

Transition Expertise: A study of individuals who succeeded repeatedly in life and career transitions

Christopher Connolly
N/A, London, United Kingdom

Fernand Gobet
London School of Economics and Political Science, London, United Kingdom

Abstract

This research studies how 24 experts in sport, music, and business were able to make successful and repeated career transitions to senior levels in their field. It examined – among other aspects – the roles of cognitive flexibility, personal intelligence, generative thinking, motivation, and contextual intelligence in career transitions. It also examined how identity changes and adapts during a career transition and how self concept evolves over the course of a career.

In-depth interviews were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively and served as the basis for evaluating several theories of expertise, cognition, motivation, and intelligence. Key findings include: deliberate practice was rarely mentioned as a contributor to transitions; the early development of expertise in multiple domains contributed to its generalizability; transition expertise evolved over the course of a career; and self concept did not unfold in a linear progression of sequential stages as predicted by many theories in the field.