

Employee Development and Career System for Enhancing Professionalism in the Public Sector of Nepal

Hari Prasad Adhikari

Abstract

The terms employee development, career system and professionalism are frequently used in human resource management. Effective human resource management encompasses employee development, career planning, career management, and succession planning. Employee development and career development are long-term processes that include regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in profession. The purpose of this article is to analyze employee development and career system for maintaining professionalism for public organizations. The methodology used for the study is analytical based on primary information. Employee development activities and career systems in the public sector tend to have a direct impact on the professionalism of its employees.

Keywords: *Human Resource, Employee development, Career system, Professionalism, Public Sector, Nepal*

1. Introduction

The most important factor for the progress and growth of any organization is employee development. The term employee development refers to any activity, which results in employees acquiring new or advanced skills and knowledge by providing learning and training facilities. Development programs in organizations are in form of training and development programs. There are orientation programs for the new employees, skill enhancement programs for the experienced employees. Whether it is working on a new machine, new technology or new

Corresponding Author

Hari Prasad Adhikari, Email: hpadhikari@cdpa.edu.np

business environment, training and development of employee is critical at all the stages. The concept of development not only covers the individual employee in the organization but also all the other factors which affect organizational performance.

Successful employee development requires a balance between an individual's career needs and the organization's need to get work done. A career is owned by the individual, but the organizations via their career development systems can also actively participate in the employees' career development (Baruch, 2004). Hence a well-formed career development system is a must in any organization to help implement the individuals' career aspirations.

The goal of any employee development schemes, or career development system is to produce a highly professional workforce that is credible and reliable in their work. Professionalism is sought by both organizations in their employees and individuals for their career growth. Professionalism is the conduct, aim, or qualities that characterizes or marks a profession or a professional person. It is an iterative process i.e. requires continuous effort and learning both individually and as part of the employee development process. Professionalism in the public sector is an overarching value that determines how its activities will be carried out. It encompasses all other values that guide the public sector such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness, impartiality, and other values that may be specific to individual countries (United Nations, 2000). Public sector professionalism embraces the notion that those people who join the public service need to be inculcated with shared values and trained in basic skills to professionally carry out their official duties.

This article focuses only on the employee development and career system for enhancing professionalism in the public sector of Nepal. The perception analysis done on these areas might not represent the entire national state. Despite the efforts to make the respondents aware about the employee development, career system and professionalism in the public sector of Nepal, due to the difference in level of understanding in the members of focused group, there might have been some biasness in the response, which is not considered in this study.

Many studies have been done in the field of human resource development, career and professionalism, but very few studies have focused on causal relationship among employee development, career system and professionalism and such studies are rare in Nepal. In this context this article analyzes how the employee development, career system and professionalism interlink and are important to

Nepalese public organizations. Hence, study on employee development; career system and professionalism practice in the public sector of Nepal seems crucial.

2. Problem statement

Employee development, career system and professionalism are frequently used terms in Human Resource Management. A group of competent, capable, and committed employees are of utmost essence to any organization whether private or public in order to provide quality service to the users they are serving. The work environment of Nepalese public organizations faces a lot of challenge due to the frequent changes in the political, legal, economic, social, demographic as well as technological factors. Although there are institutions in place, significant shortcomings exist in civil service legal frameworks, co-ordination structures and management. Also, the lack of a coordinating, advisory and implementing body for personnel management has an adverse impact on career management. It can undermine efforts made to make the civil service both more professional and more efficient. So there is need to focus on employee development, career system as well as professionalism practice in Nepalese public organizations. Based on this context, this study is focused on the following research questions:

- How can employee development and career system help enhance professionalism in the public sector of Nepal?
- What is the current status of employee development and career system for enhancing professionalism in the public sector of Nepal?
- The objective of this study is to analyze the "Employee Development and Career system for enhancing Professionalism in Nepal".

3. Methodology

The present study is based on a descriptive research design. An opinion was taken from focus group discussion in 2020 for analyzing "Employee Development and Career system for Enhancing Professionalism in the Public Sector of Nepal." Single Focused Group Discussion was done for the data collection for the study. The population for this study was taken from Kathmandu district. Convenience sampling was done for the location. The population comprised of Government officials and Academicians. The focus group consisted of three groups comprising of 7 people each. Purposive quota sampling technique was used for the focus group. The quota was determined on the basis of the size of population and researcher's convenience. Since the focus group discussions resulted in specific

responses from the respondents, similar responses were grouped for analysis.

4. Literature review

The review of literature aims to describe the 'state of play' in the area selected for study. An effective literature review is not merely a summary of research studies and their findings. Rather, it represents a 'distillation' of the essential issues and inter-relationships associated with the knowledge, arguments, and themes that have been explored in the area. Review of literature also gives guidelines for conducting future research works.

5. Concept of employee development

Employee development is an integrated set of planned programs, provided over a period, to help assure that all individuals have the skills necessary to perform to their fullest potential in support of the organization's goals. As a process, employee development includes the learning of all individuals in the organizations including frontline employees, professionals or managers and can be provided through a range of approaches, including off-the-job and on-the-job training programs, educational programs and seminars, job rotations, self-study materials and mentoring programs, among others. (Jacob and Washington, 2003)

Employee development is crucial for the growth and prosperity of any organization since the employees are the determining and differentiating factors among organizations (Dessler, 1997). The employee development programs are also a very big morale booster. These motivate the employees to take up additional responsibilities, change roles, delegate and do everything to make employees perform well (KC, 1993). Employee development programs make positive contributions to organizational performance as employees like to learn new skills and face new challenges.

In short, employee development is considered as encouraging employees to acquire new or advanced skills, knowledge, and viewpoints, by providing learning and training facilities and opportunities where such new ideas can be applied.

5.1 Methods of employee development

Employee development activities help employees enhance their skills and upgrade their existing knowledge for them to contribute more towards the success of an organization. Employee development is a long-term initiative, but it also leads to

short-term benefits like increased loyalty and improved performance and engagement (Beach Dale S, 1989).

There are three terms: training, development and education that are used for employee development. Training is considered as a process of learning a sequence or programmed behavior (Goel, 1993). In training there is application of knowledge and training makes people aware about the rules and regulations to guide their actions. It attempts to improve performance on the present job or prepare an individual for future role. Development is a related process. Development covers not only those activities, which improve performance but also those, which improve one's growth and personality (Luthans, 1992). Development helps an individual to realize his potentials. In organizational context it helps an individual employee to grow and develop in terms of designation and responsibility. Education is the understanding and involvement of knowledge in progress of an individual (Likert, 1967).

Methods to improve employee development are: Professional Training: continue professional training; Coaching and Mentoring: right conversations regularly taking place; Cross-Departmental Training: e.g. finance, administration, marketing etc.; Develop "Soft-skills": e.g. self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill all play a vital role in effective leadership and execution at all levels of the organization; Personal development: comprised of physical, intellectual (Continue Professional Education) and emotional experiences.

5.2 Concept of career

All types of employees strive for betterment of life through skill, professional capacity as well as competency. In this sense, career refers to changes or modifications in employment or profession during the foreseeable future. E. Flippo, cited by Agrawal (2002) - "A career is a sequence of separate but related work activities that provide continuity, order and meaning to a person's life". Career is also defined as the sequence of the person's work-related experiences in one or several organizations (Baruch, 2004; Greenhaus and Callanan, 2006). It is the succession of related jobs, arranged in hierarchical order, for a person to move in any organization. It is the profession, which is regarded as the means of livelihood for the entire working life of a person (Eliza, n.d.). Thus, career comprises not just vertical promotion to higher posts, but also any change of posts, responsibilities and the related learning seeking to acquire various meaningful work experiences. It indicates the individual expectation through the defined process and path.

5.2.1 Career system

Career system refers to the set of policies, priorities, and practices that an organization employs to manage the flow of employees as they enter, serve, and exit over time. Usually career development system provides the main principles, which regulate the careers of the employees, it reflects the dynamic aspects of Human Resource Management and includes and integrates the majority of Human Resource Management processes. Well-designed career systems provide an opportunity for organizations to upraise to the highest levels of management hierarchy the people who are able to generate, create and implement new ideas helping the organization to adapt to rapidly changing environment. Career development systems applied to the potential managers and the top management team of the organizations has the biggest influence on the organizations (Higgins and Dillon, 2007).

5.2.2 Difference between employee development and career development

Employee development is the learning, training, skill-building, mentoring, and on-the-job experiences that help to grow an employee's capacity in service of the organization-that is selected, focused, and deployed to realize organizational goals (Armstrong, 2012). On the other hand, career development is the learning, training, skill-building, mentoring, and on-the-job experiences, as well as reflection, consideration, exploration, conversation, networking, and outside-of-work activities that grow an employee's capacity in service of the employee and his or her career goals.

5.3 Professionalism

Professionalism is the conduct, aim, or quality that characterizes or marks a profession or a professional person. Profession requires specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation. So, professionalism is a trait that's highly valued in the workforce. It has many attributes, including: specialized knowledge, competency, honesty and integrity, accountability, self-regulation, looking the part (situational) (United Nations, 2000). Anyone who wants to improve their professionalism must focus on improving in each of the above areas.

5.3.1 Importance of professionalism

For any organization to succeed in a long run, professionalism is a must, whether it a big or a small organization. The way an employee interacts and forms relationships with the service takers are of vital importance to ensure that organization's goals and objectives are achieved (Cascio, 2006). Employees take pride in their work and improve their performance in any organization with professional

workplace attitude and appearance. Administrators who behave professionally set an appropriate example by encouraging their people to conduct themselves in a manner that supports organization-wide success. Professionalism demarcates the boundaries between what is considered appropriate office behavior and what is not. Likewise, it encourages personal improvement, promotes and maintains accountability, establishes respect for authority and yourself, boosts respect and minimizes conflict. In addition, the other importance are (IPL, 2020) and (Australian institute of business, 2015):

Best interest of those to whom they provide their services, Mandate to represent the public service, Examination (quality), Standard (qualification), Complex Judgement, Acquisition of the practical skills and competencies (quality for New Members entering the profession), Regulation, Ethics and discipline, and Sustainable (plan for the future). Hence, it can be said that professionalism is of utmost importance in every sector and every organization.

5.3.2 Need of professionalism in the public sector

The public service, made up of those employees of the state who are covered by national and subnational civil service laws, plays an indispensable role in the sustainable development and good governance of a nation. It is an integral part of democracy because it serves as the neutral administrative structure, which carries out the decisions of elected representatives of the people. It not only serves as the backbone of the state in implementing a strategy for economic growth of a nation but also runs the programs that function as the safety net for the most vulnerable segments of a society. Given these crucial roles, a country expects its public service to demonstrate high standards of professionalism (United Nations, 2000).

In a country like Nepal that has recently transitioned from years of monarchy system to federal democratic system public servants must adapt themselves to the rethinking of the role of the state, with respect to its broad functions and separation of powers. This change in role, in turn, demands a new personnel profile requiring new kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and above all, professionalism. Strong public service leadership and performance are now more critical than ever in maintaining stability in the public administration.

5.3.3 Key role player of professionalism

In order to enhance inclusive growth and sustainable development, productive employment and decent work are considered essential. As a critical source of income, productive employment empowers people, provides social security and strengthens social cohesion. (Khanal, 2015). Every professional plays an im-

portant role in ensuring the quality of service. Professional men often find themselves at the frontline of safeguarding the integrity of any service/work. They are involved in their own professional practices. In practice, the following professional bodies play a key role in maintaining professionalism - The local Professional body; one or more local tuition/ training providers; and Managers and mentors in government, the employer.

6. Analysis and discussion

The analysis and discussion include mainly the focused group discussion concerned with the objectives of the study.

6.1 Analysis of employee development and career system to enhance professionalism in the public sector of Nepal

Employee development and career development are considered a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in profession. Aside from the individual satisfaction or financial gain that any professionals may obtain as a result of participating in professional-development opportunities, the process of professional development has a significant positive impact on professional beliefs and practices.

The performance level of service provider and quality professional product depends on various variables. The quality of service provider is a main variable, which directly impacts on quality products. So, the quality service provider production and plan to train them continuously are mandatory initiatives to ensure professional future in each level of profession. The focus group discussion resulted in various ways employee development and career system can help enhance professionalism.

In case of employee's development seven significant factors have been found to have impact on professionalism. First training programs to fill the gap in the employee's performance. It includes facilitating the employees with knowledge based critical information and best practices related to their specific work. Second factor is mentoring which matches less experiences employees with more experienced ones to help them gain skills required for a certain task and strengthen their knowledge base. The third factor that helps enhance professionalism is skill development programs. These skill development programs can include basic technical skills necessary for the job to complementary technical skills like computer skills, communication skills etc. Another important factor is the develop-

ment of soft skills in the employees, which means behavioral skills rather than technical skills. It may include being flexible, agile, adaptable to change, ability to collaborate and cooperate with others etc.

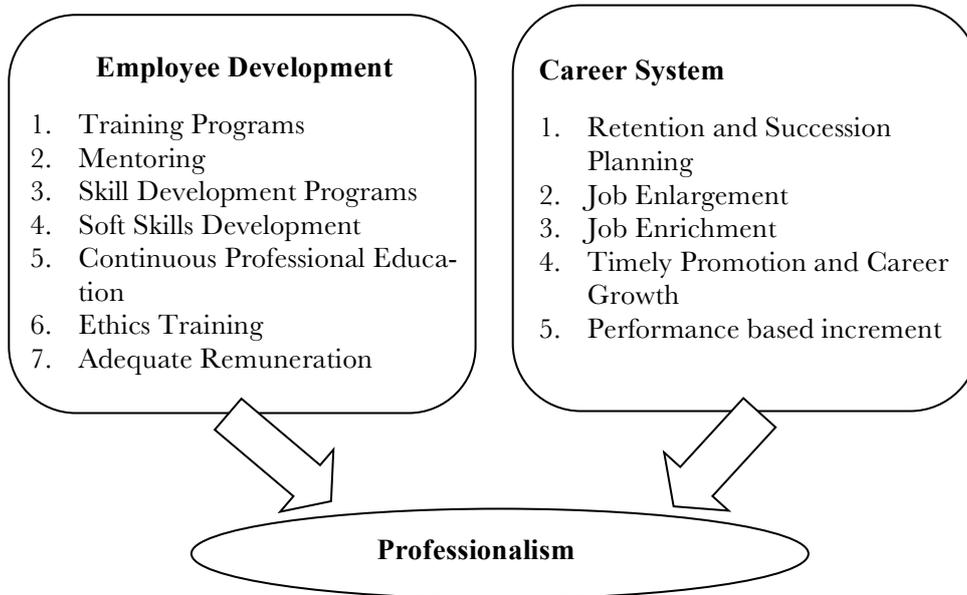


Figure 1: Result from focus group discussion on how employee development and career system can help enhance professionalism in the public sector of Nepal

Similarly, another factor is the continuous professional education of the workforce to ensure that the employees do not become obsolete with time and remain up to date with the changing professional environment. Another significant factor is the ethics training, which helps instill ethical values in the employees. Likewise, the last but a very noteworthy factor is the adequate remuneration to the employees. Proper remuneration not only motivates them to do their work properly but also has them refrain from any unethical behavior or work that they might engage in due to the lack of adequate remuneration.

Likewise, in case of career system five factors have been found to influence the professionalism. The first factor is the retention and succession planning. Devising retention strategies and succession planning helps foster the feeling of job security in the employees, which in turn makes them loyal and devoted to their work. The second factor is the job enlargement, which includes providing more tasks and duties at the same level of complexity. Another factor is the job enrichment, which refers to providing more depth to the employees' job through more control

responsibility and discretion. Both job enlargement and job enrichment enhance job satisfaction of the employees. Another important factor is timely promotion and career growth. Employees do not want to be associated long with organizations that only offer a job and not a career. The last factor is the performance-based increment which ensures the employees are compensated according to the standard of work they perform which in turn helps increase efficiency and effectiveness of their work. Such remuneration should be fully fair, transparent and participative.

In addition to the above factors it has also been found from focus group discussion that a system of coordination, communication and networking at federal, provincial and local levels can be beneficial for adequate facilitation and extended support to implement employee and career development programs to enhance professionalism. Similarly, a national apex body can look after the entire employee development sub-sector for quality control and support services. Networking with concerned authorities in other countries and beyond can be institutionalized for sharing experiences. Also, Research and Development should also be strengthened in support of employee development and career system policies development and implementation in Nepal.

6.2 Analysis of status of employee development and career system for enhancing professionalism in the public sector of Nepal

Employee development and career system as well as professionalism are relatively a recent practice but, as an activity, they are quite old and have developed gradually in Nepal. Employee Development activities have always been a part of the Human Resource Management in Nepalese Public Sector Organizations. Organizations have been striving to provide training programs to help bridge the gaps in the employees' performance. However, it has been found that training programs are not effective enough to instill them with the required skills for the job. Likewise, organizations lack proper mentoring structure. More experienced employees tend to dominate the less experienced rather than helping them grow alongside them. It has also been found that the skills development programs organized by the organizations include only high-level employees and is not participatory. Hence, the lower level staffs are not equipped with adequate skills to perform their work. Likewise, the organizations do not give any importance to soft skills development. The employees that do have those skills are also not provided any additional support to enhance those skills.

Continuous Professional Education has been a rising trend in many professions but still many organizations as well as the public sector lack the training and

workshops programs to provide the employees with the latest developments in their profession. Similarly, the ethics training is lacking in maximum of the public organizations. The organizations that do provide such training also fail to implement it in their day to day activities which has given rise to unethical behavior like corruption, bribery etc. in the public sector. It has also been noted that the remuneration provided in many organizations is not in sync with the services they provide. The employees are poorly remunerated. All these factors reflect poor employee development, which in turn hampers the professionalism of the employees.

Likewise, it has been found that there is a lack of systematic career planning and career assessment. The few assessed career paths remain unachieved due to lack of sensitivity towards the matter. The fact that there are rather few career opportunities in the country can be the most vital contributing factor for the disregard of career planning process in the organizations. In the Nepalese public organizations, jobs are offered but not careers. Career-oriented performance appraisal and feedback are very less. The organizations that do try to promote career growth lack adequate budget and thus cut back on the training and other facilities.

It has also been seen that Favoritism or Nepotism also causes hindrance in the career paths of qualified individuals in Nepalese public organizations. There is no transparency in promotions and transfers and vertical movement is favored for family, relatives, friends etc. Despite all the demerits, awareness about the importance of career planning has started to rise in the Nepalese public organizations. The organizations are trying to support and facilitate the efforts of the employees in their career planning process by conducting different kinds of trainings, seminars and workshops to promote career growth.

Also, it has been found that many public organizations lack a retention strategy, as they don't have Human Resource departments. So, there is a problem in succession planning. Succession planning is effective only if there is a strong retention strategy. Low salary levels, late salary disbursement along with lack of remuneration increment, dim career growth opportunities as well as absence of decent work culture and perception of fairness and equitable treatment in workplaces are some of the factors behind employee dissatisfaction that negatively affects the professionalism of the employees.

7. Conclusion

Putting things in a nutshell, employee development and career system as well the practice of professionalism plays a significant role in Nepal's Human Resource Management and in turn the economic development. Employee development and career development are considered to be long-term processes that include regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in profession. To address the demand of the ever-evolving society, professional process must be changed according to the necessity of service user and society.

Regarding the status of employee development and career system for enhancing professionalism in the public sector of Nepal, it has been found that the public organizations have not been able to provide adequate trainings, mentoring and skill development programs to foster the needs of the employees. Likewise, soft skill development and ethics training has been left ignored. The employees are remunerated poorly, which hampers their work standards as well as their ethics. All these factors reflect very poor employee development activities, which in turn depicts very low professionalism in the employees.

Likewise, Favoritism or Nepotism is also widespread in the Nepalese public organizations, which hinder the career paths of qualified individuals. Also, there is a lack of systematic career planning and career assessment. Another issue is that there is no retention strategy in several organizations, as they don't have Human Resource departments, which causes a problem in succession planning. It reveals lack of proper career system in Nepalese public organizations, which has an adverse effect on professionalism of the individual employees.

References

- Adhikari, D.R. (2009). Human Resource Management: Text and Cases, Kathmandu: Manakamana Books.
- Adhikari, H. P. (2016). Perspective views on career planning in the context of Nepalese Organizations, Civil service Journal, Kathmandu: Public Service Commission.
- Agrawal, G.R. (.2002). Dynamics of Human Resource Management in Nepal. Kathmandu: M.K.Publishers and Distributors.
- Armstrong, M. (2012). Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource management Practice, New Delhi: Kogan Page Limited.

- Australian institute of business (2015) Reasons why professionalism is essential in the workplace. Retrieved 05 May 2020 from <https://www.aib.edu.au/blog/organisations-culture/3-reasons-professionalism-essential-workplace/>
- Baruch, Y. (2004). *Managing careers: Theory and practice*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Beach, D.S. (1989). *The Management of People at work*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company and, Collier Macmillan Publisher
- Cascio, W.F. (2006) *Managing Human Resources -Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits*, 7th Ed., New Delhi, India: Tata McGraw-Hill Inc.
- Dessler, G. (1997) *Human Resource Management*, New Delhi, India: Prentice Hall.
- Eliza, A. (n.d.) *Career Planning Process and its Role in Human Resource Development*, online Available at:
- George, M.J., & Jones, R.G. (2007) *Understanding and Managing Organizational Behavior -5th Edition*, London: Prentice Hall/Pearson Publishing House.
- Goel, S.L. (1993). *Personnel Administration and Management*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Greenhaus, J. H., callagan, G. A. (Eds.) (2006). *Encyclopaedia of Career Development*. California. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- H. R. M. (2010-2015) *Career Planning*, online Available at: <http://www.hrware.com/hr-planning/70-2/> Accessed 08May 2015
- HIGGINS, M., & DILLON, J. R. (2007). *Career Patterns and Organizational Performance*. In: *Handbook of career studies*. Gunz H., Peiperl M. (Eds.). Los Angeles. Sage Publications. <http://upet.ro/annals/economics/pdf/2010/20100202.pdf> Accessed 08 May 2019
- IPL (2020) *Importance of Professionalism in the Public Sector*, Retrieved 05 May 2020 from <https://www.ipl.org/essay/Importance-Of-Professionalism-In-The-Public-Sector-FK5XAS7EAJF6>
- Jacobs, R., & Washington, C. (2003). *Employee Development and Organizational Performance: A Review of Literature and Directions for Future Research*. *Human Resource Development International*. 6. 343-354. Doi:

10.1080/13678860110096211.

K.C, P.B. (1993). Principles of Personnel Management, Kathmandu: Kathmandu Book Center.

Khanal, D.R. (2015). Employment Challenges in Nepal: Trends, Characteristics and Policy Options for Inclusive Growth and Development, online Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318940567_Employment_Challenges_in_Nepal_Trends_Characteristics_and_Policy_Options_for_Inclusive_Growth_and_Development

Likert, R. (1967). The Human organization, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Luthans, F. (1992). Organizational Behaviour, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

United Nation. (2000). Professionalism and Ethics in the Public Service: Issues and Practices in Selected Regions. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/26282921/Professionalism_and_Ethics_in_the_Public_Service_Issues_and_Practices_in_Selected_Regions