

## CAREER MANAGEMENT IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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### Abstract

*Career management is a specialized activity that provides the relation between HRM and the individual and organizational career planning. The health system is changing, more than any other field. Career Management in the health care system involves a complex process of analysis and human resource planning at both the organizational and the individual level.*

**Keywords:** *career, human resources, management, profession, planning, analysis*

**JEL Classification :** I1, J2, M5

### 1. Introduction

The concept of career management is a relatively new concept, which involves a process of analysis and a human resource planning at both organizational and individual level.

Career management refers to the potential of human resources and to the management succession, but in order to plan and develop the individual and organizational career it has to take into consideration the goals and strategies of the organization so that it could provide the financial resources that will support the subsequent steps, endeavours.

There are many types of careers in the healthcare system, therefore in the healthcare system employees can have multiple and long-term careers, taking into account the time needed to reach the professional maturity.

### 2. Contents

From the theoretical point of view, there were formulated numerous definitions of the concept of "career", this one being associated with multiple meanings of words such as promotion, profession, succession of positions or jobs throughout life, etc.

Career is often associated with the position of manager, director or other executive positions, ignoring the execution positions. But, regardless of the

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perspective from which we approach this notion, it is definitely about work, lifestyle and even extra professional life.

According to the opinion expressed by David J. Cherrington<sup>1</sup>, career can be defined as a sequence of individual experiences related to work and gained throughout life; other authors consider "career" as a succession of positions in a hierarchy, together with other related positions and R.L. Mathis, P.C Nica C.Rusu define career<sup>2</sup> as a sequence of positions which each employee has, in an ascending order of their prestige, according to a predictable rule. Sharing the same opinions one can say a career can be long or short, and an individual may have multiple careers, one after another or simultaneously.

Douglas T. Hall<sup>3</sup> considers that *career is the individual perception of the sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with the working experiences and activities throughout personal life*. The individual perception, he says, may have both *objective and subjective aspects*.

*The objective aspects* are related to the professional development of each individual, his/her outcomes and experiences that can lead to international career prospects.

*The subjective aspects* refer to self-assessment, how each individual estimates his/her potential.

Thus, different definitions of career are sometimes contradictory, for instance *the sequence of the individual working experiences that are gained throughout life* does not mirror the idea that an individual can have *more long or short careers*, at the same time or one after another.

On the other hand, while some authors present career as a sequence of positions, others consider it as a sequence of experiences or behavioral attitudes.

In this context, we agree with the idea that an individual can have several careers in his lifetime, and we even agree with the idea that they could coexist at the same time, except for the executive positions. This situation does not occur because it leads to incompatibility and sometimes to a conflict of interests, both situations being provided in the current legislation, especially for public institutions.

Thus, *career can be defined as a sum of experiences gained on account of the performed activity, regardless of the position held, which can influence the individual's professional ascent in accordance with his/her skills, qualifications, abilities and, last but not least, his/her willingness*

From the point of view of the individual career development, many experts have tried to outline the stages of career development. Thus, Torrington D. and L. Hall<sup>4</sup> present nine stages of a career (according to E. Schein) in the following table:

<sup>1</sup> David J. Cherrington, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> R. L. Mathis, P. C. Nica, C.Rusu, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> T. H. Douglas, 1986, *Career Development in organization*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> D. Torrington, L. Hall, 1995, *Personnel Management: HRM in Action*, Prentice-Hall International, London, p. 439.

Table 1 - *The stages of career development (according to E. Schein)*

No.	Age	Stages	No.	Age	Stages
1	0-21	Development, fantasies, exploration	6	35-45	Crises in the middle of career
2	16-25	Employment	7	After 40	Late career
3	16-25	Main qualifications	8	After 40	Decline and retirement
4	17-30	Early career	9	After 40	Retirement
5	after 25	Middle of career			

Source: D. Torrington, L. Hall, op. cit., p. 439.

Other specialists<sup>5</sup> consider that the career stages are four as follows:

1. establishment, when the employees are aged 18-24, when the individual gains the basic knowledge and the skills related to the position;
2. promotion, from 25 to 39 years old, when he/she gets his autonomy;
3. maintenance, from 40 to 54 years old, characterized by the development of qualifications and the gaining of esteem;
4. retirement from 55 to 65 years old, when there is the gradual loss of the work identity and the work experience is shared with the others.

In the contemporary society, however, *we cannot speak of a career decline after 40 years old or of a retirement after 55 years old because in certain fields the specific skills and the professional specialization are achieved after a long period of time, therefore after 40-45 years old one can hardly be considered to have completed the qualification-training cycle.*

*Career Management* is the relation between the individual and organizational career planning, it is a specialized activity of HRM, correlated with the activities specific to the specialized departments.

The concept of career management involves a process of analysis and a human resource planning at both organizational and individual level.

M. Armstrong<sup>6</sup> *defines career management as the design and implementation of goals, strategies and plans which enable both the company to meet the needs for human resources, and individuals to meet their career goals.*

Gheorghita Căprărescu<sup>7</sup> mentions that *career management is the process which provides the promotion of employees and the succession of the managing board, in accordance with the needs of the company, with the employees' qualifications, performances and preferences.*

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Gibson, J. M. Ivancevich, J. M. Donnelly, 1988, *Organizations*, Business Publications Inc., Texas, p. 660.

<sup>6</sup> M. Armstrong, *Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice*, 1999, Kogan Page, London, p. 471.

<sup>7</sup> Gheorghita Căprărescu, op. cit., p. 116-123.

Thus, while the first definition refers to the goals, strategies and planning of the company that will determine the development of the human resources, the second relates directly to the employees' promotion and the succession of the managing board.

Career management aim at both the potential of human resources and the succession of the managing board, but in order to elaborate a plan for the individual and organizational career development, we have to take into account the goals and the strategies of the company to provide the financial resources that will represent the base of the subsequent steps.

According to R. L. Mathis<sup>8</sup>'s opinion and other specialists' opinion, career planning models in which the entire staff of a company may be comprised, are presented below.

The "*chance and luck*" model which is based solely on chance and "blind" luck to get the right position and requires that the person be at/in the right place at the right time, this model being followed by most of the employees, but most of the time, it leads to a high rate of delusion;

The "*company knows best*" model, according to which the employee move from one position to another depending on the needs of the company, the model can be accepted by some young people who depend on adults, but it can have negative effects on adults because of the perception that the company is abusing them;

The self-oriented model that aims at the performance and satisfaction, according to which the employees themselves have the ability to evaluate their own career development opportunities.

Furthermore, it is estimated that employees who feel that the manager is interested in their careers are loyal, performing at the same time, quality work.

According to a study made by Duke University in the U.S., *people who have a stable job, good working conditions and professional satisfactions live longer than those who consistently change the job or are discontent with their careers and job positions.*

Considering the models and typologies presented herein, it can be concluded that for the development of individual careers, it is necessary for the employees to know their own personality and their abilities, they should not limit just to chance or luck, because it is said very often, "each person makes his/her own luck."

Career choice is an individual act, which is a general concern, mainly among young people, that are more concerned about building a career, though often they are tempted to pass over certain stages of professional development to reach directly the top of the management hierarchy. Their wish comes true and successful if they have the *chance and luck* but most of the time, a position obtained in this way cannot be preserved for a long time.

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<sup>8</sup> R. L. Mathis, P. C. Nica, C. Rusu, op. cit., p. 141.

## The healthcare employees and their career development

The main types of careers are on a short or a long term, they can be subjective or objective, singular or multiple. In this context it can be said that the healthcare staff in hospitals have a multiple career, as follows:

- a professor of the Faculty of Medicine may work, in addition to his/her teaching career, as a doctor in the hospital and even as the head of medical department, medical director or manager, but his work in the hospital must be part-time and his/her appointment as a doctor must be in accordance with his/her professional status and degree.
- the nurse employed in a public hospital may also work the same hours in a private hospital, only after she finishes her tasks at the workplace in the public hospital.

On the other hand, if we refer to the stages of career development cycle (according to E. Schein), which finishes at 40 years old, when it is considered that the career development cycle ends, or if we refer to the four stages of career development illustrated by J.L. Gibson, which consider that employees aged 55-65 begin the retirement process, we noticed that the healthcare system has some peculiarities, namely:

- if we analyze the career of a *doctor*, who definitely has to cope with a very long period of study, six years of faculty, the internship and the residency year between 3 and 7 years, we can say that after 10-14 years of training a resident doctor can become a specialized doctor after passing an exam according to the law, and after 5 years of experience he/she can become a primary doctor after passing another exam according to the law. So, only after he/she is 40-45 years old it can be said that he/she was able to go through almost all the stages of his/her professional development, and he/she can access a management position after the age mentioned previously.

Therefore, the individual career path of a doctor is a non-traditional one, and this career path could have an upward and downward mobility. The career path is predicted when the doctor has already chosen the medical specialty and has passed the residency exam;

- *the nurse* has a more traditional career path, because after graduating the sanitary school the nurse is appointed as junior nurse for a period ranging from six months to one year. In order to get a higher position a nurse has to pass an examination based on his/her gained knowledge and the next step in his/her career development is the major medical nurse position. Moreover, nurses can have administrative positions such as department chief nurse or healthcare Administrator in the Board of Directors of the hospital.

In 2006, the University of Medicine and Pharmacy established faculties for nurses, thus enabling nurses to develop their career in the sense that they obtain a bachelor degree in their field of activity.

In some cases, due to individual counselling, some nurses change their career by enrolling to the Faculty of Medicine to become doctors.

When the employer makes the selection using specific techniques and methods, he gets to know the candidate in terms of his/her achievements proven by the documents presented at the time of selection and evaluation.

Therefore, the individual career planning made when getting employed has a certain bias and to increase its objectivity, it should be reviewed periodically in the light of the subsequent development of the employee.

*The individual career* will be influenced by the quantity and quality of human resources and, therefore, the evaluation of performances is meant to identify the weaknesses of employees and to provide a baseline plan to establish professional development and training in order achieve the proposed goals.

*The development and training of the human resources* and *Career Management*, are activities specific to HRM that can be treated simultaneously, as an entire process of training and improvement of individual career which is focused on the career development that the employee proposed to accomplish or on the career he/she was advised to build, in accordance with his creative skills that have been discovered subsequently.

The healthcare staff can have multiple, objective and long-lasting career goals, considering the time needed to reach professional maturity.

But, there are also situations quite frequently encountered in public hospitals, when a doctor performs four different activities simultaneously, building for each performed activity a type of career. For example, a hospital manager, in addition to his /her administrative and managerial work, he/she performs teaching activities, he gives medical examinations, prescriptions, treatments and therapy for both the hospital patients and the patients of private clinics.

Therefore, we brought into discussion *four different careers* so that we could mention that each of them has a profound bias, and to motivate this aspect we enumerated some reasons, as follows:

- Business management requires the manager's total involvement in the management of financial and human resources, administrative organization, collaboration and participation in the collective meetings with the management structures, etc. and also his/her constant concern for legislative information and documentation so that the manager be able to build a real strategy, based on the adoption of the coherent policies in relation to the legal directions for future actions oriented on the investment and organizational development;

- Teaching implies a special responsibility, commitment to the students that become doctors, their work being carried out both in terms of teaching the basic theoretical concepts, as well as presenting the practice techniques considering the medical cases;

- Medical work done at the bedside may not be interrupted, according to the doctor's availability, because the diagnosis and the medication must be followed by a therapeutic care which changes depending on the medical state of the patient;

- Collaboration as a doctor with private clinics should be classified in the category of conflicts of interest, but this is allowed because the number of beneficiaries of this system is increasing, and major decision makers in the Ministry of Health are doctors, too.

Therefore, it is obvious that it couldn't be registered performances as long as all the activities presented above are performed simultaneously, due to the fact that, on the one hand, there is not the physical time needed to perform all the activities simultaneously, and on the other hand, most of the problems and their structural typological differentiation decreases the manager's ability to concentrate; having no qualifications and training in the economic field, he cannot appreciate or perform activities such as those specific to HRM or accounting, their decisions are mainly based on personal considerations, on sympathy or on personal grudges against the specialized personnel.

Poor hospital management has thus become a *rule* rather than an *accident*, and measures to remedy this situation are not taken, not to generate a wave of mass discontent, as it happened in 2007, and these measures especially aim to replace the doctors that have management positions with qualified personnel, specialized in management.

### 3. Conclusions

Nowadays, more than ever, the healthcare system has focused increasingly on career planning and management. This is justified by the rapid economic change, a fact that makes the current careers be less clearly delineated and predictable than in the past.

The objectivity of the career development is rendered by the fact that is reviewed periodically in the light of the employees' further developments. To build individual careers, it is necessary for individuals to know their own personality and their own potential, and they should not limit to hazardous aspects.

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