



CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES

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Abstract: *Textile industry is a very important industrial branch because it produces clothes for nearly seven billion people and textile materials for technical usage. It employs a huge number of competitive and qualified, mostly female work force. It is also technologically and technically challenging. Thus, it is vital to employ qualified and well trained employees with certain competences, knowledge and skills in order to respond to rapid technological and market changes. Here, we will consider the influence of the career development on doing business in the textile industry while acquiring the competitive advantage. Career development is a lifelong process and it includes knowledge management. The term career has several meanings while nowadays it can mean advancement. The career usually reflects the professional development path of an individual during his or her working career. The career is that concept which connects and unifies most strongly and explicitly individual and organizational interests and needs. The theoretical part explains terms such as career development, importance and improvement of employees for an organization, the possibility for career development within the textile industry. The second part of the paper deals with research conducted among the employees of the textile sector in Leskovac, the town in Serbia with a long-lasting textile tradition.*

Key words: *textile industry, career development, employees, human resources, Leskovac*

1. INTRODUCTION

The main pillars of each and every organization are their employees who perform certain tasks directed towards organizational goals. Thus, human resources determine the success of every organization. There is a trend which shades light on the human resources and it is also becoming present in Serbia, but insufficiently. Human resource management is very important in those workforce intensive industrial branches, such as the textile industry. The textile industry should base its development and competitive advancement on the human resources, as a key element and factor of its success. Today, almost every organization worldwide, especially human resource departments, deal with career and career development. A lot of owners and managers now know that the success does not only depend on the workload itself and the potential of employees, but also on their involvement based on the process of gaining knowledge, career management, motivation and evaluation of their work [1].

In the textile companies, human resource management is a subsystem of general management where the selection of high quality employees is an imperative, which results in



creating employees who are “tailored” for the textile industry. The basic role of the general management is the recognition of the current and future needs of the production process, the capacities for the workforce at hand, and thus, to create the education plan and foresee all of the potential problems in the organization. Qualified workers of the textile industry are those who constantly improve their education and are prone to lifelong learning and innovating their knowledge and skills. In such a way, certain preconditions are being created needed for successful technology management which is vital for the development and growth of these companies and the industrial branch [2].

For a person to be successful professionally or at work, a continuous professional development is required which is embedded in the lifelong learning. Individual career development directly influences the change of the general management and the organization. The career is such that it is quickly and easily being changed due to changes in the working environment, personal interests, abilities and individual values. Career development consists of career planning, development of possible career paths, trainings and development. A career is an interrelated network of activities and tasks, and the working experience growth due to changes as the career develops. Therefore, the need for career development is very important both for the individual and employees and the organization.

There is a common problem in regard to employees lacking adequate knowledge and skills in the textile industry in Serbia. They are not properly suited to perform the tasks at hand; the socialization process is quite long; they are not prone to teamwork; they lack entrepreneurial and business skills and knowledge; they lack communication and problem solving skills; incongruity between the theoretical and practical knowledge and skills; unfamiliar with new technologies; unfamiliar with the quality system, etc. [3]. This requires changes when searching for human resources and employing highly skilled workers, who would be familiar with new technologies and new work places through additional trainings and by acquiring certain competences and skills.

This paper considers the career development of workers employed in the textile industry and their advancement within the organization. In the era of knowledge, the career development of employees in regard to acquiring new knowledge and skills is becoming more and more important as the link between an individual and the organization. The organization, in order to reach its goals and development, has to turn more to individual goals and interests of its employees. Thus, it should create, plan and reach its advancement through the development of its employees. The key concepts of the career development are: adopting knowledge, applying knowledge and providing results so that the organization can profit [4]. The goal of this research is the analysis of the career development of those who are employed in the textile industry and their role in doing business and reaching the competitive advancement, while the organizational strategy supports this goal by matching the organizational interests with employees’ interests. It is important to point out that the research has been done in the town of Leskovac which has a long-lasting textile tradition and the production of textile products, where the first textile factory was built in 1884. This factory represented the beginning of the textile industry both in Leskovac and in Serbia. Traditionally having the textile industry, the town nicknamed the Serbian Manchester, the town of Leskovac is trying to revive this industrial branch. Today, there is a primary production of various treads, but also of end products (knitting, socks, fabrics and ready-to-wear clothes) [5].

2. CAREER PHENOMENON AND PERCEPTION OF CAREER IN THEORY

Modern comprehension of career is quite different than it used to be 20 years ago [1] and according to Donald Super, one of the most known career development theorists, the term “career



development” did not even exist 40 years ago [6]. Hierarchical advancement within a company is not enough any more for those who consider to have a career. Traditional ladders for career development no longer exist. Careers became complex labyrinths, and the employees should set their goals and the means to success. In order to develop one’s career, he or she should be familiar with the basic career management principles and career influencing factors. An employee has to set up a relation with the organization in such a way that so that he or she could get timely and adequate support for the career development and thus, make himself or herself possibilities or chances for advancement.

Leković and Štangel Šušnjar [7] state that career usually means getting a job, changing jobs and posts. We can regard career as keeping one’s position in the organization or as a characteristic of an employee. Also, every career consists of different tasks, positions and experiences. Today, career could be defined as a chain of different work roles. Traditionally this term was only related to those who were managers or professionals, but now it is being use more and more in general in order to describe the work roles of employees [8]. The career can be defined as an individual development path of working experience which is defined by posts in the organization [9].

The difference between a job and a career is best explained though a statement that a job is something a person does at his or her work in order to bring home the bacon, while the career refers to a fruitful activity which brings satisfaction [10]. Career can also be defined as the development of an individual learning and work through life. Therefore, career can be defined more widely as “development of an individual learning and advancement through life”, and then it also relates to volunteering and other life experiences [8].

Dessler [11] considers employees as capital which should be encouraged, guided, provided with the opportunities for development and he stresses that work based training is the most popular means of management development. Torrington and associates [8] think that employees have to manage their own career in line with the career goals which relate to the perception of their own individual talents, values and needs. Schein [12] studied the career development through connecting individual and organizational needs.

Career development can be regarded as the process of permanent education and constant change of employment. Goldsten and Ford consider training [13] systematic approach towards learning and development in order to achieve individual, collective and organizational efficiency. On the other hand, development is related to activities which result in acquiring new knowledge and skills for personal development. Barber [14] concludes according to his research that training and education at work resulted in the increased innovation and the development of tacit skills. Tacit skills are related to non-formal learning and they improve the performance and efficiency which lead to better organizational performance.

The primal goal of career development is to achieve the current and future organizational and individual needs at work, but also the improvement of employment opportunities or the development of employment skills. The general use of career development for an organization:

- Organization is attractive for potential workers,
- Strengthens the image of the organization by acknowledging employees’ needs,
- Increases the dedication of employees,
- Increases the motivation of employees,
- Influences the recognition of the workforce potential.

New concept of career is often called *flexible career*. That is a frequently changing career based on the change of personal interests, abilities and values and changes in the working environment. It occurs when an individual changes careers through time by taking personal responsibility for personal development [15]. The main role of the management of the textile



company is the recognition of current and future needs of the production process, as well as the workforce capacities, based on which the employee education plan should be created, and to be able to assess the efforts and to detect problems in time. Within a textile company employee development programs should be created and integrated within the general development strategy. Factors which influence the development tendency are skilled workers, open management to innovate knowledge, open environment, existence of qualified edukacional institutions, financial resources, teamwork, etc. [16].

3. RESEARCH AND RESEARCH RESULTS

The goal of this paper, both on the basis of theoretical and empirical research, is the analysis of the nature of the connection between the career development of workers employed in the textile industry through individual employee career development, on the one hand, and the development goals of the organization, on another, and discover the factors which would improve the career development and employee advancement in the textile industry.

There were 113 questionnaires handed out, out of which 94 were correctly filled in. Both genders participated, of various age and education backgrounds. This research was based on the descriptive statistical method, and the results were processed by SPSS 20 program. In order to prove the set goals, the research was carried out in textile companies for producing fabrics and textile products in the town of Leskovac. The survey was based on the questionnaire which was filled in by employees expressing their level of agreement by the Likert scale, which represents a scale of agreement with certain statements. There is a total disagreement, then neutral and total agreement for each statement. The questionnaire consists of 16 questions, out of which 6 are related to demography, while 10 questions are related to the career and advancement of employees in the textile industry. Based on the research, we found out how important the career was for the employees and what it takes in order for an employee to advance in the textile company.

According to the first group of questions, related to demography, one can conclude that the majority of questionees are women (69,1%), which is in line with the state in the textile industry which traditionally employs women more. Most of the employees are middle aged people with considerable working experience (31,9%), so we conclude that according to their working experience those 31,9% of employees have a developed career and are in the phase of maintaining their career. This is the phase when the employee has a stable career and a good professional status one should desire to keep. The education level of the questionees who participated in the survey, employed in the textile industry, is a high school degree (36,2%), but there are also quite a number of people with a university degree. Out of all of the questionees there are textile engineers the most 53, then 18 weavers, 7 seamsters, 5 preparation workers, 3 tailors, and 4 directors and sales manager.

The second group of questions is related to the career development and advancement of employees in the textile industry. In table 1 we can see the results of the second group of questions related to the employee development and advancement in the textile industry. Marks 1-5 represent the level of agreement, or disagreement with the questions. The marks have the following meanings: 1-total disagreement, 2-partial disagreement; 3-neutral; 4-partial agreement, 5-agreement. After the analysis of the results one can conclude that the majority of employees in the textile company have set goals they would like to achieve throughout their career. This also includes finding possibilities and means to improve and develop as stated by the questionees. When considering education of employees in the textile industry, 43,6% agree that they are in need of further education. Most of the questionees agree that they lack certain types of knowledge because they think that those types of knowledge acquired through additional trainings such as seminars, fairs and scientific gatherings, can influence their career advancement.



Table 1: Replies to the second group of questions related to the career development and advancement of employees in the textile industry

Career development and advancement of employees in the textile industry	Percentage				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. In order to develop their career, further education is needed for the employees in the textile sector.	7,4	9,6	17,0	22,3	43,6
2. For personal advancement of employees in the textile industry retraining, specialization, master or doctoral studies are required.	7,4	4,3	18,1	54,3	16,0
3. Educational programs (conferences, scientific gatherings, fair) improve the advancement of the employees in the textile industry.	2,1	19,1	21,3	30,9	26,6
4. There is a lack of certain knowledge for successful execution of professional roles in textile companies.	5,3	5,3	22,3	29,8	37,2
5. Change of job provides better opportunity for advancement in the textile companies.	24,5	31,9	18,1	10,6	14,9
6. Managers and superiors are important for career development of employees in the textile companies.	11,7	17,0	23,4	22,3	25,5
7. Personal traits influence individual development and career development of employees in textile companies.	6,4	11,7	21,3	36,2	24,5
8. Abilities, skills and education are important factors for career development of employees in the textile industry.	2,1	5,3	14,9	29,8	47,9
9. Good social and economic conditions provide opportunities for career development of employees in the textile industry.	4,3	11,7	23,4	28,7	31,9
10. Motivation has an important impact on career development of employees in the textile industry.	4,3	11,7	13,8	25,5	47,9

The questionees totally disagree (24,5%) that change of job provides better chances for advancing within the textile company. Most of the questionees partially agree (54,3%) that retraining, specialization, master or doctoral studies are required for personal improvement of employees working in the textile industry. Questionees agree 47,9% that personal abilities, skills and education can enable career development, while 2,1% of the questionees completely disagree. Survival on the market and improvement of the market position is possible only if the employees have the knowledge, experience and skills which can enable them to solve all problems quickly and adequately both dealing with technical and organizational issues. By analyzing the last question we can conclude that motivation has a major influence on career development, to which a majority of questionees agree 47,9%. It is known that the motivation of organization members is very important for the final business result of the company. Motivation within a company urges members of the system to perform their activities in the best way and therefore, fulfill the organizational goals and personal goals.

4. CONCLUSION

According to our research we concluded how important the career is for employees and what it takes for employees to advance in the textile companies. It is very important for a textile company to keep track of what other competitors are doing in regard to innovation, improvement or maintaining quality levels, in order to make adequate decisions concerning their own quality of products by comparing it with the competitors'. The competitive advantage of the textile industry of



Serbian has to be embedded in innovation, quality, technological improvement, improved human resources. Moreover, the biggest potential, which would result in a rapid economic development of textile industry, represent educated and skilled workers. The research results showed the importance of taking initiative and active participation towards career development of employees in order for textile companies to successfully acquire favorable market positions and business results. One can conclude that an organization has a more important role than personal traits in regard to career development, and is therefore an important factor for career development of employees working in the textile sector. Those organizations which support their employees to advance and develop their careers, can expect growth and success on the market, which is very important for textile companies.

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