

2. DEFINING CAREER MANAGEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The practice of career management is relatively new in the Public Service. Therefore, in order to establish broad guidelines within the Public Service, a thorough understanding of the term career management is essential.

2.2 DEFINING CAREER MANAGEMENT

Career management can be defined as the process that plans and shapes the progression of individuals within an organisation in accordance with the organisational needs and objectives, employees' performance potential and their preferences (i.e. the integration of the individual's objectives with those of the organisation). This definition was arrived at after a thorough analysis of the purpose of career management, the role players involved with career management and the elements of career management (paragraphs 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 of this Chapter).

According to Baron and Greenberg (1990, p.320) a typical career management programme, as part of the larger human resources system, involves efforts to -

- X help employees to assess their own career strengths and weaknesses;
- X set priorities and specific career goals;
- X provide information on various career paths and alternatives within the organisation; and
- X offer employees yearly reviews of their progress towards these goals by managers who have received training in conducting such assessments.

2.3 THE PURPOSE OF CAREER MANAGEMENT

All HRM practices are designed with a specific defined goal in mind. Merit assessment instruments, for example, are designed to monitor performance and to identify development needs. Career management programmes, however, encompass a large number of HRM practices with the following objectives:

X *Assisting employees to improve their performance*

Career management programmes strive to involve employees in setting their own goals and recognising their strengths and weaknesses. It assists employees with the identification and facilitation of training needs and opportunities. This is mainly achieved by building a process of feedback and discussion into the performance management systems of institutions.

X *Clarifying available career options*

Through career management programmes employees are informed of career options available within the institution. It assists employees with the identification of skills and other qualities required for current and future jobs. Most career management programmes seek to focus employees' career plans upon the institution, thereby enhancing their commitment to the institution. In doing this, career paths are developed that indicate mobility in different directions in the institution for employees.

X *Aligning the aspiration of employees with organisational objectives*

Career management programmes seek to improve the matching of jobs with the right employees. An assessment of the skills and competencies of employees could assist in accommodating them in positions which suit them better. Through the application of practices such as transfers and rotation, an institution's operational effectiveness can be improved. Career management programmes can also result in a reduction in the need to recruit externally as employees with the required capabilities are revealed through their career planning activities.

2.4 *ROLE PLAYERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER MANAGEMENT*

Section 10.5.2 of the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service provides that career management procedures, linked to a performance management system, should be developed, based on the following principles:

- X Employees are responsible for their own career management.

- X The employee's immediate manager is responsible for familiarising her/himself about the employee's career aspirations, as well as how this can best be met.
- X The manager should keep up to date with job, training and development opportunities which are likely to assist in meeting both the employee's career aspirations, and the organisation's operational objectives. The manager should also support the employee's efforts to avail her/himself to these opportunities.
- X Managers have a duty in respect of employees whose careers have been hampered through no fault of their own, e.g employees who are disabled.

2.5 **ELEMENTS OF CAREER MANAGEMENT**

Approaches to career management are diverse

A literature study was undertaken to determine what the most common elements of career management programmes are. It was observed that there are various and quite diverse approaches to career management. Elements common to most programmes, complementing and informing each other during the process of career management, are the following:

2.5.1 **Career planning**

Identification of goals

Career planning is a process undertaken by employees and their supervisors. The employee is responsible for self-assessment, identifying career interests and development needs. As part of the process of self-assessment the employee analyses his or her skills and experience as well as his or her strengths and weaknesses (Milkovich and Glueck, 1985, p.424).

2.5.2 **Career pathing**

Career paths, identify route to attain goals

Based on the career expectations identified in the process of career planning, possible career paths are mapped out for employees. Career paths set out a sequence of posts to which employees can be promoted, transferred and rotated. Each employee could have a multitude of career pathing options.

Career pathing is informed by the career goals set by individuals during the career planning phase, the career progression structure

which forms part and parcel of the employee=s conditions of service as well as the career development opportunities available to employees in an organisation.

2.5.3 Career development

Continuous process

Career development from the perspective of an employer refers to Aa planned effort to link the individual=s career needs with the employer=s workforce requirements≡ (Gutteridge *et al*, 1993, p.1). It could furthermore be seen as a process for helping individuals plan their careers in concert with an organisation=s business requirements and strategic direction.

Definition

Milkovich and Glueck (1985, p.425) feel that one of the organisation=s roles is to provide training and development opportunities to meet the requirements for movement along the career path. They therefore define career development as Athe formal, structured activity offered by an organisation for its members for the purpose of increasing their awareness, knowledge or capabilities affecting the direction and progression of their careers≡.

2.6 CONCLUSION

From the theoretical analysis provided in this Chapter it is clear that career management is a process which involves both employee and employer. Based on this background the extent to which the Public Service as an employer discharges its responsibility in respect of career management was assessed.