

Career Development Plan in an Organization: A Selected Case Study of an Automotive Parts Company in the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate, Rayong Province, Thailand

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Abstract: *The objectives of this qualitative research with a grounded theory approach was to investigate the Career Development Plan in a selected study of an automotive parts company in the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate, Rayong province, Thailand. Twenty-five participants were studied using formal in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews. Based on manual coding, two main categories emerged, which are “Focus on development”, and “Career Planning”. In conclusion, this study made a significant contribution to our knowledge and demonstrates that a Career Development Plan is a very important factor for work decisions and employee development in an organization.*

Keywords: career development plan, career planning, career development activity, human resource development

Introduction

At present, developments on the labor market concerning more change and flexibility put increasing demands on employees to take responsibility for performing their jobs and managing their careers (Segers & Inceoglu, 2012). Understanding career development (CD) is also important today due to the changing workforce. Employees leave their organizations for many reasons, but the question remains if some areas of employee dissatisfaction are more likely to result in employer turnover than others. For instance, there are studies that have focused on a myriad of factors that may contribute to career advancement opportunities (Bosse, 2011; Hodgins et al., 2010; Shahzad et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2010), and career development services (Conlon, 2004; Upton, 2006).

When organizations look to HR to provide solutions, they do what they think is best rather than what has been suggested by research to be effective. However, it has been suggested by research that provision of career development services can increase career commitment and can significantly result in lowering turnover intention (Conlon, 2004).

However, few studies have been carried out to elucidate this relationship. Fewer companies are providing CD services as they expect employees to autonomously manage his/her own career (Conlon, 2004). HR as a discipline has continued to evolve, but study involving provisions of career development services has been overshadowed by other areas of HR (McDonald & Hite, 2005). This lack of attention to the effectiveness of company-provided career development services makes us unable to determine the best way to plan careers in an era of boundaryless career options (Arthur, 1994).

Research Objectives

To investigate the Career Development Plan in a selected case study of an automotive parts company in the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate, Rayong province, Thailand.

Research Questions

What should be the Career Development Plan in the organization?

Literature Review

Career Development (CD)

Career Development (CD) is “an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks (DeSimone and Werner, 2012, p. 400)”. A Career Development Plan (CDP) is a written list of the short and long-term goals that employees have pertaining to their current and future jobs, and a planned sequence of formal and informal experiences to assist the employees in achieving their goals. These goals should be linked to each person's strengths and potential. (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) CD involves two distinct processes: career planning and career management.

Models of Career Development

Just as it is possible to depict adult development as progressing through a series of stages, it is also possible to depict career development in this way. DeSimone and Werner (2012) proposed two approaches to modeling career development: one traditional and the other more contemporary.

Traditional Models of Career Development

Many models of career development have been offered to explain the sequence of stages that adults progress through during their work lives (Hall & Nougaim, 1968). These models emphasize the notion of an orderly series of career stages linked to age ranges, place the career into the context of a person's life, and contain overlapping concepts. Given the similarities among these models, (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2010) combined these approaches into a four-stage model, each stage is described below.

Stage 1: Occupational and Organization Choice: Preparation for Work (Age 0-25). Major tasks are develop occupational self-image, assess alternative occupations, develop initial occupational choice, pursue necessary education to obtain job offer(s) from desired organization(s), select appropriate job based on accurate information. **Stage 2:** The Early Career (Age 25-40). Major tasks are learn job, learn organizational rules and norms, fit into chosen occupation and organization, increases competence, pursue The Dream. **Stage 3:** The Midcareer (Age 40-55). Major tasks are reappraise early career and early adulthood, reaffirm or modify The Dream, make choices appropriate to middle adult years, remain productive in work. **Stage 4:** The Late Career (Age 55-Retirement). Major tasks are remain productive in work, maintain self-esteem, and prepare for effective retirement.

Other View of Career Development. Certainly, the trends in globalization, demographics, technology (both information and otherwise), the changing employment relationship, team-based work, and new organizational structures significantly impact the way careers are viewed. In light of this changing landscape, some question the relevance of the traditional notion of career stages (Hall, 1986). These other views of career development

share the notion that individuals (and organizations) must be flexible and adaptable to succeed in a changeable and uncertain environment. Two sets of ideas illustrate this line of thinking. Distinctly different sets of motives underline each of the four concepts” (Brousseau et al., 1996). The four career concepts are:

Linear – a progression of movement up an organizational hierarchy to positions of greater responsibility and authority; motivated by desire for power and achievement; variable time line; in the United States, this has been the traditional view of a “career”

Expert – a devotion to an occupation; focus on building knowledge and skill within a specialty; little upward movement in a traditional hierarchy, more from apprentice to master; motivated by desire for competence and stability; rooted in the medieval guild structure

Spiral – a lifelong progression of periodic (seven to ten years) moves across related occupations, disciplines, or specialties; sufficient time achieve a high level of competence in a given area before moving on; motives include creativity and personal growth

Transitory – a progression of frequent (three to five years) moves across different or unrelated jobs or field; untraditional; motives include variety and independence (Larsson et al., 2007)

Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk (2010) argued that these four concepts can be combined to form a wide variety of hybrid concepts. They stated that the traditional model of career management has favored individuals with a linear or expert career concept, but that the shift going on in the world now tend to favor those with a transitory or spiral career concept. The challenge to organizations and individuals, then, is to conduct career management in what they call a pluralistic fashion that matches the organization’s strategy and career culture with individual’s career concepts.

Career Planning and Career Path

The practice of organizational career planning involves matching an individual’s career aspirations with the opportunities available in an organization. Career pathing is the sequencing of the specific jobs that are associated with those opportunities. If career management is to be successful, the individual and the organization must assume an equal share of the responsibility for it. The individual must identify his or her aspirations and abilities and, through counseling, recognize what training and development are required for a particular career path. The organization must identify its needs and opportunities and, through workforce planning, providing the necessary career information and training to its employees.

Career Planning, DeSimone and Werner (2012) defined Career planning as “a deliberate process of (1) becoming aware of self, opportunities, constraints, choices, and consequences; (2) identifying career related goals; and (3) programming work, education, and related developmental experiences to provide the direction, time, and sequence of steps to attain a specific career goal”. Career planning involves activities performed by an individual, often with the assistance of counselors and others, to assess his or her skills and abilities in order to establish a realistic career plan. Career management involves taking the necessary steps to achieve that plan, and generally focuses more on what an organization can do to foster employee career development. There is a strong relationship between CD and T&D activities. Career plans can be implemented, at least in part, through an organization’s training programs. **Career Pathing**, Mondy and Noe (2005, p. 237) proposed career path as “a flexible line of movement through which an employee may during employment with a company.” Following an established career path, the employee can undertake career

development with the firm's assistance. From a worker's perspective, following a career path may involve weaving from company to company and from position to position as he or she obtains greater knowledge and experience. The result of career planning is the placement of an individual in a job that is the first of a sequential series of jobs. From the perspective of the organization, career paths are important in workforce planning. An organization's future workforce depends on the projected passage of individuals through the ranks. From the perspective of the individual, a career path is a sequence of jobs that he or she desires to undertake in order to achieve personal and career goals. Although it is virtually impossible to completely integrate organizational and individual needs in the design of career paths, systematic career planning has the potential for closing the gap between the needs of the individual and the needs of the organization (Rifkin, 1996).

Research Design

The researcher employed qualitative research as the research design and employed grounded theory as the research strategy. "A Qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meaning socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern), or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative or change oriented) or both. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (Creswell, 2003, p. 18)".

Grounded theory is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the view of the participants. This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelation of categories of information (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory is generated from the data collected. The aim is to discover what kinds of concepts and hypotheses are relevant to the area one wishes to understand. The basic elements of a grounded theory include conceptual categories and their conceptual properties, and generate relationships between these categories and their properties (Symon & Creswell, 2004).

Data Collection

For completing the research objective of the study, "the collecting primary data was the in-depth interview method to support suggestions and improving the research. The necessary secondary data collected was published documents, books, journals and related research. In this study, the interview schedules were developed based on the guidelines according to Patton (1990, pp. 290-291)". The setting involved purposive sampling to identify twenty-five participants, and they were divided into three groups, which are the "Employee Group", "Supervisor Group", and "Management Group". The criteria for the participant was at least one year of work experience in the automotive parts company, Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate, Rayong province and they must have been concerned with the process of a Career Development Plan.

Data Analysis

The steps of data analysis are presented according to the suggestion made by Charmaz (2006, p. 46). The researcher proposed the coding step for data analysis as: **First step is Initial code:** Glaser (1978) recommended the Line-by-Line technique claiming that “For many grounded theorist, line-by-line coding is the first step in coding. Line-by-Line coding means naming each line of your writing data”. **Second step is Focused coding:** Once the initial codes were assigned, focused coding which was more directed, selective and conceptual than Line-by-Line text analysis needs doing (Glaser, 1978). Focused coding would permit the researcher to identify the most significant area from the early initial coding. This to distinguish the data with less importance to the matter (Charmaz, 2006). **Third step is Axial code:** according to Struss and Corbin (1990, 1998; Struss, 1978), axial coding narrows down the properties and dimensions of the category. In addition, it linked and gave the researcher the opportunity to make sense of properties, dimensions and emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2006). And **fourth step is Theoretical coding** was the last level of the grouping data. Glaser (1978). This type of coding was viewed as conceptualizing or how all codes were connected to each other and how the relationships could generate a new theory or model emerged from focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, there were only two main categories emerged in this study: (1) Focus on development, and (2) Career Planning.

Discussion

Response to research question: “*What should be the Career Development Plan in the organization?*” The above question focused on the definition and what the participant understand the Career Development Plan is. Therefore, the findings of CDP from the participants in this organization are below.

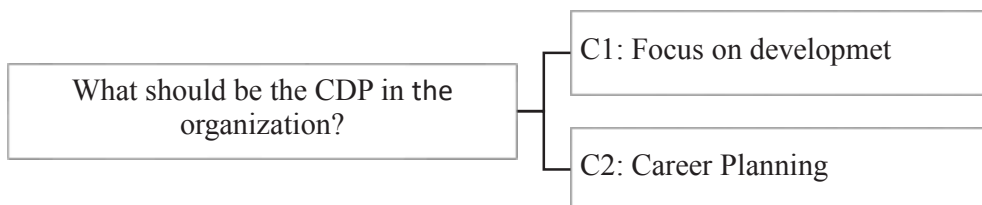


Figure 1-1 Responses to research question

Focus on development

The results show that CDP is a people development program for the short, medium, and long terms for competency fulfillment in each period, then get a promotion for job advancement in the organization. However, the development program consists of 1) self-development plan, it seems like inside preparation by willing to work or do any assignments for potential increment, and 2) management development plan, should support the activities that help the individuals development and carry out the career plan of the employees.

This result is supported by Heathfield (2016) that it is short- and long-terms skill requirements. If the employee’s goal is to be top management, understand the education, skills, technology, and experience requirements, and develop interim career plans for achieving the employee’s long-term career goal. To increase the employee’s knowledge of career options, request one-on-one informational meetings with colleagues and managers, the purpose of these brief meetings is to gather information to help them make educated career decisions. Employees are generally willing to share their success stories and advice.

Volunteer to complete challenging projects and assignments. One of the best ways to advance

the employee's career is to identify an organizational problem and propose a solution, by offering to implement the solution, the employee will not only increase their visibility as a problem-solver in the organization, but the employee might also expand their skills in the process.

Career Planning

The results of this study show that career planning should start from management policies and the trend of business on human development, clear on job descriptions which access the employee's skills as organization requirements and expectations, provide the necessary improvement or development activities to them for meet career goals, and then evaluate them by a promotion assessment. Apart from that, the organization also needs to understand the company's ability, organizational structure, budget to support programs and activities, and needs to study career programs from other organizations in order to reasonableness.

This result is confirmed by Minor (2014) who stated that in today's world of rapid change, transformation and progress, new career paths are constantly unfolding, traditional ones are being changed and shifts are taking place in occupation skills and educational requirements.

The result is also consistent with Heathfield (2016), who found that when most employees think about their careers, they have not thought past their current job or the next promotion that they would like to receive. Employees need to broaden their short-terms thinking. As employees are promoted up the organization chart, fewer jobs become available, yet continuing to grow skills and experience should still be a priority for people obtaining value from their career. The career path is discussed at several meetings bi-annually with the employee's manager. The company does not own the career path; the employee does. But, the company demonstrates commitment to its employees by assisting where possible with resources of time and money. The company has a written plan that can help each employee focus on what is most important to employee fulfillment and success. Without a plan, the employee can feel rudderless and the company has no benchmark against which the manager and supervisor can measure the employee's progress.

Recommendations for Future Research

First, the difference between the Thai and Japanese organization structure, which levels are available for Thai employee in a global company. This area is an interesting topic for system creation. This study was conducted on one organization; therefore, future research may also need to explore more significant conditions by studying more about the different organizational structures from other areas or business sectors for best practices programs.

Second, participants reported about the current situation which briefly summarized the problems in the organization. The success factor of the career system or program is management; understanding the career system, management perspective and policy focusing, matching of management style between Thai and Japanese employees, and others. Most of participants understood that CDP would work effectively based on the management team because of the approval level and decision authority.

Third, continuing from the second recommendation that the success factor of the career program is management. CDP is one human capital investment, which cannot quite be shown by concrete results, management could not able to understand covering the career system. Therefore, Return on Investment (ROI) is one future research recommendation,

whenever, it is able to show ROI on development investment, its effect on decision making of the management level.

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