

CAREER MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT A CASE OF CIVIL SERVICE OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

As to who is responsible for managing and developing the employee career has invited unending debate among the HRM writers and practitioners. Some authors particularly with traditional career beliefs emphasize it as organizational domain (organizational perspective), whereas the proponents of the contemporary version of the career are in the favour of the idea that it should be responsibility of the individual (individual perspective). This paper explores the concept of career in civil bureaucracy of Pakistan, how it is managed and developed and what type of the hurdles it is subjected to. These factors are examined in the backdrop of the cultural constraints and the traditional bureaucratic idiosyncrasies.

INTRODUCTION

In traditional view, career denotes a direction and purpose bound route that one treads through the sequence of work-related positions and experiences (Yahuda 2004). Such career has upward movement along the hierarchy, high earning, status and prestige (Kanter 1989). Traditional career has its roots in old theme of the psychological contract between the employer and the employee (Torrington et. al 2002) that transacts loyalty and commitment for security and future career (Waterman et. al 1994, Hall 1996), thus relational in nature. The traditional career on the same pattern tends to try and bind the person with the organization for life (Harrison 2005).

But the global changes that have caused the enforced redundancies, flatter organizational structures, short term contracts, availability of part-time rather than full-time work have not left the future as certain and predictable as was got assumed under the notion of the old psychological contract (Nicholson 1996). This suggested unpredictability of the future whereupon the employers

do not seem certain about fulfilling their long-established part of the bargain have broken the idealized image of the traditional career. Amidst this changed scenario, the psychological contract concomitantly has got a renegotiated and newer version in order to facilitate the contracting parties discharge their contractual obligations accordingly (Herriot & Pemberton 1996). The new version of the psychological contract shifts emphasis towards exchange of the continuous learning by the individuals and managing their careers themselves, with the opportunities provided by the organizations to enhance their future employability and the psychological success (Hall 1996). This form of psychological contract is 'transactional' in nature and provides more explicit negotiation between the parties regarding mutual expectations and obligations (Jackson 2000).

So, the concept of the career that is based on this notion of the psychological contract implies a shift from the 'job for life' approach towards the 'job for now' approach. This shift of focus has resulted in careers being defined more broadly rather than simply from the vantage point of the employer-employee lifetime relationships, hence giving rise to the new concepts of career: Portfolio career, Boundary-less career and Protean career.

INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

The first reason of emphasis on the individuals for development of their careers is natural; being the owners of their careers the people themselves should act as their sculptors shaping them according to their own needs. Since they know better about their capabilities, previous experience, current position, age, domestic circumstances, financial situation, lifestyle choices, and future plans, they are supposed to be in better position to take decisions about their own careers. In effect, with this line of argument, it looks sensible for the organization to step back and allow them to create their own career as they see fit.

This point is strengthened by the fact that careers cannot be viewed from a narrow angle of employee-employer relationship alone. Instead, they have a cause and effect relationship with the life of the person as a whole rather than the person just as an employee. Arthur *et.al.* (1999) endorse this point when they see careers as organic entities, with developing lifecycles, and which

are shaped by the complex interactions between personal makeup and choice, and the external forces of family, class, and economic and organizational circumstances.

Second reason of emphasis on the individual perspective is the fast changing environment in the modern day world. Globalization, technological advances have loosened traditional control of the organizations over the individuals. So fewer organizations are able to guarantee lifetime job security today and can do little about satisfying the needs of the individuals to move onward owing to limited promotion prospects along the flattened hierarchies (Armstrong 2004). So the need of the organizations to be responsive to the rapidly changing environment necessitates greater flexibility on part of the employees requiring them to attain career self-reliance and career resilience through enhancing their employability and marketability by means of managing themselves and building up their skills, knowledge and portfolios while working independently as many professionals do.

This cardinal shift towards flexible pattern of working has given rise to the contemporary arena of individually managed flexible careers with different patterns like, protean careers (Noe 2000), portfolio careers (Handy 1994), boundary less careers (Arthur 1994), post-corporate careers (Peiperl *et.al.* 1997).

Under this regime, personal achievements and life satisfaction are probably less likely to be solely equated with promotions within organizational structures (Evans 1986); rather career advancement will be seen as a means of enhancing personal lifestyles which are separated from, rather than subordinated to, the work roles. And fewer managers may now be reliably regarded as 'organization men' fully prepared to act as 'willing slaves to the system' (Pahl & Pahl 1971) or to be called as the 'first class ticket holders on the corporate train' (Hirsh & Jackson 1996). Armstrong (2004) endorses this point saying that the idea of providing 'cradle to grave' careers is no longer as relevant in the more changeable job markets of today, and this self-planned, multi-skilling process provides for the availability of a greater number of qualified people.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The most common argument in favor of the organization perspective has its origin in the traditional concept of 'organizations own the individuals' (Herriot 1992). Ipso facto, the organizations are supposed to take the responsibility of planning, managing, and developing the careers of the human resources they own to ensure that their contributions meet the organizations' requirements, both now and in the future (Prest 2005).

Secondly, fast emerging strategic role of the valued knowledge workers in attaining the competitive advantage has started a war-of-talent among the organizations that prompts them to remain proactive and maintain their skill base or human capital by means of retaining the key staff (Yarnall 1998), undertaking succession planning continuously (Walker 1992) and helping the individuals plan and manage their careers. Dissatisfaction with the career prospects is a major cause of the turnover. And if the organizations do not pay heed to the developmental needs of the individuals and they get frustrated out of the absence of the growth direction it is possible that they may turn into liabilities over them either through poor performance or voluntary termination (Greenhaus *et. al.* 1994, Noe 2000).

Third point for the organization perspective emanates from the arguments like that of Yarnall (1998) that it is yet to be tested if employees actually want more self-control over their career. A CIPD Survey Report (2003) gives weight to this argument suggesting that only 32% of the employees are in favour of assuming responsibility for driving their career management and development activities, whereas the majority of 68% still believed it to be a purview of the organizations.

The argument of Yarnall (1998) is more relevant to the developing countries like Pakistan where majority of the individuals do not want greater self-control over their careers. Being more sustenance-driven and dependency and security oriented in general, they prefer lifeline cash security, and smooth and predictable move along the hierarchy that is possible only through organizationally based careers. To these people, the concepts of portfolio careers and boundary-less careers that persuade the individuals to break the organizational leash, cannot be sold nor are they appropriate for them.

Harrison (1997) corroborates it saying even where individuals are willing to assume greater responsibility in this connection; the chances to do so are limited because market demands are not under their control. Bailyn (1989) also agrees with this saying knowing one's abilities, interests and values alone is not sufficient for effective career development. One must also be able to decipher the career rules and cultural norms at work in the organization.

RECONCILIATORY AND INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

This remains a fact that there is a tension between what the organizations want out of their staff and what individuals want out of their careers and the two rarely overlap entirely (Bolton and Gold 1995). And this gap is fast widening amid environmental and organizational turbulences. This fact increasingly poses a challenge of matching the career related needs of the organizations with those of the people who work for it. Yarnall (1998) says it has posed a significant challenge for the organizations to provide a good career deal for the employees in order to enable the business needs to be met at a time when organizational pressures mitigate against traditional organizational-led solutions to career management.

A way out to this challenge is implied in the integrated approach to the career management and development that incorporates needs of the both organization and the individuals amidst challenges of the new realities and creates a good degree of symbiosis, reciprocity (Herriot 1992, Arthur *et. al.* 1999), mutual commitment (Harrison 2005) and good fit (Herriot & Stickland 1996) between them, achieving a "we're-in-together" (Jackson 2000) state of existence.

So, in today's fast changing environment, instead of hankering after the traditional concept of developing commitment and loyalty through the job security, new ideas are needed to be introduced to recompense the loss of balance in the relationship equation between the organization and the individual (Yahuda 2004) in the light and spirit of the new psychological contract. Torrington *et.al.* (2002) elaborate it saying that in the deal situation that is different from the past the employees may offer high productivity and total commitment in exchange for the employers

offering enhanced employability rather than long-term employment, thus enabling them to develop skills that are in demand and that are needed to obtain another appropriate job when they are no longer needed by their present employer.

This harmony can be better achieved if the career management practices are based on the business requirements and are aligned with the business and human resource strategies both vertically and horizontally (Thomson & Mabey 1994, Walton 1999, Harrison 2005) constituting a successful career system (Yahuda 2004) substantially supported by the top management (Schein 1978, Hirsh *et. al.* 1996, Harrison 2005) and assisted by the line managers (Buhler 1994, Mayo 1994, Harrison 2005). This coherent approach on part of the organizations can create a needed climate that communicates commitment towards the employee development (Crampton *et. al.* 1994).

But the CIPD Survey Report (2003) gives a gloomy picture of the organizations' role in that regard. It sees career management slipping down the business agenda and being treated as a non-essential 'nice to have' activity rather than as a core part of the organizational resource planning and day-to-day management. The report suggests the elements like lack of time and resources and lack of senior management commitment that views the career management as an optional or peripheral activity, as main barriers to the career management and development in the organizations.

Harrison (1997) warns the organizations against this behaviour saying if the individuals' career aspirations are to be brought into productive alignment with the organization's need for the business growth, the individuals must be understood, and treated not as the 'servants' of the organization rather as organizational stakeholders having the power either to expend or with-draw energy, expertise and commitment. Thomas (1976) joins the warning saying that for their survival, the organizations have to alleviate the growing concern of the individuals that organizations are indifferent to their personal career aspirations and they are using them just as a means to an end.

CAREER PATTERN IN THE CIVIL BUREAUCRACY OF PAKISTAN

Majority of the people in Pakistan are sustenance-driven having security and dependency motives (Gellerman 1998). Remaining connected to the organization means a secure cash lifeline (Schein 1993). Security and dependency orientation of the people has its roots in the long standing unemployment, poverty and a general tendency of uncertainty avoidance. These factors accumulatively have given rise to a culture that prefers though meager but secure income over possibly high but uncertain one – conducive for continuation of the traditional employer-employee relationship. In general thinking, there is no concept of career in Pakistan in isolation from the organizations (Herriot 1992) except certain professions like medical practitioners, architects, lawyers and the skilled artistes. Employment is taken as a blessing. People welcome the 'golden handcuff' (Schein 1993) and generally there is no concept of breaking the leash and entering into the venture of boundary-less careers. For, individuals changing organizations frequently make them suspicious and unreliable in that culture. People want to be recognized for their loyalty, reliability, and commitment preferably with reassurances of further stability and continued employment. Paradoxically, organizational hierarchies are tall that keep the individuals engrossed in finding a place on the next rung of the ladder instead of promoting their employability (Scase & Goffee 1989, Quote Sofer 1970).

A career in civil bureaucracy of Pakistan is lifetime tenure and is mainly constituted by the rank of the individuals with basic pay scales and a hierarchy to tread upward throughout their life (Schein 1993). It can be better understood through the words of Max Weber (1904), founding father of the concept of today's civil bureaucracy who says a strict mechanism of bureaucratic apparatus is offered by a secured salary connected with the opportunity of a career that is not dependent upon mere accident and arbitrariness, rather in the conditions fixed in terms of seniority wherein official is set to move from the less important and lower paid to the higher position.

So, promotion of the officials in civil bureaucracy of Pakistan is strictly on the basis of seniority, an objective and tangible criterion of promotion (Martocchio 2001). Before-time or out-of-

turn promotions in the government departments are rare occasions. No career development intervention and succession planning is needed since vacant position is to be occupied by the next junior waiting for promotion.

A significant character of this type of career is that it is stable and well predictable and everyone knows her/his destination with respect to a certain time. "Career is lifetime that reaches the plateau only on day of superannuation" (Weber 1904). Complacency is abundant since once appointed no one can be easily expelled from the service.

But, opposite to the above, there is no significant structured programme for the intrinsic growth of the government employees particularly at the lower level. The main source of their learning is random job rotation. They are exposed simply to an unguided sort of job experience, randomly moving from one job to the other and completing the chain of learning and know-how through a trial and error method. The entrants while treading along the narrow career paths acquire narrow and department specific knowledge and skills that in no way creates career flexibility among them.

The bureaucratic environment, ipso facto, dampens internal development through thwarting creativity and innovation on the job and encouraging red tape through making the individuals resort to precedents and past practices (Blau 1971). 'Don't do anything wrong' (LeBoeuf 1985), is the general watchword of the civil bureaucracy of Pakistan. The officials prefer to play safe instead of venturing for the creative decisions, since mistakes could cost them high in the blame culture (Holbeche 1995) of this bureaucracy.

Another significant factor that belittles the importance of on-the-job learning in civil bureaucracy of Pakistan is the job context orientation of the officialdom rather than their interest in the work itself. Job enrichment (Hackman & Oldham 1980), job challenge and other intrinsic motivation tools (Herzberg 1966) do not matter as much to them as improved pay, working conditions, benefits and formal tenure system. For the bureaucrats, life is hierarchy and success means moving up in it. Marking time and staying at the same position is interpreted as dropping out, which is a source of personal anxiety and frustration (Sease & Goffee 1989).

More valued to the bureaucrats is keeping the political government appeased and enjoying posting of choice with

tremendous nuisance value in the public whereby they can enhance their earnings and maximize their material returns. Instead of enhancing employability and developing career insight in this sort of career regime, they need more the political skills necessary for careful maneuvering and positioning to seize the 'chance' opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Dimensions of the career in the civil bureaucracy of Pakistan debated above are predominantly external and organizational rather than internal. The external career concerns how other people and society perceive an individual's career - in terms of development, advancement along the hierarchy, status, financial success, opportunities and actual job sequences. Organizational dimension of career is taken in terms of power, influence, positions and roles the individuals fill during the working life. Both these dimensions are more objective in nature and pertain to extrinsic growth of the individuals as compared to the internal dimension of the career that relates to their self conception about their own careers.

These features plainly place this career system in the traditional category that bestows empowerment to the organization to control the individual's career matters. While concentrating on the external and organizational dimensions of the career, the bureaucratic system provides the people with a career roadmap of identifiable positions, inter-relationships between these positions, and a mechanism to enable people navigate this roadmap through life.

Since this pattern of the career safeguards the interests of the mighty bureaucracy of Pakistan and promotes its awe and pomp, the message is clear that it will take time before the prescriptions of focusing on employability rather than employment and the concepts of flexible career could find entry into the rarefied lines of the civil bureaucracy of Pakistan. And keeping in view the compatibility of this career system with the cultural values, it is likely that the civil bureaucracy of Pakistan will continue to be the largest employer in the country.

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