

A Review of Organizational and Individual Career Management: A Dual Perspective

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Abstract

This paper views career management as a combination of both organizational career management (OCM) and individual career management (ICM). It highlights the important impact of career management on personal and organizational successes. It also emphasizes on the effective career management which fosters personal career growth and sustains organizational competitive advantages. At the personal level, the notion of career management brings forth the employee's capability to develop a career in the workplace. Likewise, it provides organizations with the ability to proactively respond to the rapidly changing organizational environments. This paper differentiates between OCM and ICM that could lead to a clearer understanding of the two terms. The concept of career management is important to academics and practitioners who are involved in this area.

Keywords: career success, organizational career management, individual career management

1. Introduction

Considering technological and economic changes in the world, the nature of careers or the way people pursue their careers has changed (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010; Sullivan, Carden & Martin, 1998). The changing work environments (e.g. technological innovation) make people find the increasing complexity of modern careers (Wickramasinghe & Jayaweera, 2011; Zhu, Wolff, Hall, Heras, Gutierrez & Kram, 2013). Individuals who are unable to adapt themselves to career complexity usually fail to have a great career (Gunkel, Schlaegel, Langella & Peluchette, 2010; Zhu et al., 2013). All businesses need to improve organizational management in order to achieve and sustain their competitive advantages over time (Ho, 2008; Kaneko & Munechika, 2012; Langenhan, Leka & Jain, 2013). Managing people in workplace is one of managerial tasks (Larsen & Brewster, 2003). Effective human resource management (HRM) leads to continuous organizational competitive advantages (Herington, McPhail & Guilding, 2013; Stavrou-Costea, 2002; Wang & Shyu, 2008; Zhao & Du, 2012).

Career management issues have been widely studied by researchers (e.g. Birasnav & Rangnekar, 2012; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Henderson, 2013; Rees, Järvalt & Metcalfe, 2005). Career management is a key factor for accomplishing both personal goals and organizational goals (Atkinson, 2002; Barnett & Bradley, 2007). Many companies consider career management as important to contemporary HRM practice and they assist employees to manage careers (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010; Kong, Cheung & Zhang, 2010; Sturges, Conway, Guest & Liffroghe, 2005). Most companies value skilled employees and need to retain them for long-term employment (Hemdi & Abdul Rahim, 2011; Mohsin, Lengler & Kumar, 2013). OCM ensures the long-term availability of skilled and competent employees to reach business goals (Appelbaum, Ayre & Shapiro, 2002; De Vos, Dewettinck & Buyens, 2008). This is OCM facilitates employee development as well as employee performance (Appelbaum et al., 2002; Lewis & Arnold, 2012).

While companies pay attention to establishment and implementation of career management programs (Kong, Cheung & Song, 2012b; Verbruggen, Sels & Forrier, 2007), individuals can also develop themselves without waiting for career development support from their organizations (Quigley & Tymon Jr., 2006). Individuals who focus on occupational goals prefer long-term career development and want to be successful in their careers (Nie, Lian & Huang, 2012). Individual career management (also referred to as career self-management) has been noted as important to employee's career success (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Selmer, Ebrahimi & Mingtao, 2002; Weng & McElroy, 2010). However, many people put less effort into career self-management (Chiaburu, Baker & Pitariu, 2006). These people normally reactively respond to changing career environments (Prabhu, 2007). The notion of career self-management behaviors was found to be crucial for HR practitioners since it influences individuals' career outcomes (Bambacas & Bordia, 2009; Chiaburu et al., 2006). Employees who concentrate on career self-management seem to be more proactive than those people who do not take action on their own career management (King, 2004; Raabe, Frese & Behr, 2007). Proactive behaviors of employees support both individual and organizational success

(Bjorklund, Bhatli & Laakso, 2013; Converse, Pathak, DePaul-Haddock, Gotlib & Merbedone, 2012; Crant, 2000; Prabhu, 2007). The concept of career management is discussed in this paper. It provides knowledge and idea to those who are interested in and involved in this issue.

2. Organizational Career Management

Organizational career management (OCM) refers to the programs or activities provided by organizations to support their employees' career success (Kong et al., 2010). OCM includes organizational practices in employees' career development (Verbruggen et al., 2007). OCM techniques (such as training and educational opportunities, performance appraisal for career planning, and mentoring program) which were identified in the literature could be adopted by companies to help employees to manage their careers (Crawshaw, 2006; Lewis & Arnold, 2012). OCM practices have an impact on employees' career satisfaction, for example, a study of hotel career management in China by Kong, Cheung and Song (2012a) found that hotel career management practices (e.g. training and career development programs) are positively related to career satisfaction. Employees' career satisfaction occurs when the organization provides them with the expected programs (Chiaburu, Diaz & De Vos, 2013). Yap, Holmes, Hannan and Cukier (2010) contend that employees were more satisfied with their careers when they perceived effective diversity training. Furthermore, OCM practices can improve employees' organizational commitment levels (Bambacas, 2010). The previous studies (e.g. Bambacas, 2010; Hsiao & Chen, 2012; Morrow, 2011; Shubin, 2006) maintain that OCM strengthens employees' organizational commitment.

OCM is not only related to career satisfaction and career commitment (De Vos et al., 2008; Sabourin, 2009), but it is also associated with job involvement (Zhou & Li, 2008). Job involvement refers to the extent to which individuals express psychological identification with their jobs (Zhou & Li, 2008). Zhou and Li (2008) assert that there is a relationship between OCM and job involvement since OCM enhances employees' job involvement. Job involvement has a significant impact on employees' performance (Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007). Highly job-involved employees put a lot of effort to achieve organizational objectives (Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007).

Career planning is a part of OCM (Baruch, 2003; Tzabbar, Vardi & Baruch, 2003). Organizations that rely on formal career planning try to match individual career plans with organizational career management (Mayrhofer, Meyer, Iellatchitch & Schiffinger, 2004; Tzabbar et al., 2003). Career planning is important tool for companies to make sure that employees will have required skills and knowledge when they are needed (Martín, Romero, Valle & Dolan, 2001). Career planning is helpful for matching organizational objectives and individuals' goals (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005). Organizations should be concerned with career planning because employees' career advancement depends on effective career planning (Arokiasamy, Ismail, Ahmad & Othman, 2011; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

As OCM provides career development programs for employees, they can develop competencies (e.g. technical and interpersonal competencies (McQuade & Maguire, 2005)) that promote their employability (De Vos, De Hauw & Van de Heijden, 2011; Kong et al.,

2012a). Individuals' competencies are required for promoting career advancement (Mihail & Elefterie, 2006) and sustaining their future employability (McQuade & Maguire, 2005; Mihail & Elefterie, 2006; Pinnington, 2011).

However, many organizations need to adapt to environmental changes (Gustavsson, 2012; Lee & Corbett, 2006; Zhao, Rust, McKinley & Edwards, 2010). They may improve their profitability and competitiveness by implementing organizational strategies (such as restructuring and downsizing) that can influence organizational career management practices (Gustavsson, 2012; Muñoz-Bullon & Sanchez-Bueno, 2010; Sheaffer, Carmeli, Steiner-Revivo & Zionit, 2009). As a result, traditional career management which is directed by organizations shifted to career self-management (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Wickramasinghe & Jayaweera, 2011).

3. Individual Career Management

According to changing nature of career and unstable employment, there is an increasing idea that individuals' career progression is the responsibility of themselves, not the organization's responsibility (Clarke, 2008; Enache, Sallán, Simo & Fernandez, 2013). Particularly, highly educated people are capable and able to management their own career (Dittmann, 2009; Mihail, 2008). Individual employees who are graduates can encourage themselves to remain employable and marketable, not only for developing a career in a particular organization, but also for developing lifelong transferable skills in job market (Bridgstock, 2011; Dittmann, 2009; Mihail, 2008).

Based on the concept of individual career management (ICM), employees are the central actors in managing their own careers (De Vos & Segers, 2013; King, 2004). ICM enhances individuals' perceptions of control over their careers, which in turn leads to career satisfaction (King, 2004; Raabe et al., 2007). Career satisfaction is "a person's subjective attitudes about a lifetime of work" (Lounsbury, Foster, Carmody, Kim, Gibson & Drost, 2012, p. 520). It represents the extent to which individuals perceive career progress as consistent with their personal career goals (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Chiaburu et al., 2013). Career satisfaction has been regarded as a key factor for individual and organizational success (Joo & Park, 2010; Oh, 2013). Whereas people who have a sense of career satisfaction need to remain in their profession and also contribute to career growth, people who lack career satisfaction may leave their profession (Mariani, 2007).

Since career self-management is related to individuals' proactive behaviors and self-control (King, 2004; Raabe et al., 2007), a study by Converse et al. (2012) contends that proactive personality and self-control are the predictors of career success. Similarly, the studies by Joo and Ready (2012) and Prabhu (2013) found that individuals' proactive personality can promote their career success. Proactive employees are likely to engage in improvement opportunities and innovative behaviors that are significantly related to career success (Owens, 2009).

ICM guides individuals' career development, enhances self-awareness and environmental awareness, and clarifies individuals' career goals, all of these functions lead to better career

decision (Weng & McElroy, 2010). People who focus on career self-management gather information, plan for solving career problems, and make a decision in their careers (Converse et al., 2012; Weng & McElroy, 2010). They are self-directed or self-managed people who are actively involved with lifelong learning (Muja & Appelbaum, 2012). Self-directed or self-managed career attitude of employees is important to their career success (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Enache, Sallan, Simo & Fernandez, 2011; Park, 2009).

Career management strategies are crucial to managing individuals' successful careers (Kahnweiler, 2006). Firstly, career self-management training programs should be designed to assist employees to play more effective role in their careers (Kossek, Robert, Fisher & Demarr, 1998). Secondly, HR professionals could be the leaders for individual career management (Kahnweiler, 2006; Van Veldhoven & Dorenbosch, 2008). In practice, HR professionals are the key actors for promoting employees' career self-management (Kahnweiler, 2006; Van Veldhoven & Dorenbosch, 2008). HR professionals usually assist other employees to manage their careers (Kahnweiler, 2006). Therefore, HR professionals should act effectively in their own career self-management so as they can show credibility with other employees and managers (Kahnweiler, 2006). If HR professionals are ineffective in their own career self-management, those employees may not trust them (Kahnweiler, 2006).

Particularly, the concept of career self-management is crucial to individuals who work for temporary jobs (Skilton & Bravo, 2008). In the project-based careers, individuals are responsible themselves for career management (e.g. developing skills, and seeking opportunities to work in other organizations) while they are working for temporary projects (Skilton & Bravo, 2008). The concept of career self-management is very applicable to project-based workers (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008).

4. Organizational Versus Individual Career Management

The difference between organizational career management and individual career management is that OCM is planned and managed by organizations (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Sturges, Guest, Conway & Davey, 2002; Zhou & Li, 2008). Conversely, ICM is controlled by individuals to plan their own careers and to involve in career decision-making process (Sturges et al., 2002).

Nowadays, there are increasing expectations from the organizations that employees should be for managing their own careers (Bambacas & Bordia, 2009; Kossek et al., 1998; Sturges et al., 2005) while the organizations still can provide career development programs for employees (Barnett & Bradley, 2007). Organizational support for employees' career development consists of formal support (e.g. career planning and training) and informal support (e.g. mentoring and coaching) (Barnett & Bradley, 2007). Effective career management, both OCM and ICM promote individuals' employability (Baruch, 2006; Kang, Gold & Kim, 2012; McCabe, 2008). The organizations that are able to adopt the new career management tactics can increase employees' work-related skills and knowledge (Power, 2010). Competent employees can easily move from one career to another (Clarke, 2008). A new idea of career management focuses not only on the employees' experiences in the current organization, but

also focuses on the mobility of employees to other possible employers (Power, 2010).

Employee career effectiveness refers to objective and subjective career success (Orpen, 1994). Objective career success can be observed directly such as salary growth and job promotion (Callanan, 2003). Conversely, subjective career success (i.e. psychological career success) is individual's feelings of how well he or she gains benefit of pursuing a career (Clarke, 2009; Orpen, 1994). The two terms 'subjective career success' and 'career satisfaction' can be used synonymously because they emphasize on individual's subjective evaluation of his or her career (Hofmans, Dries & Pepermans, 2008). OCM and ICM enhance employees' career satisfaction (Armstrong-Stassen & Cameron, 2005; King, 2004; Kong et al., 2012b). The organizations should improve employees' career satisfaction so as they could retain their employees (Hagiwara, Hasegawa, Chiba & Watase, 2014).

5. Conclusion

OCM and ICM are highlighted as important to career success, since the concepts of OCM and ICM support the ability of employees to achieve career advancement whether to progress in one organization or to move across organizations. However, the career management issue should be explored further in order to find out factors that thwart career growth. It would be helpful for HR professionals to design suitable career management programs that can assist employees to attain career goals. An understanding of the two concepts provides employers with the capability to reach competitive advantage.

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Glossary

Career: a sequence of work experiences

Career management: activities that are driven by an organization and an individual for the aim of planning and managing a career

Career success: positive psychological or positive work outcomes that individuals gain from their involvement in work experiences