

Identifying Career Development Intervention by Counsellors for Manufacturing Production Workers

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Abstract

This conceptual paper discusses the career development interventions used in organisations for their employees. It also tries to identify the suitable career development intervention that can be considered by career counsellors as career development intervention programme for manufacturing production workers.

Keywords: career development intervention, career counselling, group career counselling, production workers

Introduction

There are many definitions of career found in literature review done related to career itself. Although it is not easy to conclude a single acceptable definition of career, it can be defined as a salient element in each person's working life and demands planning and management from both individuals and organisations (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010). Therefore regardless at any level or occupation, career is very important in one's working life. In terms of Malaysia's workforce, it is relatively unskilled where 77% are only educated up to 11 years of basic education at the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) level or equivalent, and only 28% of Malaysian jobs are in higher skilled bracket (Ghazlan Ghazali in Martinez-Fernandez & Choi, 2012). Moreover for manufacturing production workers that are classified under plant and machine-operators and assemblers category of occupation in Malaysia Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO) 2008, the number of employed persons with tertiary education in 2011 was only 2% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012).

Fail to provide appropriate skills and or adequate opportunities for upgrading for this group represents a major barrier to development and growth (Parisotto in OECD / International Labour Office, 2011). Thus, it is crucial for career counsellors in Malaysia to identify the appropriate career intervention for this group of employees in order to address their career issues or concerns well.

Career development interventions

Career development interventions implemented by organizations can assist their employees dealing with career issues or concerns. Career intervention been defined in more inclusive view of the career intervention process by Spokane (1991) as "any activity designed to improve an individual's ability to make improved career decisions". Thus, activities implemented by organisations in assisting employees dealing with their career concerns may be considered as career intervention.

Kirk, Downey, Duckett and Woody (2000) explained the most widely used career development interventions that are alternative career paths, assessment centres, career coaching / counselling, cross-training, flexitime, job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, job sharing, phased retirement, sabbaticals, and temporary assignments. They have summarised the descriptions of the said career development interventions as per in Table 1.

Table 1: Career development interventions (Kirk et al., 2000 p.206)

Intervention	Description	For use with employee group
Alternative career paths	Examining skills and experience to transfer to a new career	Passed over workers, burned out workers, career changers, mid-life employees, plateaued workers



Intervention	Description	For use with employee group
Assessment Centres	Activities or exercises used to identify employee potential	Any, but specifically high potential employees, new workers, mid-life employees, possibly plateaued workers
Career coaching / counselling	Helping people prepare to switch careers, or helping them get ahead in their current career	Any, but specifically high potential employees, new workers, burned out workers, plateaued workers
Career pathing	Outlining an individual career plan	Any, but specifically high potential employees
Cross-training	Teaching workers several skills so that they may be assigned a variety of tasks or positions	Any, but specifically new workers, high potential employees, semi-skilled workers, technical workers
Dual career tracks	A career path that allows for success and rewards without necessarily being an “upward”, or managerial, movement	Technical workers, creative workers, plateaued workers
Flexitime	Allowing employees to vary work schedules to better fit in with personal lives	Pre-retirees, re-entering workers, dual career couples, mid-life employees
Job enlargement	Increasing the number of tasks a worker performs	Any, but specifically high potential employees, technical workers, semi-skilled workers
Job enrichment	Increasing the amount of responsibility and control a worker has over his or her position	Any, but specifically high potential employees, burned out workers, technical workers, plateaued workers
Job rotation	Moving employees from job to job within an organisation	New workers, high potential employees, transferred workers
Job sharing	Two employees share one full-time job, including hours, salary and benefits	Re-entering workers, dual career couples, mid-life employees, pre-retirees
Phased retirement	Gradual tapering of work schedules and responsibilities until full retirement is reached	Pre-retirees
Sabbaticals	An extended period of leave	Burned out workers, mid-life employees, pre-retirees



Temporary assignments	Special projects or special assignments	Student workers (interns), pre-retirees, high potential employees, temporary workers, intrapreneurs, possibly career changers
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Group career counselling as career development intervention

There are several interventions identified as career development interventions and one of it is career counselling and can be performed by career counsellors especially in organisational setting. Career counselling is a formal helping relationship between a professional counsellor with a client or group of clients in coping more effectively with career concerns (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). Career counsellors can help people manage their career development effectively in the 21st century by helping their clients how to do the following (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009, p.11):

1. How to use both rational and intuitive approaches in career decision making
2. How to be clear about the importance attached to each life role and the values one seeks to express through participating in the roles of life
3. How to cope with ambiguity, change, and transition
4. How to develop and maintain self-awareness, especially in the area of interests, values, motivation, and aptitudes
5. How to develop and maintain occupational and career awareness
6. How to develop and keep one's occupationally relevant skills and knowledge current
7. How to access and participate in lifelong learning opportunities
8. Search for jobs effectively, even when one is not looking for a job
9. Provide and receive career mentoring
10. 10. Develop and maintain skills in multicultural awareness and communication

Furthermore, Whiston (2002) in applying Principles of Empirically Supported Interventions (PESI) to the research related to career counselling and interventions, has found that the most effective interventions are individual career counselling and career classes, whereas in providing the services for largest number of clients, workshops/structured groups and career classes are found to be the most efficient method.

Manufacturing production workers in Malaysia

Malaysia has turns into an industrial nation in becoming a developed country by the year of 2020. Manufacturing is one of the sectors that has a large number of manpower in Malaysia. In 2011, employment in the Manufacturing sector was 2,222,300 persons that contributed 18.1% of total employed persons in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). In terms of occupation, the number of employed persons classified under the occupation of plant and machine-operators and assemblers in 2011 was 1,554,900 or 12.7% of total employment in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). Production workers are classified under plant and machine-operators and assemblers category of occupation under Malaysia Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO) 2008.

Conclusion

In Asian context, Pope (1999) suggested that the group career counselling is especially appropriate for Asian clients and group-oriented cultures. Group career counselling might be considered by career counsellors as an appropriate career intervention for Malaysian manufacturing production workers especially in a large scale workforce. Although this is only a preliminary work, it may contribute to the career counsellors in organisational setting to further determine and develop the appropriate career counselling module according to the organisation and employees needs.



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