Career Transitions Across and Within Organizations: Implications for Human Resource Development

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Career development has been explored extensively in the literature because of its benefits to individuals and the organizations. Career transitions across and within organizations is receiving attention in this knowledge era. Limited studies however, have been undertaken to determine how individuals and organizations are coping with career transitions within and across organizations. This paper reviews pertinent literature and shows that individuals mast be proactive and be prepared to manage their own careers.

Key Words: Career Transitions, Career Models, Employee Development

Given the knowledge and information age that we all find ourselves in, the issue of career planning and management has become more critical. Thus, "A career consists of a sequence of work-related positions occupied by a person for the course of a lifetime. Traditionally, careers were judged in terms of advancement and promotion upward in the organizational hierarchy; today, they are defined in more holistic ways to include a person's attitude and experiences" (Cummings & Worley, 2001, p. 413). World over, individuals, organizations, communities and societies are in continuous transition. The transitions are being experienced in the technological, social, educational, economic, political and environment spheres. This paper examines the impact of continuous transitions on individuals' careers across and within organizations. Graham and Nafukho (2004) observed that the business world is experiencing a metamorphosis precipitated by revolutionary changes in technology, diverse consumer demands, globalization of our economy, corporate downsizing, rightsizing, restructuring, and increased competition. These changes provide challenges and opportunities for all workers with regard to their careers. The challenges are even more crucial to HRD experts with regard to individual and organizational career goals.

The field of human resource development as an area of study consists of three core areas – organizational development, training and development and career development. This paper's main focus is on career development which has been defined as "… 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" (Greenhaus, 1987, p. 9). Career development has been divided into two distinct processes namely career management and career planning. DeSimone, Harris and Werner (2002) noted that career management involves the deliberate application of steps necessary to achieve the career plan, and maintain the career, and is usually administered in conjunction with the needs of the individual and the needs and support of the organization while career planning may be a solitary action or it individuals receiving career counselling services in a more formalized set of procedures. On the importance of career planning and management to individuals and organizations, Graham and Nafukho (2004, p. 2) observed " career development practices and activities selected and utilized by human resource development practitioners vary from a minor few to multiple possibilities when addressing the growth of employees' careers and ultimately the growth of the organization."

There are many theories and concepts that impact career development including career anchor theory, power and politics, group dynamics, culture of organization. They each play a role in career transitions across and within organizations; however, within the scope of this study, we are presenting a view of tools and resources that can be used by HRD professionals as they research and explore this new phenomenon of the transition from organization control to individual control over their career transitions. Schein's (1975) career anchor theory should be of great interest to HRD professionals as they explore the concept of career transitions because it looks at individual self-perception of their talents, abilities, motives, needs, attitudes and values. Bem's (1972) self-perception theory which explores how an individual comes to 'know' her own attitudes, emotions, and other internal states is also relevant.

Problem Statement and Purpose

Career transitions are critical to many individuals in today's global economy. For HRD professionals it is essential to understand how to assist individuals in their personal adjustment across and within organizations. There are many possibilities to consider when providing career planning and management resources to individuals. The purpose of this review is to identify tools and resources available and the extent that individuals and HRD professionals can incorporate them into daily activities as they adjust to the demands of managing career transitions across and within organizations.

The following research questions guided this study:
1. To what extent are current career planning and management tools and resources effective in assisting individuals and HRD professionals with career transitions across and within organizations?
2. In what way(s) can organizations provide career planning and management tools and resources to individuals to assist them in achieving successful career transitions within and across organizations?

Career Development Models

Career development models have been prevalent since Super's life-career rainbow: Six life roles in schematic life space model was initially developed in 1953 (Gibson & Mitchell, 2006). Super's model is one of the most accepted models, yet other models of interest include, Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice, and Hayes Career Transition Model (Banks, 2006b). In the 1990, Segmental model of career development, Super based his life span development theory on 14 propositions. His propositions suggest that biographical and geographical influences affect individuals as they progress through the career cycle. This model was designed to address the differences in people and how their personality and social policy play a role in their career success. (Banks, 2006b, p. 641). Holland's theory focuses on how a person expresses personality through the choice of a vocation and that interest inventories are really personality inventories. His Self-Directed Search instrument is used to match the person with the model work environment (Banks, 2006b).

Hayes' model identifies the following six steps for managing career transitions. She suggests that adults will go through this model several times during their career. The steps are as follows:
1. Self-Assessment: Employees get to know themselves very well by looking at their skills, values, interests and personality preferences.
2. Career exploration: Individuals open up to career possibilities and let go of stereotypes.
3. Decision making: People synthesize information and seek similarities among jobs and the marketplace and their own values, interests, personalities and skills.
4. Goal setting: Individuals establish goals to move forward towards their career choices.
5. Acquiring job search skills: People build networks of professional contacts and develop skills to market themselves to employers of choice.
6. Acquiring career success skills: Individuals learn ongoing career management skills and those that will help them fit into a new organization (Hayes, 2000, pp. 14-16).

Beverly Kaye's (1997) model is designed from the organizational perspective and is focused towards the organization developing and sustaining a career development plan that will be beneficial for itself and its employees. Kaye's perspective arises from the notion that: Career development is ideally a joint effort between the individual, the manager or leader, and the organization. While the individual has the primary responsibility for his or her own career, the leader is a supportive coach, and the organization provides the necessary systems and information. Career development involves looking realistically at the present conditions and at the career environment of today and tomorrow in order to regain the control necessary to ensure future productivity and job satisfaction (Kaye, 1997).

Kaye suggests that six stages of the career development cycle exist; they are as follows:
1. Preparing (Analyzing, Planning - During this phase organizations are to determine the scope and nature of the career development effort through analyzing the needs, problems, and activities that led to the career development effort and that will, eventually determine its objectives.
2. Profiling (Identifying, Reality Testing) - In the profiling stage, the employee is responsible for identifying skills and interests, the leader must support the effort by providing opportunities for discussion, while the practitioner makes a variety of assessment tools available.
3. Targeting (Exploring, Specifying - During the targeting phase the employee is to explore possibilities and specify goals. The organization is to provide guidance that points employees' exploration efforts in a

direction consistent with the organization. Leaders and practitioners are challenged to make exploration and opening of possibilities and goal-setting a realistic and profitable exercise.

4. Strategizing (Understanding, Synthesizing - The strategizing stage involves formulating a comprehensive strategy to accomplish the goals identified in stage three. Change is of the essence within this stage of development.

5. Implementing (Acquiring, Demonstrating - During the implementing stage employees seek information, opportunities, support persons or groups, and resources to attain goals. The organization, through practitioners, provides financial resources and developmental activities, monitors progress, establishes motivation and reward systems, and documents activities and results. Managers provide information, encourage employees, provide necessary time for employee development activities, and establish internal means for using new employee capacities. The three groups share responsibility for two-way, effective communication, ongoing feedback, change in support of career development, and improved utilization of the workforce.

6. Sustaining (Maintaining, Evaluating - Kaye also suggests several actions to sustain career development programs. They must be adapted to changing conditions, which can be done by designing various sustaining systems that keep the program alive during the preparation stage. Some questions to consider throughout this phase include:
   a. How does identified career development needs match our overall business direction?
   b. How can we create interventions that are flexible and adaptable enough to meet changing needs and audiences?
   c. How can our career development efforts be made to outlive individual stakeholders and Particular actions so they become part of the fiber of the organization (1997, p.21)?

Kaye suggests that individual movement between the stages may proceed sequentially or oscillate among stages; yet, all six must be experienced at least once for one complete cycle ending at the sustaining phase (1997).

The use of these and other models can be advantageous to individuals and HRD professionals; however, with the exception of Hayes' (2000) career transition model and Vardi's (1980) Integrative Model of Organizational Career Mobility Determinants (2001), none are specifically designed to provide individuals and HRD professionals with a plan to transition across or within an organization. There is a need for more models to address this void in today's economy. Many companies are downsizing, rightsizing, laying off workers, etc… and employees are being asked to make career transitions within their organization or across to other organizations. This issue is also expected to be critical over then next several years and continue for decades with the retirement of the baby boom generation which "has already begun to impact organizations in the U.S." (Smith & Doty, 2005, p. 888). There are many models for individuals and HRD professionals to choose from that contain many variables and parameters that outline the potential for success with career transitions across and within organizations. According to Robbins career planning has made a transition from a traditional approach where organizations took responsibility for managing their employees' careers to a boundaryless method which crosses boundaries, functions, and levels and individuals must become astute at managing their own careers and take responsibility for their future (Robbins, 2005). The many models and variables including individuals, situations, and events can influence an individual's career transition planning process; yet, ultimately, the individual is responsible for accepting, managing and executing the plan (Banks, 2006b).

Method

To successfully carry out this study, the literature review was conducted using academic literature databases, Proquest Research Library Plus, and Academic Search Premier. The search terms that were used are career development, career management, career planning, career models, career transitions, and human resource development. Initially, the recent data bases (1990-2007) were searched, and then earlier literature was searched. The references from books and articles were used to identify additional material on the topic of career transitions. Kennedy (2007, p. 139) noted "Although the literature review is a widely recognized genre of scholarly writing, there is no clear understanding of what constitutes a body of literature. Each reviewer must decide which specific studies to include or exclude from a review and why." Creswell (2003) recommends the use of literature maps to organize the literature around a topic. In this study, literature review summaries assisted in the organization of literature reviewed.

Review of Relevant Literature

Career Transition Across Organizations

The U. S. military is a field that deals with career transitions across organizations more than most other organizations since its members re-enter the workforce for economic, social or psychological reasons after their retirement (Hoffeditz, 2007). Military personnel usually retire after 20 years of service and are relatively young, so they often transition into other careers (Spiegel & Shultz, 2003). Many researchers (Brown, 1995, Chope, 2001; Huuhtanen, 1994; Lankard, 1993) have noted the need for career transition assistance training to help individuals alleviate the stress and anxiety associated with this major life change. McQuarrie and Jackson (2002) also note that there are many constraints that impact career transitions across organizations including how an individual's leisure career. Many individuals consider how their selection of a career will impact their personal life from the perspective of family responsibilities, relocation and other factors when choosing to move to a different organization.

Another constraint that individuals must consider when transitioning across organizations include the transferability of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's). Employees need to feel that their skills are transferable across organizations. HRD professionals can assist employees with developing and maintaining skill sets that are broad enough to use within and across organizations. Spiegel and Schultz (2003) found that individuals must avail themselves to the career planning resources offered by their organization and/or seek additional resources to ensure their transitions from the military to the civilian workplace is successful.

Individuals who transition across organizations must recognize that it is a process that requires time and effort. Louis (1980) provided a Coping with Career Transitions: Sense- Making Process for individuals as they consider their prospects after leaving an organization. According to Isaacson and Brown (1997) Holland's model reflects the view that the success of a person on a job depends on the extent to which the individual's personality and work environment are compatible. Therefore employees must be aware of work environments as they consider transferring across organizations.

In the new paradigm that is gripping the career development field, employability has begun to replace employees' feeling of security within the organization and "self-determination is the underlying principle governing the organization, and in this spirit individuals manage their own careers"(p.41). The change to the global economy has brought about many changes that impact career transitions. According to Nicholoson (1996), The globalization of business and the information revolution have reduced entry barriers to previously protected markets, heightened exposure to a multitude of financial and environmental risks, raised the competition for scarce human and material resources, and raised the expectations of interest groups and consumers. (pp. 42-43). HRD professionals have to be aware of all of these elements as they interact within organizations and with individuals who are making changes in their careers. They must address the diversity of the individual as well as the variety of needs within the organizations. The opportunities appear endless as the world's economy continues to evolve; however, one must not forget that there is also risk involved when selecting someone from outside an organization. On risk in particular is that after all of the upfront investment in recruiting and selecting the individual, they may not fit within the organizational culture.

The type of training that is needed to ensure understanding of culture is particularly import in Asia with regards to the emergence of China and India's economies within the global market place. According to Jacobs and Osman-Gani (2005) where the training occurs has "much to do with training effectiveness" (p.vi). They provide 18 cases in countries across Asia, Europe, the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, India, Taiwan and Singapore that show the importance of employee training and learning to organizational success.

Career Transition within Organizations

Career transitions within organizations are vital as organizations work to achieve their goals both internally and externally. Human capital investments are seen as a value added component of an organization's expenditures as opposed to a cost that takes away from the bottom line of its budget. Now that employees are truly considered to be a valuable asset to organizations due to the knowledge economy that is prevalent throughout the world, HRD professionals who focus on career development and management must research and develop models and concepts that enhance the value of employees within organizations.

The research literature on this topic offers a myriad of concepts with regards to how organizations and individuals are involved in career transitions within organizations. Most of the research has been from the perspective of the organization's needs as opposed to the needs of the individual. However, in today's economy individuals have more input into the type of work they pursue, the priorities and conditions under which they work (Vondracek, 1998). Organizations now must consider employee choice along with organizational goals as they make job role adjustments.

Vardi (1980) defines OCM as "the actual intraorganizational job mobility experienced by employees as the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors related to these experiences" (p. 341). The concept of a career is based on psychological, sociological, administrative and economic factors. Questions from Vardi's (1980) study that are still very relevant today include:

1. Under what circumstances are individual – difference variables more or less important than organizational characteristics in predicting mobility patterns?
2. What is the effect of an organization's technology on facilitating or delimiting mobility?
3. Does the organization's structure make a difference?
4. Is size important?
5. How important is the individual's skills or aspirations in predicting mobility patterns?
6. Are skills and ability more important for making career decisions in an intensive type of technology than in a routinized technology?
7. Can the existence of unions result in different career mobility patterns?
8. How do various processes in the organization influence one's career opportunities? (p. 342)

While pondering Vardi's questions, one would not think that they were from more than two decades earlier. They are relevant to today's workplace and HRD professionals are still seeking answers. As individuals choose to move across organizations, these questions are often first to come to mind. Since 1980 companies have been in some ways forcing employees to leave and seek employment elsewhere. The reasons are many but the fact remains that we do not have the answers to these questions.

In trying to answer the questions, Vardi (1980) noted that career transition moves were to fill job vacancies and managed based on seniority rights and/or expertise using recruitment, transfers, promotions or training that reflected organizational policies; however, the "resultant mobility is a function of the interaction between organizational attributes and individual- level determinants"(p.343). The interaction that is required between the organization and individual is still an issue today. Constraints such as environmental, organizational and individual career must be addressed so that career transition efforts within organizations can be applicable and successful in the workplace (Vardi, 1980).

Nicholson also (1984) explored intraorganizational movement of employees from the perspective of "work role transitions, linking personal and organizational adjustment outcomes with the characteristics of the person, the role and the organization" (p. 172). The individual must adjust personally to their role within the organization. They must also realize that "the competencies essential to success at one level do not necessarily qualify individuals for advancement – nor does a long tenure with the organization (Rothwell, Jackson, Knight & Lindholm, 2005, p.32).

Communication between individuals and organizational management is essential as Career transitions are considered within the organization. Without an understanding of the goals of the organizations and how they promote from within – rather upward or laterally – individuals are unsure of how to proceed. According to (Rothwell, Jackson, Knight & Lindholm, 2005) many organizations suffer from lack of adequate internal career planning programs simply because, while many organizational leaders make it a practice never to tell people if they are successors or are in the talent pool, the organization's leaders never have a chance to compare their intentions for a person to his or her own career goals (p.35). London (1996) surmised the importance of training and development to organizational growth and noted that employee development can be directed to business expansion and, in the process, increase career opportunities within the organization; thereby, enhancing the overall value of an organization. Internal development is perceived by many employers as the most beneficial way to retain talented employees thus reducing the cost associated with having to hire additional personnel.

Discussion and Conclusions

Contemporary transitions within the workplace have led to many changes. Some organizations have minimized the negative impact on employees and inspired them to use their abilities to contribute in new ways that add value to the organization. As a strategy to manage change, organizations have established self-managing teams; end-to-end, process management; quality improvement; continuous learning; customer responsiveness; flexible job and work group structures; outsourcing; and outplacement. However, some organizations have mishandled transitions resulting in severe stress, long-term unemployment, premature retirements, and resentment, especially among mid and late career employees, including early career professionals (London, 1996). Since all these changes impact individual careers within and across organizations, organizational leaders must be willing to address career issues and how they affect employee transitions and productivity.

In this paper, we have examined the main career development models with a special emphasis on the issues of career transition within and across organizations. As evidenced from the selected studies reviewed in this paper, issues pertaining to individual career growth in this knowledge revolution era require the individual to be an active participant in the career management process. No longer can employers alone be expected to plan career paths for their employees. French, (1998) concluded that career planning and management must aim at preparing a competent workforce ready to adapt to the changing work conditions. We concur with this observation and conclude that career

paths issues require individuals to be innovative and creative in managing their own careers. To do this, they must continuously be willing to learn informally and formally. In addition, individuals must communicate actively within and without the organization on career growth issues. The technological revolutions taking place at the workplace should also help individuals to network and grow their careers. Employees should be proactive and ready to learn the emerging technologies as a career growth strategy. While individuals are challenged to manage their own careers, it is critical to emphasize that organizations must continuously invest in people since they are the real assets They have, as correctly noted, "Understanding present and future human resource needs provide a clear competitive advantage over other organizations that fail to do so. It also facilitates discussions to guide individual development to meet individual career goals" (Rothwell, Jackson, Knight & Lindholm, 2005, p.33).

Implications for Human Resource Development

HRD professionals have long been involved in career development; yet with the transition in focus from the organization to the individual, it is essential that they understand how the two entities relate to achieve smooth transitions across and within organizations. This area of inquiry is relatively new and offers a vast opportunity for HRD researchers to explore processes and methods that can assist both the individual and the organization to achieve success. Opportunities will be vast since "between 1998 and 2008, almost twice as many job openings are occurring or will occur from people retiring rather than from economic expansion" (Rothwell, Jackson, Knight & Lindholm, 2005, p. xiii). Exploring and understanding the elements of employee development, change, economic and career stability may add value to the life of the employees, their community and the workplace.

There are very few tools and resources available to the individual. Banks' S*elf-Assessment and Sufficiency Career Planning Model* (2006a) is designed primarily for individual development within organizations. It could be tested and/or used by HRD professionals within the course of their research to enhance individual development within organizations. One area of HRD that may find it most useful may be Coaching. Career coaching is a relatively new field that provides extensive opportunity for HRD research.

HRD professionals can further explore the concepts contained within this study to address industry/sector issues related to external labor market conditions and socioeconomic influences of why and how individuals make career transitions across and within organizations throughout the world.

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