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Career Development And Learning In The Civil Service

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Abstract

Contemporary concept of career comprises not only vertical promotion to higher posts but also any change of posts, responsibilities and the related learning. Currently it is almost unanimously agreed that career is owned by an individual, but organizations, via their career development systems, can also actively participate in the employees' career development. The purpose of the empirical research was assessment and analysis of the following individual level career development and learning related constructs: career conception, career aspirations, conceived career possibilities, career barriers, career satisfaction, work engagement and evaluation of learning system suitability/non-suitability for career development in the Lithuanian civil service. The representative survey of the Lithuanian civil servants was carried out. The applied method enabled to clarify the career development and learning related tendencies and attitudes in the Lithuanian civil service. The main findings of the research were that the level of career aspirations in the civil service is much higher than the level of conceived career possibilities. The most important barriers for career in the civil service are considered lack of career opportunities in the civil service, unfavourable career policy towards civil servants and belief that selection and promotion processes are unfair.

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1. Introduction

The organization is a system where career can be made. However, not all organizations have formalized career development systems supporting individuals who are willing to implement their career aspirations. Career development system provides the main principles which regulate careers of the employees, it reflects the dynamic aspects of Human resources management (HRM), encompassing and integrating the majority of HRM processes.

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Well-designed career systems provide an opportunity for organizations to upraise to the highest levels of management hierarchy the people who are able to generate, create and implement new ideas helping the organization to adapt to rapidly changing environment (Higgins & Dillon, 2007). The current career development theory focuses largely on the individual, while the field of human resource development is mostly concentrated on the organization or large systems (Upton, 2006). Therefore, many scholars of these areas (Savickas, 2002; Upton, 2006; Patton & McMahon, 2006) foresee the opportunity for the convergence of individual career development and human resource development research. This approach would provide a chance for HRM professionals to address career and learning related goals important for both employees and organizations. The individual is considered to be the main subsystem of an organizational career development system. Therefore, the identification of individual-related factors and the analysis of the individual's approach to career and learning provide a solid background for modelling the career development system. The purpose of the research was assessment and analysis of the following individual level career development and learning related constructs: career conception, career aspirations, conceived career possibilities, career barriers, career satisfaction, work engagement and evaluation of learning system suitability/non-suitability for career development in the Lithuanian civil service.

2. Method

2.1. Subjects and procedure

The representative survey of the Lithuanian civil servants was carried out. Selection of the respondents for the research was carried out using probability cluster selection method. This type of selection is implemented dividing all the possible respondents into the groups, which are similar according to the characteristics important for the research and varying inside the groups. 523 respondents participated in the survey. Age of the respondents was from 22 to 64, distribution of the respondents according to gender: males - 41,3 per cent and females - 58,5 per cent. The respondents were distributed equally among all the categories of civil servants, representing their status and the position in the hierarchy of the Lithuanian civil service: from the lowest to the highest. The pilot research was carried out before the main research to verify the scales.

2.2. Measures

The following constructs were measured in the research: career conception, career aspirations, conceived career possibilities, career barriers, career satisfaction, work engagement and evaluation of learning system suitability/non-suitability for career development. Career conception is considered to be the basis of the individual level career factors. It could be defined as general attitudes towards career held by the person, which can help to make career or prevent from making it in spite of the factual conditions provided for career in the organization. Career conception was assessed using semantic differential methodology (Osgood et al., 1957). One polarity of the 5 point scale constructed by the authors of this article refers to traditional and the other to contemporary conception of career. The dichotomies of adjectives of contemporary and traditional career conceptions were constructed using contemporary career conceptions introduced by Arthur & Rousseau, (1996); Peiperl & Baruch, (1997); Peterson and Anand, (2002); Hall (2002); Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer & Meyer (2003). Career aspirations are understood as a desire and intention to pursue a role or a particular position within an organization or a wider system. Aspirations play an important role in career decisions because they reflect the goals and intentions that foster individuals to pursue a particular course of action (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006). Career aspirations were assessed using single item 5 point scale: would you like to pursue career in the civil service? Conceived career possibilities refer to possible career paths, their quality, quantity and adequacy for the individual within a social system as conceived by the individual. Conceived career possibilities were assessed with 3 item 5 point scale developed by the authors of this article. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0,78. Career barriers comprise individual's perceptions of negative conditions that might interfere with career progress. In this research we identified the list of 16 possible career barriers and asked to indicate how much each item was considered to be a barrier for career in the civil service. Career satisfaction is an important factor in research on career development and other areas of inquiry. Career satisfaction is often regarded as a key outcome representing career success and personal fulfilment (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006). Career satisfaction was assessed using 6 item 5 point scale constructed by the authors of the article. Cronbach's

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