Rethinking Career Starters' Entrepreneurship in a Digital Economy

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<요 약>

In the digital economy praising innovation, entrepreneurship has been strongly admired because it works as a foundation for successful innovation. In this paper, I will focus on the entrepreneurial attitude within an organization because the purpose of this paper is to clarify the organizational mechanism to facilitate the career starters' entrepreneurship in the digital age. From a psychosocial perspective, career starters seem to be so vulnerable and unstable because they are in their 20s as the most turbulent period during lifetime. For this reason, entrepreneurship for career starters needs to be reconsidered in terms of the uniqueness of young novice workers. While hierarchical organizational structure such as "atelier" is suggested in this paper, trustworthy leadership should be a basis of teamwork between veterans and novices.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship, Career starters, Digital Economy, Innovation

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Ⅰ. Introduction

Since the theme of a *Digital Economy* first appeared in *Business Week* in 1994, it was expected that radical and pervasive new technologies could always guarantee higher productivity and sustainable economic development. However, the .com collapse and the slow-down of U.S. economic growth put a halt to such rosy prospects. Under the recognition that the early optimistic conjectures about the digital economy were obviously wrong, critics such as Freeman (2001) suggested the necessity of a more realistic view on the real and spurious effects of the digital economy.

Of course, it is not surprising that digital technologies have transformed our life. For example, the Internet has changed the way of expressing our identity and of communicating each other. Besides, in the Internet, people can freely access to a great amount of information and knowledge exploring a variety of perspectives and experiences. Despite the market change, we cannot help admitting the fact that digital technologies have been utilized by humans. Although many people expect that the digital technologies make them almighty alchemists, it is inevitable that humans' limitations and weaknesses are reflected in structuralizing the use of technology.

In the digital economy praising innovation, entrepreneurship has been strongly admired because it works as a foundation for successful innovation. Since entrepreneurs are positive about initiative taking for innovation (Shapero,1975), entrepreneurship is related to both self-employment and entrepreneurial attitude within an organization. For example, current technical and economic shifts are making the notion of a fixed job obsolete. Over 25 million Americans are now self-employed and fewer than one in ten works for a Fortune 500 company (Pink, 2002). At the same time, entrepreneurial capabilities are also necessary for today's knowledge-intensive organizations because knowledge work emphasizes entrepreneurial innovation. Although entrepreneurship has been acclaimed as the positive quality for several decades, current society seems to ardently require an entrepreneur's initiative taking and the acceptance of risk of failure. However, paying attention to the career development of organization workers is important in that it not only can strengthen HR efforts of organizations but also can satisfy the unique needs of each worker regarding career development (박희동, 박민생, 2012). In this paper, I will focus on dealing with the latter, the entrepreneurial attitude within an organization because the purpose of this paper is to clarify the organizational mechanism to facilitate the career starters' entrepreneurship in the digital age.

The above 'career starters' refer to young college graduates who start their work in knowledge-intensive industries. From a psychosocial perspective, young college graduates seem to be so vulnerable and unstable because they are in their 20s as the

most turbulent period during lifetime. In fact, some people tend to unconditionally applaud the potential of young people as an entrepreneur asserting that young people are familiar with constructing new understanding of the world around them through active exploration and experimentation using digital technologies. Advocates believe that new digital technologies make a learning revolution that makes up for young peoples' shortage of real experiences (Resnick, 2002). Besides, current college education is likely to focus on the success of job hunting rather than considering mental characteristics of college students (이길환, 이덕로, 박상석, 2012). However, since this view disregards psychosocial characteristics of young career starters, it would mislead the direction of organizational structure to promote the entrepreneurship of career starters. For this reason, this paper will attempt to find an appropriate organizational structure according to the understanding of psychosocial features of career starters.

In order to find the suitable organizational structure, this paper will first discuss the implication of knowledge nomad workers in the digital economy. In addition, I will reflect on why entrepreneurship is needed in the digital economy and will clarify what should underlie career starters' entrepreneurship from a psychosocial perspective. Based on the analysis, an effective organizational structure to facilitate their entrepreneurship will be discussed.

II. Knolwledge Nomads in a Digital Economy

1. Knowledge in a Digital Economy

Generally, the advent of the *Digital Economy* represents the victory of digitization of information combined with the Internet. In fact, historical evidence shows that new technologies in the past also resulted in new business opportunities that contributed to economic growth. For instance, the technological changes in transportation and communication in the 19th century such as steamships, cables, and telegraphs offered great opportunities for business to take advantage of scale and scope in production and distribution of certain capital-intensive goods. On the other hand, the Internet has less to with transportation than with communication and therefore has less impact on production and distribution of goods than it does on handling of information (Carlsson, 2004). The Internet has revolutionized the way of collecting, packaging, and distributing information. Besides, it is not hard to imagine that the Internet makes it easier than before to connect people, ideas, and bodies of knowledge.

At this point, it is necessary to differentiate information from knowledge to discuss the implication of the digital economy. Information is defined as a collection of data, while knowledge can be defined as a structure that makes it possible to organize and interpret

information (Carlsson, 2004). In an old economy, information flow was physical and knowledge was dominated by a few powerful people. However, in the digital economy, the Internet has transformed the configuration of inequality through the decentralization of knowledge. Knowledge and information is racing at the speed of light across networks breaking down the barrier of nation states and employment forms. Although everyone cannot equally enjoy the privileges of the Internet, it is certain that the Internet has enormously contributed to the sharing of knowledge deconstructing the boundaries of time, space, and culture. Clearly, knowledge is a nomadic resource in the digital economy.

2. Knowledge Workers in Technology Era

While many organizations emphasize change and innovation, developing HR practices supporting innovation has been ignored (윤준섭, 2014). When knowledge work involves complex problem identification, problem-solution, or high-technology design resulting in innovative new products or services (Neef, 1998), technology has been regarded as the most important intervention in knowledge worker performance in the digital economy (Davenport, 2005). Personal computers, personal productivity software, personal digital assistants, mobile technologies, and other applications for the support of knowledge work have transformed the performance of knowledge workers considerably. In the long run, therefore, knowledge-intensive industries such as education, biotechnology, and health care have been benefited the most from digitization and the Internet.

Besides, digital technology and software networks enable large numbers of knowledge workers to be geographically independent of homes and offices; to work wherever and whenever they wish and to choose between a sedentary or nomadic lifestyle (Wood, 2005). The mobile knowledge workers freeing themselves of time and space are called knowledge nomads in this paper. In fact, the nomadic lifestyle is not new when considering the pastoral nomads of ancient times looking for pasture, settling, and then moving on. According to Braidotti (1994), nomadism consists not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of creating home everywhere. The nomadism, therefore, is about dis-engagement, destabilization, and deconst-ruction raising critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought (Braidotti, 1994).

III. Why Entrepreneurship in a Digital Economy?

Innovation is based on “creative destruction” to deal with uncertainty and to intelligently exploit change (Schumpeter, 1934). According to Schumpeter (1934), an entrepreneur is a

person who is willing and able to convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. Knight (1967) and Drucker (1993) thought that an entrepreneur would be a person to take risks embracing changes and assiduously trying out different things. Clearly, entrepreneurship requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solution (Kuratko, 2009).

1. Knowledge nomads and Entrepreneurship

Generally, knowledge nomads are heavy users of remote access because they usually travel or work in remote offices. The mobility provided by digital technologies would make them feel a sense of freedom as well as a sense of fear stemming from instability. If knowledge nomads do not deeply trust themselves, it would be hard to overcome the sense of fear. In order to enjoy disciplined freedom, they should trust themselves from the bottom of their heart. When considering that disciplined freedom means to voluntarily train the process of vision, change, and creation, knowledge nomads should be able to autonomously manage the process deeply trusting themselves. If so, how can they run the process for the disciplined freedom? In order to answer this question, this paper will analyze the entrepreneurial approach to the process of vision, change, and creation.

2. Entrepreneurial Approach to Digital Economy

First, the vision motivates the entrepreneur to think and work. All activities or series of efforts are orchestrated toward the vision. Establishing the vision is to picture an end result that can be life-long to achieve. Since entrepreneurs always proceed with their own vision, they are not strongly influenced by the frustration of goals. Goals are specific targets that we aim at. Goals are not a philosophy in life and are not mission statements that give meaning and purpose to our existence. Since entrepreneurs tend to focus on not a specific goal but vision, they are able to be autonomous rather than depending on external and temporal rewards which result from the achievement of goals.

Regarding the autonomy, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) mentioned "autotelic" experience without concern for external rewards, spontaneously, with total commitment. The concept of "autotelic" experience is tied to the optimal experience of "flow", a state where people are so involved that nothing else seems to matter. An individual, or a team, is said to be in a state of "flow" when the activity at hand becomes so intense that the normal sense of time and space disappear, and all energy is invested in the task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), the phenomenon of flow results in individuals and teams giving their best capabilities to tasks at hand.

"Autotelic" workers can create their own

experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Entrepreneurs can be "autotelic" workers because they concentrate on their own vision coming away with feelings of accomplishments, joy, and well-being. Since they tend to be free from the fear of temporary failures, they are likely to be involved in this flow state feeling a sense of exhilaration and joy. Of course, the prerequisite of the flow state lies in their strong vision. Without the firm vision, they would have no choice to be overwhelmed by the results of fleeting achievements. Besides, in order to achieve their vision, entrepreneurs are willing to accept the risk of failures.

Second, entrepreneurs are not afraid of changes because they feed off the stimulation of new places and random events yearning for adventure. The ability to adapt to changes is related to creativity because creativity refers to the way people think and how inventively they approach changes. According to Amabile (1998), within every individual, creativity is a function of three components: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and motivation. The expertise refers to knowledge in technical, procedural, and intellectual domain (Amabile, 1998). The creative-thinking skills determine how flexibly and imaginatively people approach problems (Amabile, 1998). Lastly, intrinsic motivation such as interest, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself leads to solutions more creative than do external motivation driven by money or social recognition (Amabile, 1998). While expertise and creative thinking are an individual's raw materials, motivation determines what people will actually do. (Amabile, Burnside, & Gryskiewiez, 1998).

The above three components of creativity are essential to achieve successful innovation. When considering that entrepreneurs are successful innovators, they are required to be creative effectively dealing with the above three components of creativity. In fact, creativity is based on the desire to gain new perspectives and experiences. For this reason, highly mobile knowledge workers are likely to be creative because they tend to be sensitive to novel perspectives and experiences. For example, since knowledge nomads travel all parts of the globe traversing time zones, oceans, and countries due to the help of digital technology, they tend to be familiar with adapting to various situations, cultures, and languages. In this respect, knowledge nomads are of great advantage to adapting easily to many changes.

Finally, entrepreneurship is closely related to the ability of balancing between exploration and exploitation. According to March (1991), exploration is characterized by search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, and innovation. Exploitation refers to refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, and execution (March, 1991). When humans or animals adapt to a new environment, a central problem in the adaptation process is about how to balance exploration of new actions against exploitation of actions that are known to be good (Fu, 2006). Therefore, it is important to remember

the fact that both exploration and exploitation is necessary for people to adapt to an environment.

Generally, people tend to think that entrepreneurs should focus on continuous exploration. However, it is vital to set a limit on their exploration because severe emphasis on exploration would extremely exhaust their energy. Of course, until they are ready to attempt the exploitation, they need to focus on the exploration. At a certain point, after continuous explorations, they will be able to find the final destination being reached by consistent exploitation. However, while in the process of exploration, learning the strategy of exploitation is helpful to improve the efficiency of life and work because people can make realistic plans by using the strategy of exploitation such as assigning a limit to the exploration. If we are too active in undertaking exploration, we will burn out before we reach our destination. In this respect, the balance between exploration and exploitation is an important qualification to be a successful entrepreneur.

IV. What Should Underlie Career Starters' Entrepreneurial Spirits?: A Psychosocial Perspective on the Entrepreneurship

1. Psychosocial Perspective for Career Starters

As Erikson (1968) mentioned, it is the inability to settle one occupational identity which most disturbs young people. Erikson (1968) stressed that individuals move through specific crisis periods where they have to make choices in which way to go. These crises are created by our age and our society (Erikson, 1968). Besides, the choices we make greatly impact our future personality and behavior (Erikson, 1968). This paper will analyze career starters' entrepreneurial spirits from Erikson's psychosocial perspective.

Although entrepreneurship is necessary for everyone living in a digital age, it is especially important for career starters because young people often experience diffusion or moratorium in the process of developing adult occupational identity (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989). During the twenties, they do not acknowledge being adults until clear identity is apparent (Arnett, 2004).

In fact, since young people are commonly engaged in generating and transmitting knowledge based on the digital technologies, they are likely to believe that they are good at designing and creating things. It is true that they are experienced in creation and distribution of knowledge due to digital learning. Besides, digital technologies make them have strong desire to gain new perspectives and experiences. Although they seem to be adept at coping with changes, they would be fragile in dealing with their values or needs because they are in the process of developing adult occupational identity. In this respect, career starters are likely to have difficulties in formulating their vision and in

balancing between exploration and exploitation while they are good at adapting to mobile work environment. I think, if they take an entrepreneurial attitude in their work and life, they can more effectively deal with diffusions and conflicts than before.

2. Entrepreneurial Attitude for Young Career Starters

First of all, in balancing between exploration and exploitation, career starters need to be realistic within an organization. While exploration refers to initiative taking, exploitation means to follow regularity or existing system. Some career starters tend to overemphasize exploration when they start their work within an organization. However, although they are knowledgeable about some subject matters, they cannot apply the knowledge to real situations right now because it takes a certain amount of time to understand the social and cultural dynamics of an organization. Therefore, in real organizations, the required role of young novice career starters is close to assistants rather than leaders. Above all, when they start working, they should more concentrate on building relationships with other employees rather than taking initiative. Before gaining the trust of other employees, the initiative taking would not be effective or helpful for the organization. In order to obtain the trust from other employees, they first need to be loyal to the required role of supporters or assistants. Therefore, when career starters are willing to play a supporting role, they can rapidly adapt to the new organization.

Regarding the formulation of vision, career starters need to be careful in understanding the entrepreneurship within an organization. Entrepreneurship needed for career starters is related to a sense of ownership for their work which can motivate them to be immersed in work without extrinsic rewards. In reality, when they start their work, it is hard for them to take conspicuous extrinsic rewards because they belong to the least powerful group within an organization and their required role is close to assistants. When no one recognizes them, they should be able to satisfy with intrinsic rewards given by their voluntary willingness. In fact, within an organization, the entrepreneurship needed for career starters is to be delighted to undertake the role of extras or background performers. In this respect, the entrepreneurial attitude for career starters is a sense of ownership for their work driven by intrinsic motivation. If they have a sense of ownership grounded on the intrinsic motivation, they do not feel the need to be a star performer coming into the spotlight and they are willing to become supporters or assistants. In this sense, career starters need to be entrepreneurs as invisible heroes within an organization.

Besides, the intrinsic motivation is closely related to creativity. People will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, satisfaction, and challenges of the work itself not by external pressures or

rewards (Amabile, 1998). The intrinsic motivation seems to be more adaptive for them in the long term because people with intrinsic motivation are likely to persevere with tasks they selected in spite of failures while those with extrinsic motivation do not tend to be patient of failures in case failures result in losing their reputation or money. Since success is acquired through visible and invisible failures, the extrinsic motivation would not be beneficial for people in the long term. In addition, people with intrinsic motivation have stronger positive belief that success will come from efforts (Ames & Archer, 1988) and the positive attitude toward work would be a solid foundation for more productive knowledge work as well as a person's state of well-being. For this reason, pursuing intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation would be recommended for developing the entrepreneurial attitude for career starters.

On the other hand, career starters need to remember that they are not experts in a specific field. Scientists studying the structure of expert performance in many professions have found that individual differences, even among elite performers are the result of effortful activities (deliberate practice) and that expert performance is acquired over a decade of intense preparation (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993). Besides, expert educators in other professions such as law and engineering also have recognized that academic preparation provides a foundation for the competent practitioner, but additional practice experience is required to develop expert performance (Sullivan, Colby, Welch Wegner, Bond, & Schulman, 2007). When young novice workers start working, it is natural that they are immature and unskilled. In order to develop the expert performance, they need to be patient in front of failures and ambiguity. Besides, they need to consider the fact that people will be more likely to achieve creative success if they persevere through a difficult problem (Amabile, 1998). Career starters, therefore, should have tutored themselves to be patient if they want to be an expert in a specific field.

For the above reasons, career starters need to appreciate the value of patience or slowness. In fact, we cannot deny that efficiency and speed is the most acclaimed virtue in a digital economy. People are running and running to acquire more accomplishments. However, the speedy race made people forget the value of patience or slowness. In other words, people tend to believe that slowness retards their productivity in a digital economy. Despite the general prejudice, it is certain that slowness helps people to think about the purpose of life and to find the genuine values of life (Sansot, 2000). In fact, establishing the philosophy of life is very important in long-term productivity because the philosophy of life is essential to create vision at work and life. If career starters are engrossed in temporary achievements without making efforts to picture the vision, they cannot persevere through dry spells. Although the value of slowness is helpful for everyone, it is

Figure 1. David Ryckaert III,
<Painters' Workshop>, 1638, Louvre Paris

particularly vital for career

starters because they are required to endure their emotional and cognitive vulnerability at the beginning of their work. Unfortunately, they do not have enough experience to cope with the vulnerability. They are novices in terms of both work and life. Therefore, when considering their vulnerability and immaturity, they need to be patient keeping the value of slowness in mind. Rather than sticking to temporary achievements, they need to focus on the creation of their own vision because the vision can be completed by conscious efforts and a certain amount of time. In a sense, an organization is a school for career starters to learn and to train the patience.

3. Organizational Structure for Career Starters

While I was writing this paper, I had an opportunity to think about the future of an organization. I finally made a conclusion that it is necessary to design the future organization beyond the commonly accepted dichotomy such as "virtual" vs. "traditional". And I found the ideal image of the future organization in the "atelier" where an artist works (Figure 1).

Since the Renaissance, ateliers have been recognized as the place for creative artistic activities. Although an atelier often had a hierarchy including masters, journeymen, and apprentices, it has contributed to the production of creative works as well as to the education of apprentices. The schools of art such as realism were formed around specific ateliers. A master painter or sculptor trained a group of assistants and apprentices until they were ready to work independently.

In fact, some people tend to degrade the value of the hierarchical ateliers because the hierarchical painting seems to be associated with technicians' manual work rather than creative co-work. However, I think the hierarchy would be useful for apprentices if the collaboration can stimulate their curiosity and passion. Until they have their own view about an art, they need to start with a part of whole work because it is hard to holistically

understand the whole process at the beginning of their work.

On the other hand, an atelier was not a closed or conservative place because it was the only place to paint the nude of women for quite a time. Until the midst of 19th century, European art academies did not approve female nude models assuming that it would cause moral problems. Those who want to paint the nude of women had to go to the atelier working with female nude models. Curiously enough, an atelier was a place encouraging both freedom and hierarchy toward the production of creative works. I think it is necessary for career starters to consider both the freedom and the hierarchy as important sources of innovation.

V. Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have talked about both changing and unchanging things. Of course, it is certain that we have lived in a new and postindustrial age and the work environment is said to be becoming high-tech. Although the advancement of technology have freed us from the restraints of time and space to some extent, we are still longing for humanistic values such as love and trust in relations with ourselves and others. Rather, I see people have more intense aspirations toward security and stability within a mobile environment than in the past. Although digital technology made people feel a sense of freedom, the mobility also made them be anxious about losing steadfastness.

Interestingly, the digital age requires firmer self-trust than in the industrial age. Without the self-trust, it would be hard to effectively adapt to the mobile work environment because nomadic life is usually equipped with anxiety stemming from uncertainty. Since the self-trust is established by strong vision, it is important for career starters to focus on shaping their own vision. Making the vision starts with a question about what we live by. Only if career starters have their own answers about the purpose of life and work, they can think and act according to intrinsic motivation. However, since forming the philosophy of life requires a certain amount of time and efforts, career starters need to be patient with their confusions or conflicts.

Until they are equipped with enough knowledge and experience, they should be able to act as an extra within an organization. Although young people seem to be good at innovation due to digital learning, organizations should consider that young novice workers are inexperienced. Following the hierarchy, therefore, is still helpful for them because the hierarchy can work as a guide for their learning if the hierarchy resides in valuable and ethical vision facilitated by managers' leadership skills.

In this respect, this paper has some implications for organizational structure and leadership which can effectively support career development of novice workers. The intention of this paper's arguments does not lie in unconditional obedience of career

starters. Rather, shared valuable and reasonable vision will be able to lead career starters' voluntary devotion to their organizations. In other words, trustworthy leadership has an important role in building healthy teamwork between veterans and novices.

Francis Bacon said that time is the greatest innovator. Even in the digital age, his words are still valid especially for career starters. They are required to persevere through dry spells until they gain enough knowledge and experiences. In order to design the appropriate organizational structure for them, their limitations and weaknesses should be considered. Although we are living with digital technology, we do not need to forget unchangeable truth that humans are still working within limits. With enough courage, we will be able to make use of our defects. In the end, figuring out who we are is the whole point of human experience.

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Abstract

디지털 경제와 커리어 초심자의 기업가 정신

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혁신을 장려하는 디지털 경제에서 기업가 정신은 성공적인 혁신의 기초로서 강조되어왔다. 본 연구의 목적은 커리어 초심자들의 기업가 정신을 촉진시키는 조직 내 메커니즘을 밝히기 위해 조직 안에서의 기업가 정신적 태도가 무엇인지에 초점을 맞추고 있다. 심리사회적 관점에서 볼 때, 20대라는 질풍노도의 인생주기를 보내고 있는 커리어 초심자들은 매우 불안정하고 취약한 특성을 갖고 있다는 점을 고려할 필요가 있다. 이와 같은 이유로 커리어 초심자들을 위한 기업가 정신의 특성은 재해석되어야할 필요가 있다. 본 연구에서는 “아틀리에”와 같은 위계적인 조직 구조가 커리어 초심자들에게 필요한 반면에 신뢰할 수 있는 리더십이 전제될 때 건강한 팀워크를 형성할 수 있다는 결론을 제시한다.

핵심주제어: 기업가 정신, 커리어 초심자, 디지털 경제, 혁신

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