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Career Development: An Enabler for Job Satisfaction

Ratna Sinha

Abstract

Successful organizations exist because of a competitive edge in the global economy. In order to maintain the status, firms need talented and engaged employees. The endeavour for human resources function is to have practices which have an impact and make a positive difference in the lives of employees. An important practice is career development. Career development programmes enable HR managers, managers and their stakeholders to work together to plan, organize, formalize, lead and monitor career programmes to develop not only employees' jobs but the whole stage process, attitude, behaviour and state of affairs relating to employees' work life. Employee satisfaction can be achieved by making a good career development system and giving an understanding of how important the system is that is designed by the company for managerial and professional employees.

Keywords: career development, job satisfaction, career development programmes, employee satisfaction, human resource

1. Introduction

Successful organizations exist because of a competitive edge in the global economy. In order to maintain the status, firms need talented and engaged employees [1–3]. Several recent research studies have focussed on the importance of retaining valuable human capital in today's competitive world of work [4–7]. The endeavour of human resources is to have impactful human resources practices which make a positive difference in the lives of employees. An important practice is career development. The extant literature suggests that there is a widespread acceptance of the value of career development activities and that, in the years to come, more and more organizations will be required by various internal and external pressures to develop and expand career development services [8].

2. Importance and relevance of career development

Career development is a significant path of knowledge management, effort, freedom and evolution to move towards a personally resolute and developing preferred future. Leibowitz and Lea [9] described career development systems as integrated services and procedures that meet the needs of both individuals and organizations.

Chang et al. [10] posit that career development programmes enable HR managers, managers, and their stakeholders to work together to plan, organize, formalize, lead and monitor career programmes to develop not only employees' jobs but the whole stage process, attitude, behaviour and state of affairs relating to employees' work life.

Job satisfaction is influenced by people, supervisors and co-workers in the workplace, compensation and the work environment [11]. Locke [12] defined job satisfaction as the pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the overall evaluation of one's job or job experiences.

Employee satisfaction can be achieved by making a good career development system and giving an understanding of how important the system is that is designed by the company for managerial and professional employees [3, 13].

We all know that businesses exist to attain high productivity in their working styles and produce a competitive edge in the global economy. To achieve this edge and high efficiency, firms need talented and engaged employees. The role of human resources management becomes even more important than ever in this competitive era. An approach, which is a panacea to this managerial need, is the implementation of career development process [14].

Career development is one such significant practice which enhances the level of employee engagement, which in turn subsequently increases the organizational effectiveness. The purpose of career development is to match the employees' aspirations with the firm's challenges that could result in organizational effectiveness. Organizations that want to attract, motivate and retain employees need to show concern towards employee career development. Abdelnour and Hall [15] stated that organizations can no longer afford to squander valuable human resource assets because employee development leads to corporate development. That the talent generates a lot of company performance and is a source of a competitive advantage, it is important to create conditions for intra-organization movements (internal job posting) and to offer many career management practices such as succession planning, coaching, mentoring, rotation, development plans, individual information on opportunities for career development and others [16].

In order to understand the implementation of career development programmes, it is essential to run a survey on the kind of audit to be carried out. This will help in estimating the career development needs of the organization (**Figure 1**). Organization's need cannot be satisfied without satisfying individual needs [17]. Understanding the organizational culture and context with defined roles of those implementing needs to be well defined and articulated.

Each individual is different. He/she has different personalities, abilities, needs and desires. Therefore, career planning programmes should be based on the segmentation of employees, grouping them more by their needs, rather than hierarchical levels. Managers should create several different career development programmes customized for each segmented group and provide development programmes based on the assessment of the potential and performance of the employees, keeping in mind the needs and mission of the organization.

Having the right resources and support systems would enable in making the process effective based on the outcome of the need and the strategy built. There are a number of initiatives and practices which could give the perspective on the resources and supports.

One of the ways which can help is counselling. Counseling sessions are of great help to develop themselves because it provides a path towards achieving career goals. If an employee is in a state of not being able to choose from the options, counseling perhaps would show a positive path. Herr and Cramer [18] suggested that counsellors may be involved in team building; consultation with managers;
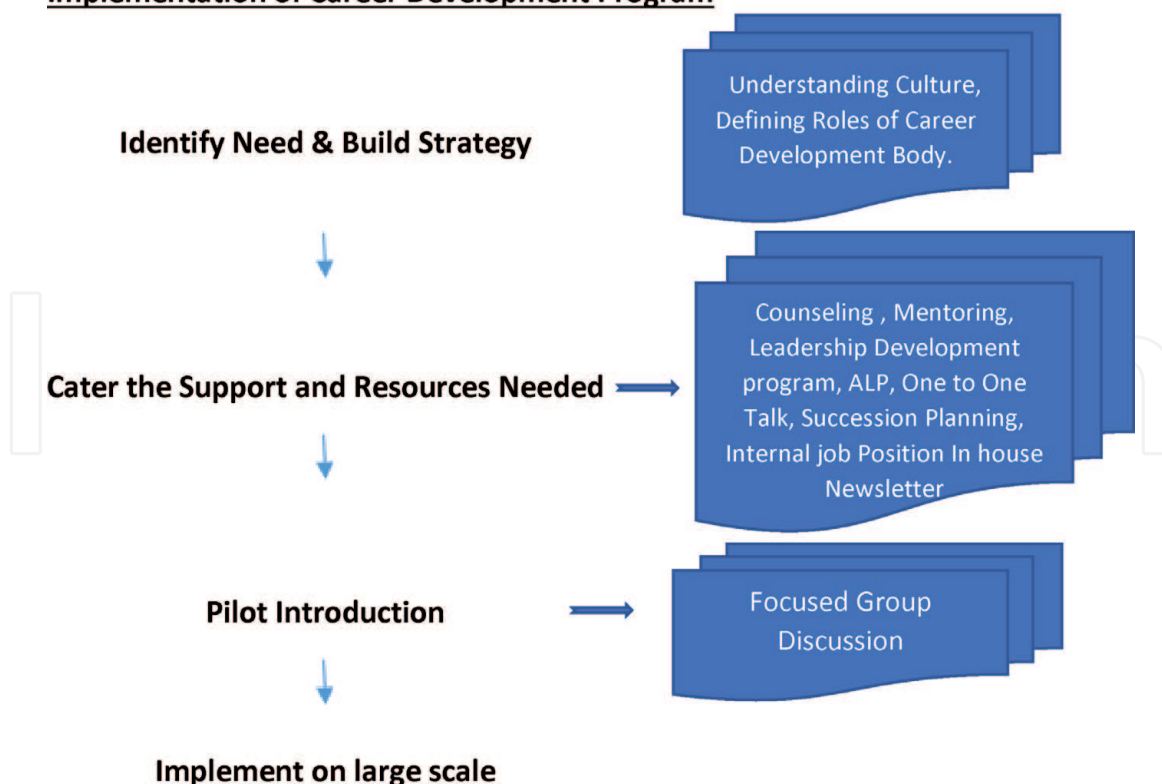
Implementation of Career Development Program

Identify Need & Build Strategy

Understanding Culture, Defining Roles of Career Development Body.

Cater the Support and Resources Needed →

Counseling , Mentoring, Leadership Development program, ALP, One to One Talk, Succession Planning, Internal job Position In house Newsletter

Pilot Introduction →

Focused Group Discussion

Implement on large scale

Figure 1.
Flow and implementation process of career development programme.

psychological crisis consultations; training in negotiating skills; assessing needs; training trainers; evaluating outside programmes; designing, presenting and evaluating training programmes; and interviewer training.

One-to-one talk brings in a conversation which is even more transparent and can come up sharing more openly especially those who keep to themselves and slowly lose interest and move out of the organization in time to come if they are not tapped at the right time and a chord is struck in a positive way.

In similar lines, mentoring programmes give that support which an employee looks towards to discuss and share with his mentor who is a friend, philosopher and guide. Corporate mentoring programmes reveal much benefit in days to come for the employee. Mentors provide a perspective of leadership. External mentors and so does a coach provide a constructive feedback.

According to Savickas and Baker [19], career psychology is in need of reinvigoration to respond to the challenges of rapid transformation in a postmodern world.

Leibowitz and Lea [9] and Brown and Brooks [20] suggested that more research in the area of career development may result in more organizational support. Comparatively the number of career development services available, there is very little research published on their effectiveness [21].

Secondly, company's leadership programmes chalk out career development plans for an employee. There could be action learning projects chalked out as a career development plan which accelerates his growth and development and at the same time plugs his gaps by working as a member of the project team. Self-directed workbook aimed at guiding career planning and analysis of the individual gives a record and shows a document of progress keeping an individual spirited on his journey of career development. The primary aim of the career planning programme is not to help employees lay out a career plan per se but to help employees in being focussed to acquire skills essential for planning their own career.

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Group workshop is another way which could help employees evaluate their skills, abilities and interests and to formulate development plans.

If the organizations arrange training sessions by investing in their employees' career, then the organizations in return acquire the most talented and satisfied workforce [22]. It is a continuous process that gives an employee the set of new skills and sharpens the existing ones.

In addition, succession plans and job rotations vertical or horizontal enable an employee to see these as opportunities. It is seen as one of the career development activities which is useful in enhancing their knowledge, skills and abilities to improve job performance and adding value to current and future jobs bringing in a sense of fulfillment and value. Career development should be implemented effectively because it can affect the sustainability of the company [23].

There are even apps today which work on career development. One would say it a 'cool tool'. 'Whatfix' is an electronic performance support platform that can provide in-app guidance within business applications. Using this platform, talent development professionals can train and support employees at their point of need. However, the contact on a person-to-person keeps an exchange of mind and gives a support to the emotional self.

Yet another platform which enables an employee visibility especially more so in large organizations is featuring an employee in company's in-house newsletter. This kind of platform creates an image and gives connection in organizations on the availability of a profile which could fit in other engaging roles.

The social exchange theory primarily dwells upon feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, and trust [24]. Social exchange theory [24] can be used to predict the outcomes of different management practices.

Career development programmes provide stimulation and fulfillment at numerous phases of employee development, proactively finding capacity in advance and granting prospects for learning. Tziner [25] defines job satisfaction as the extent to which individual needs are met in the work setting.

Employee satisfaction can be achieved by making a good career development system and giving an understanding of how important the system is that is designed by the company for managerial and professional employees [3, 13]. Investing in professional development of employees allows differentiation and gaining competitive advantage, as it also increases the level of abilities and knowledge the organization can use to achieve organizational goals [26].

However, good career development can be manifested when it is actualized in day-to-day behaviour by all in the organization [27]. Meta-analytic support also exists for the positive relationship between individual career management behaviors and career satisfactions [28].

Today, employees are more conscious about their professional and personal growth. Organizations that do not align themselves to this thought process eventually lose their talented workforce.

Traditionally career was considered to be confined to professionals or those who advanced through organizational hierarchy; in terms of today 'career', it is more appropriately meant to be the lifelong sequence of the role-related experiences of individuals [29].

Employees of today know that they could be out of date if they do not enhance their knowledge and skill. They too would look out for opportunities to upgrade; therefore companies providing that support of career development programmes make a huge difference in their engagement and satisfaction in their career life. The flip side is that too much of raising expectations and there being not enough roles could lead to dissatisfaction, and one would then go beyond the frontiers of their own organization. Being straightforward about career options builds trust and rests no false notions.

Super [30] referred to the specific stages of 'exploration', 'establishment', 'maintenance' and 'disengagement', noting that individuals have different career development tasks and characteristics at different stages of their careers [31].

Yu [32] affirms that studies on workplace career programmes highlight the fact that the ability of the management to properly plan and manage career programmes for employees who work in different job categories may have a significant impact on employee outcomes, especially job satisfaction.

It is essential that the practices as per the strategy need to be piloted before we move forth into a full implementation.

One looks at career as a life's fulfilling journey. The employee is more concerned about his/her career and personal development and transformation throughout his work life.

Ismail et al. [33] correlate on career development and job satisfaction, as the readiness of management to appropriately plan and manage career programmes adequately which assists employees to develop career paths and, as a result, may lead to higher job satisfaction in the organization. Employees need the encouragement, resources, tools and support to envision their futures. It is not necessary that organizations need to provide new app or programme, but they do need conversations with managers, coaches or mentors. Even if the salaries are not high, corporates with career development programme and experience of job satisfaction exist [34].

3. Limitations

This study concludes with suggestions for future research. First of all, this study is a more qualitative study of career needs. Future studies could include data through surveys or through longitudinal studies which could result in promising outcomes. In addition it is also foreseen that the development of valid and reliable measures of career needs is one of the primary challenges for those researchers interested in taking this aspect forwards.

4. Practical implications and conclusion

Grappling with situations and circumstances in the journey of the future of work, change is inevitable and can influence numerous events inside and outside an organization. Seen through the theoretical lens and on ground practices, the findings added new insights into the circumstances under which employee can work in the process flow articulated implemented by the organization which would influence positively employee satisfaction with organizational retention practices.

The contrasting attitudes of acceptance and resistance to change are an increasingly interesting topic in today's global, ever-changing and competitive environment. Career development truly forms an enabler to job satisfaction. If one hops in the bandwagon, the feeling could be comforting in the beginning. One needs to filter the popular demand and peer pressure, rather than to think objectively and assess his own competency, skill and passion, and then take a call.

The implication is that individuals will then find their jobs to be more meaningful and enjoyable. It plays a pivotal role in the ecosystem of the entire gamut of development-related processes. Managers should ensure that they frequently review employees' career concerns through formal career discussion and have conversations. It requires alignment of human resource systems like performance management, career development and succession planning. In addition, it involves

establishing an integrated career development system to support current and future business needs with continuous development and upgrade of people.

Career development programmes should be flexible in order to adapt to the changing economic scenario.

The readiness of individuals within organizations and their ability to make an edge are the factors which influence the opportunities in career development. Having career conversations and advancements will enable an employee to be satisfied, will keep them engaged and give them a sense of fulfillment in the journey of employment and work life. It is trusted that this research will inspire further research on the topic, which will align organizational and employee needs.

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