Career Road Strategy Model, Complementary of Competency Models and Strategic Job Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Strategic Job Analysis (SJA) and Competency Models (CM) both have the potential to fill an important void in Career Road Planning (CRP). This paper deals with a strategic model of career road planning to magnify organization and employee's situations in career road guiding complying with the strategic goals of the organization.

To approve this meaning, It is assumed that career road planning is a project in organization's human resource management plan. It is then concluded through the investigation of different aspects of job analyzing and competency models that these methods are not able to present a complete solution in directing of career in road of organization's strategic goals because these approaches omit employee's role as a stakeholder in analysis and selection of career road. This paper presents a model with regard to two aspects: amount of career planning independency from organization's goal and stakeholder (organization and employee) roles to guide the strategic career road planning.

Based on this analysis, it is inferred that the degree of employee’s independence is an important parameter in the career planning project’s environment that can be used to explain different strategies in career road. We suggest four distinct types of career planning strategies: obedient servant, independent innovator, flexible moderator and strong leader making job analyzing more clearly than previous approaches.

1. Introduction

Job analysis may be viewed as the hub of virtually all human resource management activities need for the successful functioning of organizations [1,2]. At the heart of almost every human resources management program or activity is the need for accurate and thorough job information. Job analysis is thus a prerequisite activity for the effective management of human resources. However, many important assumptions that underlie such fundamental uses of job analysis in management are becoming questionable in today's business environment. Job analysis is focused on the collection of work-related information for the job as it currently exists and/or has existed in the past [3,4]. This has led to call for a more proactive and strategic approach to job analysis, so that the procedures will continue to be relevant in today's workplace [5,6].

In many organizations, Competency Modeling (CM) has been replaced with Traditional Job Analysis (TJA) for a host of human resource applications. However, there seems to be no professional consensus regarding the difference between TJA and CM, and some have even argued that any Competency Modeling (CM) project is at its foundation also a job analysis process [7].

A group of experts, surveying the differences between TJA and CM, noted that the latter's emphasis on “linking results to business goals” is not only largely absent in TJA, but also methodologically more rigorous than CM in regards to data collection, level of detail, assessment of reliability of results and documentation of the research process [8], while others opined that at least some CM applications are merely watered-down, less-than-rigorous job analysis [9,10], or that CM does not accomplish anything that new forms of strategic-oriented job analysis cannot accomplish [11,12].

Guion [13] states: “…job analysis, as we generally know it, suffers from a couple of serious plagues, at least for inferring performance requirements. One of these is its emphasis on the status quo…we need further kinds of analysis to avoid the static nature of conventional job analysis. We need organizational forecasting information, strategic plans, and both current information and plans related to the interactions between different organizational activities.”
The “new” careers literature is grounded in the supposition of a substantial change affecting careers and the career success construct [14,15]. In particular, much has been written about the gradual displacement of the traditional, organization-based career and the old psychological contract with new types of career and the new, employability-orientated psychological contract [16,17]. Consequently, there has been a noticeable evolution in the way career and career successes are defined. While Wilensky [18] referred to career as a succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered (more-or-less predictable) sequence. Super [19] defined career as the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime. Finally, Arthur, Hall and Lawrence [20] defined career as the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time, which is an established definition of career today [21]. This evolution from “jobs” to “experiences”, reflected in the post-modern, turn in the social sciences during the late 1980s when attention increasingly shifted from the objective to the subjective world of work.

The organization of this paper is as follows: First, we investigate different aspects of each of the above issues, involving a comparison between CM and TJA followed by a strategic view to the job analysis. Finally, we converge each of these aspects in a unique road, leading organization to its strategic objectives. In order to reach this goal, we use a common strategic planning model.

2. Literature review: career road, TJA, SJA and CM

There are different approaches and meanings for career success concept. Savickas [22] described the “rise and fall” of career in North America by outlining the historical evolution from an agricultural to an industrial economy and finally, to the current-day knowledge economy, causing careers to be decreasingly regulated and linear [23,24]. With regard to culture, several authors have demonstrated that the career narratives of people vary from different countries. Dany [25] described the European culture as bureaucratic, with servile obedience, risk aversion and strong commitment as key features. The U.S culture, on the other hand, was defined as “contractual”; risk-taking and entrepreneurial, individualist attitudes are valued [26].

Sturges [27] and Nabi [28] both reported finding of two factors in their qualitative studies,
i.e. external, or extrinsic, career success versus internal, or intrinsic, career success. Dyke and Murphy [29] classified their findings on the meanings of career success under the four factors; balance, relationships, recognition and material success. Lee et al. [30] identified organization-based, personal and interlinked themes in interviewees’ discourse about career. Additionally, Hennequin [31] established three factors within the career success road: material career success, psychological career success and social career road.

To reach these career success opportunities and to approach to the organization goals, up to now, to many types of tools, methods and models have been presented. TJA, SJA and also CM are three famous models of them.

CM is much better suited to the task of influencing employee behavior along the strategic lines than TJA is. That is, key to CM's capacity to provide a path between day-to-day employee behavior and the broader goals of the organization. Schippmann et al. [32] relied on a small number of core competencies that were unambiguously worded to embody the organization's competitive advantage across jobs, ranks, and locations [33,34]. Thus, competency models should be easy to understand and communicate to anyone in the organization, regardless of job title. In contrast, TJA is usually burdened with long lists of tasks and psychologically-worded Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics (KSAOs) that undoubtedly provide a deep understanding of the nature of each job and its requirements, but which, together, form a complex description that is difficult to communicate to those who are not closely familiar with the job or with job-analytic terminology.

As competition and technological innovations increase and product life cycles get shorter, jobs are becoming not only less static, but also less individually-based. Consequently, the tasks to be performed, and the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required for effective job performance are also becoming more volatile, and sometimes more team-based. Furthermore, in all likelihood, organizations may perceive the creation of jobs that do not currently exist and the analysis of which is beyond the scope of traditional job analysis (TJA).

Despite the obvious need for a strategic approach to job analysis, there have been just a few theoretical attempts in proposing SJA frameworks. In a seminal paper, Schneider and Konz
[35] built on traditional job-analytic approaches in which they term a “multi-method job analysis” procedure. There is nothing particularly unique in their eight steps approach until the stage of collecting information about the future and revising tasks and KSAs in light of future expected changes. The eight stages identified are: 1. collect information on the current job; 2. specify job tasks and build task clusters; 3. develop and administer task surveys; 4. conduct statistical analysis of task survey responses; 5. conduct the knowledge, skills and abilities process; 6. develop and administer the KSA surveys; 7. gather information about the future; and, 8. revise tasks and/or task clusters, and KSAs and/or KSA clusters in light of future changes.

Schneider and Konz [51] suggested that subject matter experts (SMEs), including job incumbents, supervisors, managers and job analysts, be brought together in a workshop to discuss likely future changes.

According to Stewart and Carson [36] “this approach acknowledges the dynamic nature of work and illustrates how perceptions of current and future jobs may differ, but it still assumes that jobs can be analyzed independent of people”. Despite practical and theoretical problems inherent in the approach, the attempt is certainly useful since it highlights the need for SJA and offers a method to reshape job analysis to suit the emerging needs of many contemporary organizations.

Snow and Snell [37], in an essay on staffing as a whole, rather than job analysis per se, argued that new trends in the environment demand changes in many human resource management functions, and that “companies that respond quickly and appropriately to the staffing challenges presented by these trends will find that they can outperform competitors who are slower to develop a strong human resource planning and management function”. Three conceptual models that characterize the staffing process are presented. Model 1, using traditional job analysis, seeks to match individuals to specific, well-defined jobs and ignores the company's strategy. Model 2 views staffing as part of the overall strategic implementation process and is concerned with broadly defined jobs, as well as linkages between jobs. Model 3 suggests that the recruitment, assessment and selection of high-caliber individuals should be the
foundation of strategy. In this model, staffing drives the formation of competitive strategy.

In Model 2, strategy supplements traditional job analysis as the basis of staffing and takes into account the company's relationship with the environment. Its effectiveness is defined by the company's accomplishment of its strategic goals rather than just the person–job match. Model 3 assumes shorter business cycles and rapid technological advances.

3. Comparing TJA and CM approaches

It is clear that the dimensional comparison serves to clarify that TJA and CM are (or ideally should be) two fundamentally different HRM tools, even though the line that separates them has been blurred in many of their field applications to date.

In doing so, we hope to demonstrate how CM can be implemented in a manner that adds not only to its strategic purpose thereby overcoming the limitations of TJA denounced elsewhere [38], but also to the rigor that has been missed in CM [39].

First of all, TJA is best positioned in the domain of applied measurement and serves to inform HR functions such as staffing, training, and compensation, whereas CM is best conceived of as a strategy execution tool whose closest referents can probably be found in Organizational Culture and Social Control theories [40,41]. These theories suggest that a critical determinant of strategic leadership is not how brilliant the strategy is, but how much employees understand and share organizational norms concerning strategically-aligned behavior. CM ideally attempts to open up a conduit for strategy execution, so that the employee learns how to incorporate strategic concerns into day-to-day behavior.

Secondly, the existence of an external reality dubbed the job that is objectively verifiable [42]. The arrival of the conceptualization of the job as a separate entity from the person who performs a certain work activity can be traced to the onset of the industrial revolution, which created a need for division of labor. Obviously, there is a justification for the recommendation to separate the job from the person; specifically that the job analyst is interested in a “neutral” description of the job that is not contaminated by any job holder's idiosyncratic interpretation.
Because TJA has focused on capturing the essential elements of the job in the form of an across-incumbents description, it should not be surprising that this homothetic approach has obviated the influence of the incumbent's interpretation of the job.

The shared perception reflected in the job descriptions characteristic of TJA reflects the aggregate of behaviors displayed by job incumbents over time, and the aggregate is just a homothetic compromise representing the manner in which a non-existent, “average” job incumbent performs the duties of the job [43]. However, the notion of the job is a social construction that does not have tangible existence separate from those who perform it [44]. In contrast to TJA's view of the job as a fixed entity that does not change from incumbent to incumbent, CM views the job as a role to be first interpreted, and then enacted by each employee.

Another thing is that, TJA focuses solely on the job and CM, in contrast to TJA, assumes that performance across all jobs in the organization should be touched by certain behavioral themes embedded in the competencies that are connected directly to the organizational strategy.

Another point that illustrates this contrast between the foci of TJA and CM is the fact that the same set of competencies normally cuts across jobs and layers of the organization. Thus, CM becomes a common language that prescribes the most valued behavioral themes by the organization, regardless of the job.

The strength of a list of competencies that cuts across all jobs in the organization is still its ability to simplify succession planning and career development systems. That is, competencies represent universal behavioral themes that the organization would like to be displayed across all jobs and, therefore, those who wish to be promoted know exactly what these behavioral themes are that should lead them to better paid jobs.

Also, whereas TJA is essentially descriptive, CM is primarily prescriptive [45]. That is, TJA attempts to provide an “objective” account of the “average” work activities and their associated worker requirements and in contrast, CM intends to prescribe the manner in which work activities should be carried out in alignment with the organization's strategy.
Because of its descriptive nature, TJA is also rooted in the past, and it portrays the job as it has been done to date. CM, on the other hand, is focused on the future, and it signals the manner in which the job should be interpreted and performed from now on, regardless of whether or not employees have adopted such an approach in the past.

TJA is concerned with uncovering day-to-day operational capabilities that have facilitated the continuation and survival of the organization to date and In contrast, CM is concerned with evolutionary and dynamic capabilities that facilitate growth and change.

Still another difference lies in the distinct performance level addressed by TJA and CM. Whereas TJA can be said to focus on describing “typical” performance as represented in the description of the job as performed by an “average” job incumbent, CM aims at inducing “maximal” performance as reflected in a strategic interpretation of the job that results in a series of behaviors that fit certain strategic themes.

TJA is well suited to applications where the goal is in part to determine basic worker requirements or minimal qualifications needed for job entry and in contrast, CM encourages a series of loosely coupled behaviors or behavioral themes that go beyond mastery of the basic aspects of their job, and instead concretize performance excellence as envisioned in the organization's strategy.

4. **Strategic job analysis (SJA)**

It is generally agreed that various human resources functions should be integrated into the overall strategic management process of the organization [46].

Strategic job analysis means aligning current and future jobs with the strategic orientation of the organization. That is, SJA is a purposeful, systematic process of collecting current and future work-related aspects of a job, within the organization's strategic context.

In order for organizations to become more strategic in terms of their job analysis, Siddique [47] advised a need to start looking into competencies as opposed to tasks and KSA's as seen in
the traditional job analysis approach. So, the use of a competency approach is critical for organizations wishing to develop a strategic job analysis [48].

Job analysis plays a pivotal role within the human resources management field, and it is of crucial importance to other functions such as training, compensation and performance appraisal. As such, strategic job analysis should not only be integrally linked to the strategic management process of the organization, but to other related organizational functions as well.

An environmental analysis/assessment entails the purposeful scanning of an organization's internal and external realms for information on opportunities, threats and probable changes.

Environmental scanning provides a rational basis for action by anticipating future conditions. Interestingly, Schneider and Konz [49], in their approaches to strategic job/work analysis, advocated the use of subject matter experts in predicting future job changes and then the present and most likely future situations are compared by SMEs, job analysts and relevant personnel within the organization. Such a comparison allows an assessment of the extent to which changes in the environment of the organization yield significant task and KSA changes for the job in question. This comparison, or gap analysis, will reveal one of the following three possibilities: little or no significant differences, moderate differences, or significant differences.

Another implication of SJA also relates to selection and staffing. SJA goes beyond the traditional person–job match and implies the incorporation of KSAs and work behaviours aligned with the strategic thrust of the organization. Traditional job analysis infers KSAs solely from work behaviors associated with the current job.

The human resource function, through a strategic job analysis, can help to ensure such attributes and in the process, can increase the likelihood of the organization's survival and success. It is only after a comparison of current and possible future jobs that the organization can set its strategic job analysis objectives. The objectives should also take into consideration the overall strategic thrust of the organization. The objectives will guide the development of SJA action plans/programs and the allocation of resources. The SJA process must also be...
continuously evaluated through such feedback mechanisms as employee adaptation and performance.

5. Career Road Strategy, Complementary of TJA, SJA and CM

It is obvious from the above discussion that none of these approaches, in spite of their unique specifications, are able to be an exact view without any shortage for present job analysis or team base or future job analysis. Studies [50] show that, TJA, SJA and CM approaches are opposed or at least different in these following aspects:

A: purpose: because TJA describes the job, CM focuses on affects of career behavior and SJA purposes is a mixture of them.

B: focus: the main attention of TJA is job, the CM approach is the organization and SJA points the organization with its employee’s skills, knowledge and abilities.

C: time orientation: TJA is rooted in the past, and it portrays the job as it has been done to date. But both SJA and CM are focused on the future, and signal the manner in which the job should be interpreted and performed from now on, regardless of whether or not employees have adopted such an approach in the past.

D: Performance level: whereas TJA can be said to focus on describing “typical” performance as represented in the description of the job as performed by an “average” job incumbent, CM aims at “maximal” performance as reflected in a strategic interpretation of the job that results in a series of behaviors that fit certain strategic themes and SJA, in this item, is more approaching to CM.

E: Measurement approach: all criteria used in TJA are measurable so that the assessment of job’s task is clear and simple while in CM, criteria are elusive and qualitative; SJA criteria depend on the strategic goals and their indicators for assessment.

Through more precision on details, we can find some other differences between these three approaches, so we simply can say that, none of these approaches are able to present a complete
view for career road strategy. In the other direction, there isn’t any attention to role of the employee as a stakeholder for selection of career road in all of these approaches. That’s because each of TJA, SJA and CM are aimed to increase organization’s performance, so the job and the employee are evaluated just for this goal in these approaches.

As it can be concluded from the above, employee leaving out during job analysis and representation of career road process, naturally will decrease organization performance and lead to unsuccessful strategic goals. Many researchers and practitioners accuse traditional job analysis of being too legalistic and of creating artificial boundaries that interfere with this emerging need for team-oriented and cross-functional employees [51] and make reaching to organization goals very hard. Therefore, representing a tool or method to be a complement part for these approaches with entering role of the employee in decision making process and selection of the career road can be insurance for organization strategic goals acquirement.

This paper introduces career road strategy as a complementary for TJA, SJA and CM models. This model helps to make clear organization and employee situations to lead the road of the job and to comply it with the organization goals. In the next section we describe different aspects of this method.

6. Career Road Strategy Model description

In this paper, we present a career road strategic model that insert organization and employee’s goals inside of the career planning properties. Therefore, planning of the career road viewed as a project in human resource management plan of organization, so according to a project independency characters, three tracks can be assumed:

In the first and most dominant track, career planning projects are viewed as subordinate to the parent organization where career strategy is derived from more significant business strategies of the parent.

In the second track, career planning projects have been considered as autonomous organizations connected loosely or tightly to a parent organization.
In the third track, career planning projects have been considered as organizations that are not subject to clearly defined governance or authority setting in relation to their surrounding organizations or stakeholder organizations. In such cases, career planning projects adapt to the ongoing changes as career strategic entities of their own.

The Career planning strategy can be considered to be partly derived from the success discussion. The success issue relates to different stakeholders. The various stakeholders’ different objectives, interests, and needs add to the complexity of managing a career planning projects. The governance and shaping of the career planning projects in its complex environment with several stakeholders relate to strategic job analysis with attention to both employee and organization as stakeholders.

Based on the above analysis, we conclude that the concept of career planning strategy should not be limited to serve a single organization only. Instead, this issue should acknowledge organization strategic goals as well as employee’s requirements and competencies. So, career road strategy is moving on the road of success that both organization and employee take part in it.

Strategies of career planning project relates to its environment. Career planning project strategy is influenced by how autonomous an employee towards the organization is.

Traditional/strategic job analysis and competency models in the existing literature assume that an employee is not autonomous, but the career planning project is run under a strong governance of one organization. Our interpretation of career planning autonomy is not restricted only to cover autonomy in relation to the organization, but we’d rather use the concept of independence that reflects the autonomous position of employee to the organization as stakeholder.

Based on this analysis, it is concluded that the degree of employee’s independence is an important parameter in the career planning project’s environment that can be used to explain different strategies in career road. We suggest four distinct types of career planning strategies: obedient servant, independent innovator, flexible moderator and strong leader. In Figure 1, we show these four different types of career strategies can take along the employee’s independence
from the organizations goals. The four career planning strategy types are explained subsequently.

**Figure 1:** Types of career planning strategies.

Career planning with obedient servant strategy considers its organization as the most important stakeholder in its environment. Employee exists for the organization and the objective for the career is to fulfill its organization’s goals. An obedient servant strategy may result in the career planning project’s success due to appreciation of the organization, measured by how well the career implements and supports the organization’s business strategy.

Career planning with independent innovator strategy establishes its direction through encouraging innovative and independent behavior for finding or maintaining the employee’s own goals and purposes. Career joins with such parts of the organization that help to advance the career and organization’s purposes, but it simultaneously competes, fights or hedges against such parts of the organization that pose a threat to the career road’s purpose. The success of an independent innovator strategy may be measured through newness, degree of change, or impact related to employee’s outcome, or even through the employee’s competency to renew its organization’s business strategy.

Career road planning with flexible mediator strategy finds its direction by defining employee and organization as strong stakeholders. The career planning project adapts to its stakeholders’ goals and objectives set for the career.

Career road planning with strong leader strategy selects its direction by creating a strong
independent culture and feeling of the importance of making the career successful. This means that the career establishes and adjusts its own goals and objectives. The career planning project is organized from inside out by creating a governance umbrella where organization is positioned in purposeful roles. The success of a strong leader strategy may be measured by the career’s internal capability of creating a unique purposeful goal and objective for planning of the career road, capability of using the organization as a resource.

7. Conclusion

Job analysis may be viewed as the hub of virtually all human resource management activities need for the successful functioning of organizations. Strategic Job Analysis (SJA) and Competency Models (CM) both have the potential to fill an important void in career road planning. In this paper we present a strategic model for career road planning that makes the situation of both employee and organization clear in the process of strategic planning. Characteristics of TJA, SJA and CM are compared and then we concluded that none of them could be a complete method or tool for career planning, because they don’t pay attention to both stakeholders together, so career road strategy model is a complementary of competency models and traditional /strategic job analysis. Degree of employee’s independence is an important parameter in the career planning project’s environment that can be used to explain different strategies in career road. We suggest four distinct types of career planning strategies: obedient servant, independent innovator, flexible moderator, and strong leader.

8. Themes for future research

The generic definition of career road strategy as a HRM project introduced in this paper provides a fruitful foundation for further research. Such further research should take into account the dynamic nature of the career road strategy, meaning that the career strategies are dynamically created and they also change during the HRM project lifecycle. We suggest future research on the following three themes:

First, the practical value of the four types of strategies, created in this paper based on synthesis of existing research, should be shown by empirical research. What is the more specific nature of each of the four different career strategies? Which career strategies are the most appropriate in different contexts, i.e., what are their real success factors?
Second, research on career strategy formulation and implementation is needed. What are the routes through which successful career strategies emerge?

Third, further research is proposed on the evolution and dynamics of career road strategies. Empirical studies should address especially the factors that determine what kinds of positions a career may take in relation to its external environment and how that position changes during the career life. From this perspective, career road strategy can also become a path to change a career’s position, e.g. to gain more autonomy.

9. References


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