

Relationship among individual level factors in career development system of civil service

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Abstract

Career development is the inseparable part of the system of human resource management of any social organisation. The basic idea underlying the contemporary model of career development is that dynamically changing organisations and dynamically developed careers of the employees must be considered to be the phenomena complementing each other. The aim of this research was to carry out empirical analysis of individual level career development factors in the civil service of Lithuania and to determine their level of expression and the mechanisms of their interaction. The data indicate that career satisfaction has a stronger influence than job satisfaction on such career development results as work engagement, commitment to work in the civil service and subjective well-being.

Keywords: Career, career development, career satisfaction, job satisfaction, civil service.

1. Introduction

Any social organisation is always a system where career can be made. However, not all organisations have formalised career development systems, which support individuals wishing to implement their career aspirations. Usually, a career development system provides the main principles that regulate careers of their employees; it reflects the dynamic aspects of Human Resource Management (HRM) and includes and integrates the majority of HRM processes. Well-designed career systems provide an opportunity for organisations to upraise to the highest levels of management hierarchy the people who are able to generate, create and implement new ideas, helping the organisation to adapt to rapidly changing environment (Higgins & Dillon, 2007).

Career development phenomena in the civil service can be analysed in the context of systems theory (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Such kind of analysis enables to integrate the factors identified in the individual career development sphere and in the human resource development conceptions and also to evaluate their interaction. Thus, in the model of career development system of civil service, formulated on the grounds of theoretical analysis, individual and organisational levels are identified (Valickas, 2011). The individual (employee) is considered to be the main subsystem of an organisational career development system. Therefore, the identification of individual-related factors and the analysis of the individual's approach to career provide a solid background for modelling the career development system. On the other hand, the organisational level of a career development system comprises all the efforts and means applied by the organisation for the purpose of employees' career development (Valickas, 2011).

The basic idea underlying the model of career development is that dynamically changing organisations, including public sector organisations, and dynamically developed careers of the employees, must be considered the phenomena complementing each other. This provision obligates to treat the careers of employees not as that is easily predicted and controlled, but as the relations maintenance and development with the employees, seeking for mutual benefits for the employees and organisations.

A career development system of civil service in its contents should represent the shift from exceptionally organisational career management practices towards individual career development in organisations with all the consequences following from that. In the context of change, the majority of the most competent employees and managers are working pursuing to the realities of contemporary careers formation, till the maximal extend seeking for self-realisation in the spheres which are the most important and interesting for them. Therefore, they are permanently looking for new most benevolent career possibilities. Thus, we make the assumption that it is impossible to retain the highest quality of human resources ignoring the changing context of work relations and not adjusting legal aspects of employment relations to the changing realities of career formation.

However, it remains unclear how the contemporary theoretical ideas relating to career development systems find their expression in the practice of career development. Thus the research object of this paper was career development system of the Lithuanian civil service. The aim of this research was to carry out empirical analysis of individual level career developmental factors in civil service and to determine their level of expression and the mechanisms of their interaction using regression analysis. This enables to ascertain the main problems within the career development system of the Lithuanian civil service and to suggest new scientifically grounded principles for civil servants career formation in the context of reform of human resource management in the Lithuanian civil service.

2. Methods

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 the 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. The age of the respondents was from 22 to 64, the distribution of the respondents according to gender: males – 41.3% and females – 58.5%. 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: actual mobility in the career space of public service, career aspirations, career and work identity construction efforts, career development competencies, public service motivation, conceived career possibilities, positive employability changes, justice assurance in the process of career development, career satisfaction, job satisfaction, work engagement, commitment to work in civil service and subjective well-being.

Actual career mobility the career space of public service was assessed through the question: have you ever been promoted (or transferred to another post, demoted to lower post)? If yes, how many times?

Career aspirations are understood as a desire and intention to pursue a role or a particular position within an organisation or a wider system (in our case in the civil service). Aspirations play an important role in career decisions because they reflect the goals and intentions that influence individuals towards a particular course of action (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006). Career aspirations were assessed with single item scale: would you like to pursue career in the civil service?

Career and work identity construction efforts are understood as a wish and efforts of the person to construct his/her career implementing his/her work identity. The basis of measuring a career and work identity construction is the theory of Savickas (2002), stressing the importance of the efforts of a person creating and giving sense to his/her career. Career and work identity construction scale was developed by the authors of this article. It has 11 items. The measured coefficient of internal consistency of the scale Cronbach α was 0.887.

To measure career development competencies, we used the career development competencies scale, developed by Valickas (2011), which consists of three subscales: self-knowledge subscale. This subscale consists of six items (e.g., I know my values well). Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.8, occupational knowledge subscale. This subscale consists of five items (e.g., My experience shows that I know how to learn), Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.74, career planning subscale. This subscale consists of five items (e.g., I am able to plan my career taking into consideration my personal needs and environmental changes). Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.83 (Valickas & Pilkauskaitė Valickiene, 2014).

Public service motivation is understood as an altruistic motivation to serve in the interests of people, country or humanity (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). For measuring this construct, a 12-item scale developed by Perry (1996) was used. The measured coefficient of internal consistency of the scale Cronbach α was 0.835.

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 a 3-item 5-point scale developed by the authors of this article. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.78.

Positive employability changes are understood as the changes in the whole of the competencies of the individual enabling to adjust to constantly changing work environment. 4-item scale composed by the authors of this research was used to measure this construct. The measured coefficient of internal consistency of the scale Cronbach α was 0.722.

Assurance of justice in the career development system is understood as providing equal opportunities for all civil servants seeking a career within the system of civil service. A 10-item scale composed by the authors of this research was used. The measured coefficient of internal consistency of the scale Cronbach α was 0.843.

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 a 6-item 5-point scale constructed by the authors of the article. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.86.

Job satisfaction is understood as general satisfaction with the job which is possessed by the employee. Job satisfaction was measured using a single item: taking into consideration everything I am satisfied with the job which I have now.

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Work engagement was assessed using shortened nine items, Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES-9) (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova 2006). Cronbach's alpha for the total nine-item scale was 0.89.

Commitment to work is understood as the psychological state of the employee, which characterised his/her relations with the organisation (or wider system) for which he/she works and influences his/her decisions in respect to how these relationships must be developed. Constructing the scale commitment to work model suggested by Allen and Meyer (1990) was used. The measured coefficient of internal consistency of the scale Cronbach α was 0.821.

To measure subjective well-being, we used the satisfaction with life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin 1985). The Lithuanian version of this scale was prepared by the authors of the study. Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.9.

3. Results and Discussion

Assessing the career mobility of civil servants in the Lithuanian civil service system, it can be stated that career mobility in the systems is a rare phenomenon. The average number of promotions received by civil servants is just 1.19 and transfers to other similar level posts is even lower and equal to 0.68. Taking into consideration, the average term of service of the respondents, which was estimated at 11.5 years, the mobility figures are considered to be very low. The majority of civil servants have no objectively measurable career experiences. Those who have such experiences are most often moving within the borders of one institution. Thus, our data support the assumption that the Lithuanian civil service is not functioning as the united space of career possibilities. Such a situation is not favourable from the standpoint of civil servants learning and talent development.

Analysing career aspirations of civil servants, it was established that the majority civil servants (78.4%) have such aspirations in the career space of civil service and just a minor part of them are undecided or do not have (22.6%). However, the conceived career possibilities in the Lithuanian civil service were significantly lower than career aspirations and career and working identity construction efforts, reflecting the actual intentions of employees and really devoted efforts to career construction. Average expression of conceived career possibilities in the scale from 0 – the lowest to 5 – the highest

was 2.69, career and working identity construction efforts – 3.78 and career aspirations in civil service 4.08.

This enables to identify unfavourable assumptions in the system of career development of civil service, which can lead to losing of certain part of human resources due to career development imperfections. This is especially true speaking about the highest quality human resources, which are in demand in private and non-governmental sectors.

Having related the information received in regression analysis with the provided interaction among the factors identified in the theoretical career development model (Valickas, 2011), the career development factors’ relationship model was composed (Figure 1).

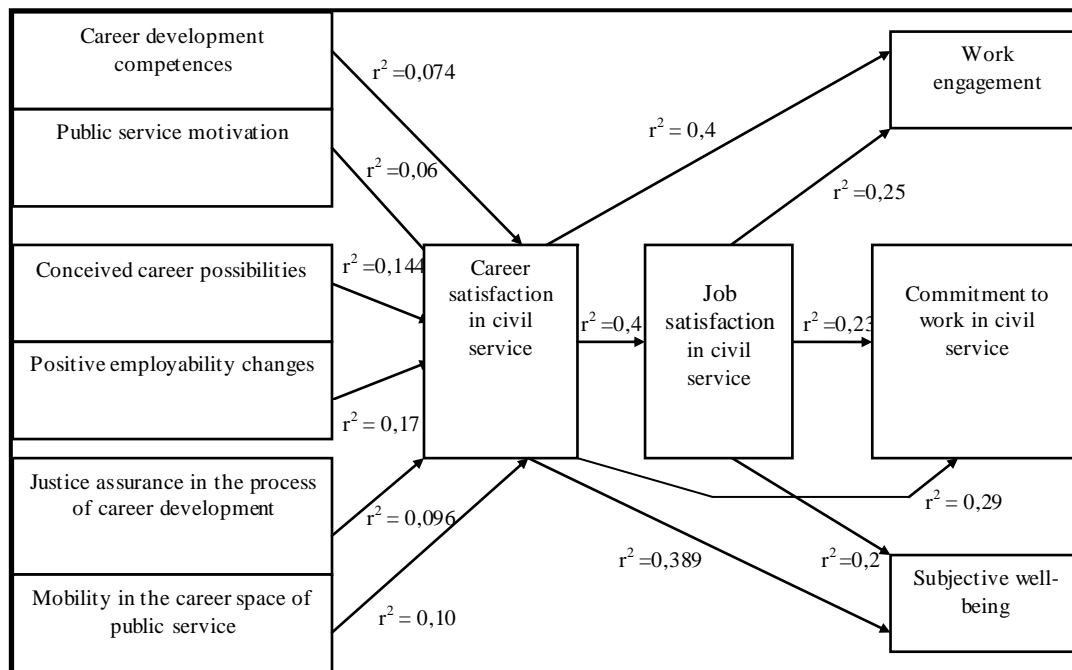


Figure 1. Career development factors’ relationship model

As it can be seen from Figure 1, possession of career aspirations and career construction efforts are not included into the model as their input into the main career development outcome on the individual level – career satisfaction is very low. These results of empirical research could be explained by that the latter factors are ignored in the career space of the Lithuanian civil service. Thus, the assumption that the Lithuanian civil servants have clearly defined career needs and aspirations, and are ready to take responsibility for their career development; however, currently existing system does not allow to do this, could be proposed.

It is also notable in the model that career satisfaction has a stronger influence than job satisfaction on such career development results as work engagement, commitment to work in the civil service and subjective well-being. Thus, our data support the assumption that systemic career development in the civil service is one of the most important factors determining the effectiveness of the system of civil service (through the intermediate factors of work engagement and commitment to work in the civil service) and positive changes of subjective well-being.

These results enable to make further assumptions that, opening wider career possibilities for the most capable and competent employees, higher levels of work engagement and a higher commitment to work in the civil service could be expected and, consequently, the positive changes in the sphere of work results could be assured.

Thus, it would be recommended to create assumptions for individualisation of work relations in civil service. Orientation towards results should prevail over the aspects of legal regulations of work relations, i.e., sufficiently many alternatives of maintaining work relations should be created in order to use them seeking to attract and maintain the highest quality human resources. It must be pursued that the civil service system could become maximally attractive for capable employees and civil servants, belonging to the system that would not become the limitation in their way of self-development.

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