; Wrzesniewski McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997) that when people classify their work as a “job,” the focus is on financial rewards and necessity rather than self-fulfilment or pleasure. In this case, participants viewed work as a matter of survival and a role one plays. Therefore, it does not create meaning in life and supports Maslow's (1954) hierarchy, which argues that when higher needs develop, money is no longer the most important issue. Similarly, for Koula, female senior manager, meaning in life and career are not linked, because for her meaning in life comes

from her family. Hence, in this context, authenticity in the sense of finding meaning and purpose in life through one's career was not relevant – it was to be found outside work. Christina, female front line employee, also argued about the absence of authenticity in her career:

*“I believe that I could do more interesting and important things, but it's my choice to stay here. I don't blame anyone else. I mean, I can't, since I cannot leave the job that I have and do something else, which might be more interesting and fulfilling, since there are no jobs, there is unemployment.”*

For Christina, purpose and meaning in life were not to be found in the civil service; she was aware of it but had decided to stay there as context restrained her. Hence, authenticity in KCM terms of finding alignment with what one desires career-wise and what work demands of her/him is not apparent. Rather, living in austerity does not allow people to self-actualise, as the lower-level needs such as employment stability are not satisfied (Maslow, 1943).

Participants stated that they chose a public sector career due to its permanency. Hence, in this case, the safety need guided them, rather than the need to be authentic (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Maslow, 1943). This was illustrated by Theodor, male front line employee, who explained why he joined the civil service.

*“I wanted to become a teacher, but I did not manage. I took the exams twice but failed and gave up, so I turned to the private sector and then to the public sector.”*

Theodor wanted “to secure my future”, as this would mean a safe and stable paycheck and employment. Interestingly, Theodor was “sad” when he joined the public sector. He explained:

*“Because I already had a job but I took it as an opportunity to secure my future...as things have turned out, it was better that I came here [public sector]...”*

Theodor felt that he had made a wise choice to accept the position in the public sector, as it helped him secure his future. Consequently, he did not accept a career based on his dream, but rather he acted upon his uncertainty avoidance (Goldthorpe et al., 1969; Hofstede, 1980). Indeed, although participants acknowledged their dreams, they continued with their civil service positions, hoping to hold on to their salary and the permanency which is slowly fading away. This supports other research conducted in Greece, which has suggested that public sector employees regard job security as very important, and choose this type of career because of the security it provides them (Hofstede, 1980; Patiniotis & Stavroulakis, 1997). Indeed, the need to feel secure and achieve work-life balance is the major selling point when it comes to working for the government (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Maslow, 1943).

### ***Balance***

The KCM states people choose careers and/or find strategies to balance their lives. In the Hellenic public sector, working hours are more or less stable (typically from 7am-3pm), and overtime is rarely an issue, thus making it an ideal working place for many. According to participants who had previously worked in the private sector, they chose the public sector certainly for the safety element but also for the need to balance their lives. Zaharias, male front line employee, explained it thus:

*“Yes, quality of life, I mean more free time, and that was a decisive part as well when choosing the public sector... In the bank, where I was working previously, I worked over 10 hours a day, I had no spare time...”*

For Zaharias, the public sector not only provided him with safety, but also with “*quality of life*”, giving him plenty of time to pursue leisure activities and be with family. In other words, there was a conflict between working life and personal life, which was why Zaharias chose to seek work in the public sector, as it provided “*more free time*”. When role conflicts between these two different life spheres are minimal and one is satisfied, the situation is known as having a good work-life balance (Clark, 2000). Iliana, female front line employee, also discussed these issues:

*“I don’t have long working hours. One of the reasons I chose the public sector is that I am not a careerist, I need to have a life. However, nowadays I think that even if they made the working hours longer, no one would say ‘I quit’.”*

From Iliana’s perspective, the need to preserve one’s job is more important than achieving work-life balance. For those *in* the public sector, balance is not a major issue, but it was a motivator *when choosing* the public sector, especially for those who had previously worked in the private sector. Toula, female front line employee, stated:

*“...when searching for a career when I was unemployed, I did not think about it [work life balance] ... I wanted a job with safety.”*

For Toula, the criterion for entering the public sector was its job security. Work-life balance was less important for her; she focused primarily on making sure her family and herself

had their physiological and safety needs covered (Maslow, 1954). Petros, male front line employee, also felt that he had found a work-life balance in the public sector:

*“Yes, I have plenty of free time and it was a factor for changing career to the public sector. The private sector, was stressful...”*

Several authors (for instance Joplin , Shaffer, Francesco & Law, 2003; Spector, Cooper , Poelmans, Allen, O’Driscoll & Sanchez, 2004) argue that cross-cultural studies of work life balance need to pose a basic question of how generalisable the traditional US models are in different contexts, because the meaning of work, career and family differs across countries and cultures. Hence, contextual differences are to be expected (Joplin et al, 2003). In the Hellenic society, people from birth onwards are incorporated into a group consisting of an extended family including grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. This group protects its members in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995), and therefore work-life balance might be less important in one’s career, because careers may not be ‘violated’ by one’s family (Glaveli, Karassavidou,& Zafiropoulos, 2013). Nonetheless, in Greece, private- sector careers are more demanding than those in the public sector because the work-life balance of the civil servants is protected by a legal framework (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011a). Hence, it is logical for individuals to desire employment in the civil service (Demoussis & Giannakopoulos, 2007).

### ***Challenge***

For the KCM, the reason why people choose their work, except for money, is to learn and grow in one’s career and find stimulating work (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). In all cases, participants in the present study had a clear understanding of what challenge at work means,



however they worked to survive. They did not see any challenge in their work, as Iliana, female front line employee, illustrated:

*“No, it is a daily routine especially where I am positioned...”*

For Iliana, a challenge means learning and developing, but her work is a routine and tedious job dealing with papers, where challenges are absent. Similarly, Petros, male front line employee, bemoaned the lack of challenge at work:

*“We don’t have targets to work toward; we just go there and wait for someone to come in. Targets are needed in order to provide motivation and challenges....”*

In terms of the literature, participants considered their careers as being content plateaued. Work was characterised by repetitive tasks and lacking challenge (Bardwick, 1986). Litsa, female front line employee, only worked *“to be financially ...compensated...”* Similarly, Gianna, female front line employee, said that the reason she works is *“to support myself and my family.”* Hence, there was no evidence of challenging work being a motivator. Rather, people worked in order to be financially secure.

Hermione, female senior manager, supported this view but also felt that her contribution to society was important. This pro-social behaviour is very typical of public sector employees (Perry & Wise, 1990), and it was found in all participants. Intrinsic factors, such as helping others, are an important part of a public sector career, but it should be stressed that participants initially chose the sector due to its safety, money and good working conditions and secondly due to their need to contribute (Lewis & Frank, 2002; Perry & Wise, 1990).

Human needs and motivation differ according to the circumstances people face, their age, and their expectations (Schein, 1980). For instance, a key survey on employee motivation was conducted in 1946 (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), and among the ten motivating factors, salary was placed in fifth position. However, in 1992 when the survey was repeated, salary was found to be the main motivator. Wiley (1997) argues that this change was a result of the numerous mergers and downsizings during the 90's. In such times basic needs may be the most important motivators (Maslow, 1954). Similarly, in Japan and Greece, money was found to be a vitally important career motivator (Sarri & Trihopoulou, 2005).

For the KCM people choose their work, with the exception of money, due to the need to develop and grow in their profession. However, research in Greece has shown that people are motivated mainly by job security. Career growth, although desirable, is related to whom one knows, referring to clientelism and networking (Bozionelos, 2014). In the Hellenic context, the most valuable career motivators were pay, job security and transparency in promotions both in the private and public sector (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011b; Manolopoulos, 2006;2008).

### **The career needs of the Hellenic civil servants**

Participants cited three career needs as being important to them; namely safety, fairness and training. Hence, the career needs deemed important by participants were different from those in the KCM. Rather, they were focused on survival – the basic human needs located in the lower part of the needs hierarchy (Maslow, 1954).

#### ***The need for safety***

More specifically, participants talked about the need for safety in terms of employment safety, meaning being able to have stable secure work, due to the threat of redundancy, and they

provided examples of people who had been dismissed during austerity. Maria, female front line employee, illustrates her safety worries:

*“One day they say this; the other day they vote that. You don’t know what to do, what is going on, will they cut my salary again? What is happening is stressful, and of course you think different things...nowadays you don’t know – you might ...get fired.”*

Maria felt that her worries, and the insecurity she experiences in her daily life, were caused by the recession. The crisis has blurred employment stability, and put stress on the employees. Iliana, female front line employee, also mentioned her concerns about being transferred:

*“Now I feel insecure with everything that happens... The unionists say do not worry, but the uncertainty is general and strong...”*

Employment safety and security are major needs and are key reasons for working. Maslow (1954), used safety and security interchangeably, and argued that in the working arena the notion of employment safety takes the form of a job with tenure and protection .Likewise Super (1957) and Herzberg et al. (1959) also considered employment safety as the main reason for working, and contended that workers need to be safe at work, and hence need the assurance of continued employment within the company. Similarly, Pfeffer (1995) regarded job security as the ‘number one’ HRM practice, arguing that it is unreasonable to ask individuals to commit to the organisation without providing them with basic security, which entails a salary, in order to cover other needs (Maslow, 1954).

The belief and the need to maintain a secure job contributes to our personal development through learning tasks and socializing, helping us in satisfying basic needs. Hence, it is an important aspect of our lives (Maslow, 1943). The threat of unemployment hinders the fulfillment of the needs and the potential loss of important monetary resources (De Witte, 1999). Indeed, the antecedents of job insecurity are related to the country, to national unemployment rates, and to labour market conditions (Linz & Semykina 2008; Nätti , Happonen , Kinnunen, & Mauno, 2005).

In addition, perceptions of job insecurity are subjective and reflect an individual's position in the labour market (Näswall & De Witte, 2003). The evidence from our study suggests that insecurity was indeed a reflection of the impact of austerity and that people take into consideration changes in labour market conditions when assessing their career needs and their chances of unemployment (King, 2000). Therefore, the need for security at work reflects the current financial and social context of Greece. Hence, there is a conflict between the level of security people once had and the situation they are experiencing now (Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans, & van Vuuren, 1991). Participants told stories about individuals who had lost their jobs due to the removal of their statutory positions, and feared for their own jobs. There was a perception that whoever loses his/her job will never find a new one because outside the public sector the market is "dead" (Chrysoloras 2013; Smith, 2013). The need to feel safe at work does not form part of the KCM, perhaps because the model was developed in a context of prosperity before the financial crisis of 2008. Hence, the findings of this study contradict the KCM.

### ***The need for training***

Participants felt that they had not received enough training from their employer to help them in their work. They received training in the form of on-the-job sessions. This training could

be flawed if the person, usually the colleague, did not comprehend the working object well enough. Furthermore, they argued about the lack of training in the form of seminars, due to the absence of public funds. Chrysa G., female front line employee, illustrated how most participants learn:

*“We learn the wrong way, we learn by ourselves, we are looking for the answer, either by reading in order to be updated, or by someone who has been in the object longer... So, for instance, if your colleague got it wrong in the beginning, he/she will give you the wrong information and the fault will continue. We need education. This is a huge problem, as we don’t go to seminars to learn and this is problematic ...”*

Austerity has led to cuts in public spending, and training has been badly affected. Hermione, female senior manager, discussed the absence of training from the point of view of a manager:

*“If you want to go on anything you have to pay it on your own and seek for it on your own, the headquarters have a very limited budget for that. For instance, the staff asked for IT training, but there were no seminars running from us (the organization) so I told them to fund them on their own... ”*

Hermione argues about the absence of training due to the lack of funds which unfortunately brings disappointment to her staff and to herself. Moreover, the absence of training made Zaharias, male front line employee, feel “*exposed and inadequate*” when dealing with the public since he cannot not advise correctly, as he lacks training. The importance of training and education has long been recognised (e.g Marescaux, De Winne & Sels, 2012; Pfeffer, 1995).

Training is closely linked to education (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009), which itself is a basic human need aimed at helping the individual reach self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954; Noor, 1981). From a HR perspective training provides employees with fundamental knowledge, and enhances their capacity to change, their willingness to accept new ideas, leading to improved work quality (Romanowska, 1993). In addition training helps employees reach their full potential (Pfeffer, 1995). Failure to do this can result in poorer performance, decrease job satisfaction, and increase withdrawal from the organisation. Indeed, training and development may even be the single most important HR factor for service quality and productivity across EU nations (Birdi, Clegg , Patterson , Robinson, Stride, Wall & Wood, 2008; Brinkerhoff 2006; Cozzarin and Jeffrey, 2014; Peretz and Rosenblatt, 2011).

From a needs theory point of view, training at work occupies a vital position. The employee, when seeking to cover their safety needs, consciously or subconsciously relates training at work to safety as organisations usually develop the individuals they intend to keep (Benson & Dundis, 2003; Maslow, 2000; Pfeffer, 1995). Indeed, Harvard (2010) argues that by gaining knowledge one is able satisfy one's employee needs. Similarly Granrose & Baccilli (2006), found that employees expect their employer to provide them with training opportunities, as this provision contributes to feelings of security and appreciation. In the UK public sector, due to austerity, training has adapted to the circumstances, and has become smarter (Felstead, Gallie, Green, & Zhou, 2010) instead of being completely removed. However, the Hellenic public sector has suffered significant cuts which have led to the removal of training completely (Mitsakis, 2014; Rodokanakis & Vlachos 2013).

### ***The need for fairness***

Another key theme in the present study was the participants' perception that their career was unjust, and that there was a need for more fairness. Participants expressed their concerns about the lack of fairness in terms of position and promotion and in terms of procedures, referring to the appraisal system. The need for fairness is highly related to the concept of organisational justice (Greenberg, 1993) which has generally been assumed to include three different elements: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Greenberg, 1993). Maslow (1954) combined justice with fairness, honesty and orderliness and concluded that injustice is an impediment to human development arguing that in order for society to function properly and be able to gratify basic human needs, certain preconditions such as different freedoms need to be in place. Because of its importance scholars argue that it is a basic human need (Eccleston & Ward, 2006; Taylor 2006). The participants mentioned the need to receive fair treatment in terms of distributive justice, as promotions and placements in the "good" divisions where conducted due to clientelism or knowing whom (Bozionelos, 2014; Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Koskina, 2008). This was illustrated by Giannis, male front line employee, when he illustrated how promotions happen in the Hellenic public service:

*"In Greece it happens [progress] through different ways and with personal relationships... with connections, the well-known (βήματα) visma or rousfeti (ρουσφετι). It's not necessary to be a political help, it can be your middle manager who knows someone who can help you... put you in a place higher up than you deserve. There are a lot of things/issues and these bring disappointment over the years."*

Giannis depicts an everyday reality, a common scene of distributive injustice, where instead of someone being promoted through meritocracy, he/she is promoted either through

favouritism, or political connections/ clientelism (Koskina, 2008). In addition, these actions eliminate the rule of equity (Cropanzano, Bowen & Gilliland, 2007). This, Giannis mentions, brings disappointment as there is no meritocracy which will decide who progresses.

From an HR perspective, equity cannot be stressed enough, as it signals to the employee that his/her effort is recognised and valued (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Research has shown that when employees perceive unfairness at work they are more likely to become apathetic and seek work somewhere else. In this case, seeking work somewhere else was not an option, as the market was considered dead, and so, as they claimed, they did not go the extra mile and did only what was expected of them (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, & Anthony, 1999; Vigoda, 2000). Koula, female senior manager, mentioned the way the “knowing whom” competency (Inkson & Arthur, 2001) affects careers:

*“The phone calls are there, have always been, will always be. This is the system, about securing (βολεμα). Whether it is promotion, better position...It is the way it works”*

Koula mentions phone calls, referring to factors outside the organisation which influence their work, claiming that this is the way the sector works, and hence, confirming perceptions about the unfair system (Koskina, 2008).

Additionally, Magda, female front line employee, argued for the need to have correct help in one’s career in order to progress:

*“Progress in the public sector is related to one’s political beliefs. If the employee’s political beliefs are not those of the party in government, he/she might find obstacles possibly in her/his career progression...”*



This quote recognises that participants view career development as unfair (Koskina, 2008). Makis, male front line employee, had similar feelings:

*“Everything is connections; the branch manager is a political individual, and this causes problems... even if you deserve a promotion you will not get it. He/she will promote the individual who shares her/his opinion...”*

Thus, for participants there is an issue of distributive injustice, highlighting obstacles to career progress. These obstacles are related to promotions and/or placements in relaxed departments, and they are driven by one’s contacts or clientelism, or to the ‘knowing whom’ competency (Bozionelos, 2014). These findings are consistent with previous research conducted within the Hellenic context and specifically within the public sector (Koskina, 2008).

The need for procedural fairness was another key sub-theme expressed by participants in their stories when mentioning the appraisal system (Brown, Hyatt & Benson, 2010). According to participants, the whole notion of appraisal is viewed as unfair, as everyone is treated the same way (e.g. everyone gets high scores independent of effort), and hence they argued that certain individuals gained high scores due to favouritism or clientelism. The following extract, from Eleftheria, female front line employee, illustrates her perception of the appraisals:

*“The appraisal was not based on objectivity ... because everyone gets high marks, even though he/she works or not, you see? The manager always gives an 8, or a 9... because he/she does not want to upset anyone. There are people doing nothing, no effort, how can they be a 7 or an 8? There is no real system of appraisal...”*

Eleftheria illustrates that everyone received high marks even though they were not being effective. This happened because relationships are built on exchanging favours, and management did not want to upset anyone. Eleftheria argued for the need to adopt a proper and fair appraisal system which would objectively evaluate individuals (Ohemeng, Zakari, & Adusah-Karikari, 2015). Nikos, male front line employee, echoed Eleftheria's thoughts about the appraisal:

*“No, there is no appraisal... Some are surely being treated unfairly, because of the ratings other people receive. Some get almost merit while for me they should be rated 5 (base). This is due to the intertwining (refers to connections). I know they do not want to spoil their relationship with others (slang). It would be better if we did not have any appraisals, because from the moment everyone gets the same high score it is pointless – why do it? There is no purpose... Not that I got less than I deserve; it's just that people get more than they deserve. And this is not only me saying that – everyone thinks it...”*

According to the findings of this study, appraisals in the Hellenic public sector are conducted for the sake of it, and ratings are inflated to serve different purposes (Nalbandian, 1981; Ohemeng et al., 2015). More specifically, participants were displeased with the way the appraisals were conducted, as they were not based on objectivity. This finding is consistent with previous studies within the Hellenic context, (Amygdalos, Bara & Moisiadis, 2014; Koskina, 2008) which discovered that appraisals were based on subjective criteria referring to political interference and clientelism interfering with the career development of civil servants by prohibiting fairness within the sector via appraisals. Similar results were discovered in the Ghanaian public sector by Ohemeng et al. (2015), where appraisals were used in exchange for favours. In addition, research in the US confirmed that appraisals were dictated by political

considerations, as some managers inflated ratings in order to promote an individual or in order to display a high score for his/her department (Longenecker, Sims & Gioia (1987).

The appraisal is a vital HRM tool which, if implemented correctly, leads to improved individual and organisational performance, due to the identification of training needs, the enhancement of the career development of employees via feedback, and its consequent contribution to meritocracy (Amygdalos et al., 2014; Baruch, 1996). Moreover, when employees have a voice in the appraisal process, they are more satisfied, see the process being fairer, and are more motivated (Cawley, Keeping & Levy, 1998). This means that accurate rating of the appraisee is important, because inaccurate rating based on favouritism can lead to mistrust, disappointment and incorrect decisions being made (Brown et al., 2010; Nalbandian, 1981). This is supported by the findings of this paper when participants claimed that there was no need to have appraisals as they led to disappointment. Similarly, from a needs theory point of view, when employees are confronted with unfairness, the result will be dissatisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, and loss of trust (Herzberg et al., 1959).

To conclude, participants explained their career needs through issues that bothered them and they wanted to improve. Consequently, they emphasised their need to feel safe at work, their need to be treated fairly, and their need to receive training. From a needs theory perspective, a need is a deficiency, something that is missing and needs satisfying in order to avoid conflict (Maslow, 1943; Ramashray, 1990). In the present case, conflict arises from the negative outcomes resulting from the non-satisfaction of particular needs, such as mistrust of management when treated unfairly at work, apathy, reduced commitment and faults at work due to non-adequate training (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Kacmar, et al, 1999; Vigoda, 2000;Youngcourt,

Leiva & Jones., 2007). It is therefore necessary to redevelop the KCM in order to reflect austerity, due to the evidence from the present study. This is the purpose of the next section.

## CONCLUSIONS

The data presented herein support the argument that there are no universal career needs, since career perceptions are socially constructed and context-dependent (Thomas & Inkson, 2007). There is, therefore, a need to further develop the KCM. This paper argues that we cannot become what we are capable of becoming unless the basic safety needs are satisfied (Maslow, 1943). Hence we argue that our analysis provides the framework for a new version of the KCM model and propose the acronym ABCS (authenticity, balance, challenge and safety), in order to reflect the Hellenic public sector in austerity as shown in the figure below.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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As a result, we argue that there is a need to incorporate a lower-order need within the KCM which accommodates career actors in need of satisfying lower-order needs. This is important because even though one cannot self-actualise in work or be authentic by focusing on a lower need and rotating the kaleidoscope to that need, the emphasis will be placed there and once that is satisfied, then the focus will move to the other needs, since the ultimate need is to be authentic or self-actualise (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Maslow, 1943). This way, the dynamic nature of the KCM will remain as it is, but with an added lower-order need which will give the model an inclusive appearance where the majority of basic human needs are represented (Maslow, 1943).

More specifically, authenticity is being genuine to one's own values. It is a person's need to find some link between work and their own personal values. This study suggests that not everybody can reach the level of authenticity, due to contextual constraints. This realisation means that lower-level needs, such as safety, must be fulfilled before one can gratify higher-order needs such as authenticity. The need to satisfy lower-order needs, such as employment security, fairness and training has not been taken into consideration by the previous version of the KCM as it was developed in a different context, which perhaps offered more to its employees than the Hellenic public sector does (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006 ; Maslow, 1943).

Balance is referred to as the Holy Grail of life, combining personal life with work. This paper proposes that the career need of balance remains unchanged in the model because this was an important career need to participants. The only difference from the KCM was found in participants' stories when they compared the private and public sectors, where balance was an issue for those who previously worked in the private sector.

Challenge is a motivator to work and reflects the need a worker has to learn, grow as a person and find stimulating, exciting work. In this study, challenge did not emerge as a reason to work. Rather money and permanency were important to all participants.

Safety reflects the worker's need for safety within the working environment, and hence it incorporates the need for job security, training, and justice/fairness at work (Bardwick; 1986; Maslow, 1954; Noor, 1981; Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall, 2002; Taylor, 2006). This paper suggests a need to redevelop the KCM, as its components were not all completely necessary. Instead, other needs were more important. In addition, some components of the KCM were contradicted by the findings of this study. For instance, authenticity was not reached in the civil service career. Instead, the choice of this type of career was based on uncertainty avoidance.

Moreover, challenge was not as a career motivator. Again, the motivators were uncertainty avoidance and money. Furthermore, balance was not an issue in the public sector, whereas in the KCM balance is a big issue. Although participants did stress the importance of work-life balance, in comparison to the private sector balance was perhaps taken for granted.

Hence, there is a need to redevelop the KCM since the vital career needs are located in the need of safety incorporating safety, fairness and training. Research has acknowledged the importance of basic needs gratification, arguing that the results are employee commitment, improved performance and job satisfaction (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Marescaux et al., 2012). In addition, this study emphasises the importance of the safety need – job security, training and fairness – as the gratification of these needs plays a vital role in how employees perceive their careers. Hence, we argue that safety is a prerequisite to the model, because without the safety need the remaining career needs of the KCM cannot exist.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This research utilised 33 semi-structured interviews with public sector employees in a qualitative study. As such, it is not possible to generalise from the findings, and so care should be taken when interpreting the outcomes. It is also possible that a longitudinal study might lead to different results due to (for instance) changes in the external environment of participants or, indeed, a change in their personal circumstances – each of which might alter their personal and professional needs and desires. Also, from a methodological perspective, although data collection ceased when saturation occurred, we acknowledge that adopting a different research design, such as case study, might have aided the exploration of the phenomenon in depth by utilising different data collection methods such as observation, i.e. triangulation.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper has contributed to the enrichment of career literature via the exploration and redevelopment of the KCM in an under-developed career research context – austerity. Overall, our study demonstrated that career perceptions are grounded in the social context of the public sector and austerity (Berkema et al, 2015) and therefore illustrated that the KCM framework is not wholly appropriate for explaining the career needs of the Hellenic public sector in austerity. Our findings illustrate that safety, fairness and training are basic career needs which are required when the individual locates himself/herself and his/her meaning and purpose in life on the basic level of the hierarchy (Maslow, 1954; Taylor, 2006). Hence, our research has theoretical implications for the KCM as the redeveloped KCM now incorporates lower basic needs, thus allowing the inclusion of more workers who may necessarily not self-actualise in their work although they would like to do so, as that should be the ultimate goal (Maslow, 1943).

In addition the revised KCM aids management to maintain attention on the key areas, even when there is turbulence and uncertainty. Hence, by emphasising employees' career needs, the new version of the KCM allows managers to better align the management of individuals with enterprise-wide key performance drivers, because as these needs are satisfied, businesses will benefit from committed employees who will maximise their productivity to the firm's advantage since career motivation has long been recognized as key to improving organizational performance (e.g. London,1983; Maslow,1954; Pfeffer,1995). This link between career satisfaction and performance is particularly relevant in the current climate of austerity, as when redundancy is properly managed (Baruch & Hind 2000) issues such as demoralisation, insecurity and stress are reduced, and managers who understand the importance of these issues and how they affect the motivation of individuals will be able to enhance the performance of both

employees and the organisation itself. This approach also extends to areas of HR such as recruitment and selection, promotion, and job content and enrichment. This study clearly shows that ‘who you know’ is a cause of particular resentment and demonstrates that where challenging work is lacking, this leads to a loss in motivation and morale. Thus, this paper gives an incentive to senior managers and HR professionals to develop jobs in such a way that they incorporate more stimulating work in order to provide challenges. The research also has implications for those who teach and train managers – both at university and in the workplace. A recent call from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) asks university business schools to teach ‘real-world’ management as opposed to theory (Wood, 2013). Given the importance of the issues raised by this study to managers in the workplace (and to their employees), it is clear that if the CMI requirements are to be met, then teaching needs to embrace the same issues. The new version of the KCM provides an empirically-based framework to underpin teaching practice, and therefore students might be better served by learning about these current issues rather than by sticking to purely academic curricula that may be out of date. Similarly, in-workplace training methods such as shadowing and mentoring will need to address these issues and are therefore more likely to be relevant and useful than other methods. At the very least, the new version of the KCM can help as part of a blended training programme, and as such, it is a key contribution to practice.



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**FIGURE 1**  
**The new KCM**



**TABLE 1**  
**Demographics of participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Highest qualification</b>	<b>Years of service</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Interview duration (min)</b>
Iliana	Female	Bachelor	8	Front liner	45
Athanasia	Female	Lyceum	23	Front liner	35
Sofia K	Female	MA	10	Front liner	40
Urania	Female	Technological	26	Middle manager	37
Hermione	Female	Bachelor	28	Senior manager	43
Sofia P	Female	Lyceum	9	Front liner	35
Stella	Female	MA	10	Front Liner	35
Theodor	Male	Lyceum	15	Front liner	40
Toula	Female	Technological	9	Front liner	42
Vaso	Female	MA	15	Middle manager	45
Giannis	Male	Technological	10	Front Liner	45
Eleftheria	Female	MBA	13	Front liner	45
Christina	Female	MA	11	Front liner	45
Chrysa G	Female	MA	13'	Front liner	45
Gianna	Female	Lyceum	26	Front liner	45
Magda	Female	BA	10	Front liner	45
Maria G	Female	Technological	15	Front liner	35
Mihalis	Male	Compulsory	33	Front liner	37
Litsa	Female	BA	22	Middle manager	36
Konstantina	Female	BA	7	Front liner	45
Nikos	Male	Technological	17	Front liner	39
Petros	Male	BA	8	Front liner	40
Giannis T	Male	Lyceum	8	Front liner	45
Chrysa M	Female	Technological	14	Front liner	42
Chrysa D	Female	BA	26	Middle manager	38
Zaharias	Male	MA	12	Front liner	38
Eleni M.	Female	Technological	23	Middle manager	43
Eleni S.	Female	Technological	8	Front liner	45
Koula	Female	BA	31	Senior Manager	42
Nikos N.	Male	Lyceum	24	Front liner	45
Apostolos	Male	Lyceum	18	Front liner	36
Makis	Male	Lyceum	18	Front liner	35
Parthena	Female	Technological	29	Middle Manager	45