



Careers: workers' perceptions of organisational support for their professional growth

Carreira: a percepção dos trabalhadores sobre apoio das organizações ao seu crescimento profissional

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Abstract

This study focused on the concept of career, taking into consideration the changes this construct has undergone over the years: from traditional approaches to contemporary perspectives. The research included analysing organisational policies and practices, as well as recognising the importance of workers' views regarding these phenomena. The study specifically sought to understand more fully organisations' career management strategies in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. The data collection included both Human Resources Departments' stated positions and employees' perceptions of their opportunities for professional growth and the available career planning mechanisms. Secondary data were obtained from the 'Melhores Empresas para Trabalhar – 2016' ('The Best Companies to Work for – 2016) survey, which also provided a methodological framework. The results highlight organisations' concerns regarding subsidising their employees' career development, although this support varies according to hierarchical level and company size.

Keywords: Career planning, career development, human resources, professional growth, best companies to work for.

Resumo

Este artigo trata do tema carreira tendo como contexto as modificações que esse conceito vem sofrendo ao longo dos anos: de uma abordagem tradicional (linear) a um enfoque contemporâneo (múltipla e sem fronteiras). A pesquisa revisita o tema analisando as políticas e práticas organizacionais, e também (re)conhecendo a importância do olhar do próprio trabalhador sobre o fenômeno. Seu objetivo se traduz em compreender a gestão de carreiras em organizações do estado de Minas Gerais (Brasil), considerando os posicionamentos adotados pelas áreas de Recursos Humanos e a percepção dos empregados quanto às possibilidades de crescimento profissional e mecanismos para planejamento de carreira. Toma-se como base metodológica, dados secundários obtidos da pesquisa "As Melhores Empresas para Você Trabalhar" (2016). Os resultados apontam para uma preocupação das organizações em subsidiar o desenvolvimento da carreira dos seus profissionais, ainda que haja distinções deste apoio em relação aos níveis hierárquicos e porte da empresa.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento de carreira, desenvolvimento da carreira, recursos humanos, crescimento profissional, melhores empresas para trabalhar.

1. Introduction

This article deals with the career theme, taking as its context the changes that this concept has undergone, migrating from a traditional to a more contemporary approach (Engel, Burg, Kleijn, & Khapova, 2017). In this regard, two aspects of career discussions are identified: one related to the role of the organization and the other to that of the person (Veloso, Dutra, Fischer, Pimentel, & Amorim, 2011).

Thus, on the one hand, careers were traditionally seen as composed of linear stages, with guaranteed benefits and security, and that evolved in a hierarchical structure. This type favored learning and knowledge transfer within the organization, with seniority being a socially valued characteristic (Engel et al., 2017; Silva, Trevisan, Veloso, & Dutra, 2016).

On the other hand, careers came to be related to personal trajectory and to professional mobility, expanding their space of expression to the personal, family, social, and professional

domains. New careers emerged in the late twentieth century characterized by the possibility of individuals creating their own opportunities. Thus, one has (beyond the traditional career) the protean career - molded more by the individual than by the company, and the career without borders - in which the individual becomes responsible for his/her development through the cultivation of networks and by seeking access to knowledge and external resources (Engel et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2016; Veloso, Dutra, & Nakata, 2016).

This study focuses on the career perspective developed within organizations. The theme is revisited from the perspective of organizational policies and practices, and also the worker who feels their impacts. From this context emerges the general objective of this research: to understand the careers in organizations in Minas Gerais (Brazil), considering the positions of the Human Resources (HR) department and the perception of employees regarding the possibilities of planning and development of their careers.



The specific objectives proposed are: a) to describe the formal mechanisms offered by the organizations that help employees plan their careers; b) to identify the employees' perceptions regarding the professional growth that the organization offers; c) to verify whether employees perceive the investment of companies in career planning and development.

The basis for the study is composed of secondary data obtained through the "Best Companies to Work For" (*Melhores Empresas para Você Trabalhar - MEPT*) survey, which has been conducted every year since 2006 by the "Programa de Estudos em Gestão de Pessoas", of the *Fundação Instituto de Administração (PROGEP-FIA)* [Institute of Management Foundation], at the University of São Paulo (USP), in partnership with *Editora Abril [Abril Publishing]*, which publishes its results in a Special Guide of the *Você S/A* professional magazine. This database supports a set of studies that discuss the modernization (or not) of HR department in the turbulent business context of Brazil's economic scenario.

The focus is placed on the state of Minas Gerais considering that, among the 27 Brazilian states, it is one of the five with the largest share of Gross Domestic Product - GDP (8.7%) in 2015, together with São Paulo (32.4%), Rio de Janeiro (11.0%), Rio Grande do Sul (6,4%), and Paraná (6,3%), altogether 64.7% of the Brazilian economy (IBGE, 2016). In addition, in the analysis by state, Minas Gerais ranks second in the number of municipalities (10.7%) and employed persons (10.0%) (CDDI/IBGE, 2017).

The present study is characterized as descriptive research with a mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative), and from the set of participating organizations, selecting the 15 located in Minas Gerais. It presents and discusses the data related to the evaluation categories that involve the theme "career" and is organized into discussion of the theoretical framework, methodology, data presentation and analysis, final considerations, and references used.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Career and its management

The term "career" refers to the possibility of progression or a profession that presents stages (Martins, 2011) and can be associated with a salaried job, with the feeling of belonging to a professional group, or with a vocation (Bendassolli, 2009). This understanding dates back to the nineteenth century and has undergone changes due to social, economic, and political changes that affect organizations and the worker (Chanlat, 1995).

From the companies' point of view, from 1990 onwards, care with its management was initiated, in order to stimulate movement within the organization itself (Silva et al., 2016). This was because companies benefit from career management as an instrument that administers resources based on the junction of personal and professional goals (Kuzaqui, 2016). This management is defined by Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk

(2009) as a process by which the employee gathers information about himself and the working world, develops a profile of his talents and values, establishes the occupations he wants, and defines a growth strategy.

The organization that stimulates this development needs to have its objectives defined, supporting workers in adhering to these intentions for their growth. For this, it is fundamental to reconcile organizational and personal growth, including support for individual career planning, the establishment of levels of development, and requirements for this growth (Dutra, 2001). In addition, the organization needs to make public the necessary qualification for workers to achieve organizational and personal goals (Carvalho, Nascimento, & Serafim, 2013).

Within the labor market, it is thought there are different career structures. Three of these structures are highlighted, according to Oliveira (2013), as: in an ascending line (conventional), in a network (with multiple areas of activity), and parallel. In relation to the parallel career, Dutra (2001) emphasizes that the most common is the traditional parallel one, but it can also be Y-shaped (presupposes the choice for the managerial or technical path), and multiple (encompasses distinct activities inside and outside the organization). Recently, some companies have begun to adopt a W-shaped career that involves projects that demand managerial and technical skills, but also administrative skills (Segala, 2015).

2.2 Career planning

Among the debates about careers are those on reconciling career expectations and professional opportunities, improving internal recruitment processes, and building a database on people in an appropriate form for managing their careers. The relevance of instruments for this planning, as well as development actions, are highlighted by Veloso and Dutra (2010). According to Rocha (2015), there is also clear concern with actions based on self-knowledge, capable of aligning personal and professional interests.

What is expected is that organizations establish ways to identify, attract, and retain competent professionals that constitute a competitive advantage in the market (Kuzaqui, 2016). Thus, it is from this perspective that mechanisms and actions for career planning are developed, which can be constituted as:

Career plan: understood as a formal document that consolidates information and activities developed based on a career evolution methodology and serves as a talent retention tool (Oliveira, 2013; Schuster & Dias, 2012). Tachizawa, Ferreira, and Fortuna (2006) consider it as a process of continuous interaction and convergence of interests between worker and organization. According to Oliveira (2013), organizations need to have some definitions that can facilitate the elaboration of the plan, such as corporate goals, agreement about what is expected of employees, the necessary



qualifications for positions, and the structuring and dissemination of the system of opportunities.

Manuals, software, and courses for career planning: these are intended to convey information about how employees can occupy higher positions (progressions or promotions), with lines of succession and defined timelines. They can be computerized (software) and contain tools that help in improving skills, in self-knowledge, and in elaborating the Individual Development Plan (IDP). Courses and workshops are also used to stimulate the exchange of ideas and to demonstrate how to build career planning. In this modality, the participants can discuss their career development preferences and goals as a group (Hall, 2002).

Career paths: alternative and flexible paths for personal and professional growth (Freitas, 2002), forming as a map that shows where the individual is and where the employee intends to arrive, what path the worker has to travel, and what the individual has to acquire to get there. The individual thus becomes a kind of sculptor of his/her career (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989). Le Boterf (2002) makes the analogy with the establishment of a navigation route: the navigator, with geographic charts and meteorological forecasts, establishes the route. Based on the paths, each individual can establish what they want to achieve, according to their interests and needs, and obtain information about how to do it, including new learning (Freitas, 2002).

Individual Development Plan (IDP): a document composed of goals and objectives, in which the individual identifies what personal and / or professional competencies are necessary for a sustained development and how they will cover the identified gaps (Kuazaqui, 2016). The IDP is the responsibility of immediate management together with the employee, based on HR policies. Its construction, development tracking, and results should be monitored by superiors and mean that the leaders include in their plans the monitoring of those they lead (Dutra, 2010).

2.3 Career development

In addition to planning, organizations should be concerned with supporting individuals in stimulating higher levels of commitment, satisfaction, and growth (Ascensão, 2009). Toward this end, there are a variety of actions in use by organizations for the development of professionals, such as:

Job Rotation: practice of varying activities, in which the worker can switch day-to-day tasks, with activities in which the individual can learn in other positions, sectors, and locations. Lacombe (2011) points out that it is one of the most-used tools in large companies to prepare their professionals for new positions. It can make work more challenging, taking workers out of their comfort zone, learning continuously, getting to know different processes, exercising their leadership and networking, and taking on multiple responsibilities.

Coaching: one of the strategies used especially for those who occupy critical positions. It takes place between the professional (coach) and the client (coachee), aimed at the client's personal and professional development (Oliveira, 2015). Batista and Cançado (2017) define it as a process of orientation aimed at stimulating learning, based on goals related to the individual's development. Sergers, Vloeberghs, Henderickx, and Inceoglu (2011) point out different types of coaching, with performance proving to be the most common in career development, seeking to optimize competency and professional potential (Graziano, Peixoto, Pizzinatto, & Castro, 2014; Sergers et al., 2011).

Mentoring: more directive than coaching, with suggested actions from the mentor (experienced professional) to the mentored (less experienced professional, but with a growth perspective), being applied to individuals with potential, but who need help to increase their performance (Baugh & Sullivan, 2005; Graziano et al., 2014; Kram, 1983).

Counseling: distinguishes itself by indicating a focus on the past and on the present through a prescriptive approach, while in the coaching and mentoring processes the focus is on the present and future of the individual, with a collaborative approach (Dingman, 2004).

3. Methodology

This study is characterized as descriptive research with a mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative), since it was intended to identify the existence of relationships between variables by using standardized data collection techniques, such as the questionnaire. Secondary data from the "Best Companies to Work For" survey was used, following the methodology of organizational climate research combined with an assessment of HR policies and practices, in order to indicate the best (150 in total). The registration process is open to any company that has been operating in Brazil for more than 5 years, with at least 100 employees in a regular employment relationship.

For this study, the 15 companies operating in Minas Gerais were selected. In order to protect their identities, the code "Company", followed by a sequence of numbers from 1 to 15, was created. These are organizations that belong to the commercial, industrial, and services sectors, with a total number of employees ranging from 128 to 7,278. The companies with the highest total of employees are 4, 5, 14, and 15, and with the lowest, 2, 3, 9, and 11.

The companies participating in the MEPT survey fill out an institutional questionnaire with their profile, HR structure, and people management policies and practices classified into the categories: strategy and objectives, leadership profile, recognition and reward, career, knowledge and corporate education, internal communication, participation and autonomy, interpersonal relationships, process and organization, health, safety and quality of life at work, sustainability and diversity, and employer branding. These



practices are described in an Evidence Book of qualitative material, with open questions, that aims to demonstrate the management practices stated in the institution's questionnaire.

The companies are responsible for sending a message or letter with a password and a link to the workers, randomly chosen, to answer the employee questionnaire (85 questions). The respondents are not identified and their participation is voluntary. They answers the questionnaire via the internet, The

employees express their perceptions, reporting their level of agreement regarding a set of assertions, according to a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Totally disagree - 5 = Totally agree). In this article, the research questions are presented enclosed in quotation marks for identification.

This study uses the following sources from the MEPT (2016) research, according to the proposed objectives (Table 1).

Table 1 - Data Collection Sources for Each Specific Objective

Specific objectives	Qualitative approach	Quantitative Approach
Describe the formal mechanisms offered by organizations that help employees plan their career	Evidence Books	Institutional Questionnaire
Identify employees' perceptions of professional growth in the organization		Employee Questionnaire
Ascertain whether employees perceive the investment of companies in career planning	Evidence Books	Institutional Questionnaire and Employee Questionnaire

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The quantitative data from the two questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics (Alves-Mazzotti & Gewandsznajder, 1999). Using multiple sources of evidence, triangulation of quantitative data (from questionnaires) and qualitative data (reports from the Evidence Books), also analyzed in a descriptive way, was performed. According to Yin (2015), triangulation makes a study's findings more convincing and accurate.

4. Results

4.1 Formal mechanisms for career planning offered by the organizations: the institutional perspective

When asked whether "The company adopts formal mechanisms to encourage and support employees in planning their careers",

13 of the 15 organizations said they did and detailed the content in the Evidence Books. Company 1, despite responding that it "adopts", did not fill in the Evidence Books detailing the content. Company 6 claimed that it did not have such mechanisms (Table 2). Thus, from this point onwards, the analysis will cover those 13 companies, excluding 1 and 6. Regarding the mechanisms adopted, they include: courses, career counseling, existence of career paths and individual development plans. This reinforces the idea presented by Carvalho et al. (2013) and Rocha (2015) that organizations should work on career planning so that there is a combining of their goals with the motivation of the professionals to develop along with the business.

Table 2 - Number of mechanisms for career planning in relation to hierarchical levels

Company	Strategic Level	Tactical Level	Operational / Administrative Level	Total
Company 1	0	0	0	0
Company 2	1	5	4	10
Company 3	4	4	4	12
Company 4	11	11	8	30
Company 5	9	9	6	24
Company 6	0	0	0	0
Company 7	7	7	3	17
Company 8	5	8	7	20
Company 9	0	2	2	4
Company 10	4	4	9	17
Company 11	1	3	2	6
Company 12	11	10	8	29
Company 13	1	9	11	21
Company 14	5	4	1	10
Company 15	6	6	5	17
Total	65	82	70	

Source: Study data.

It appears, for the most part, that the organizations show concern for promoting this planning through appropriate tools.

However, there is variation between the number of these mechanisms by hierarchical levels and number of employees,



highlighting that the levels are divided into: strategic (top management), tactical (management), operational / administrative (other positions).

Most of the companies (eight) have offered more than one mechanism for the career planning of their employees. Only Company 9 provides no mechanism for strategic-level positions. The existence of a greater number of mechanisms targeted at the tactical level is highlighted. It is inferred that they constitute rising leadership and, therefore, receive a greater share of investment. It is noteworthy that the companies with the

lowest number of employees (2, 3, 9, and 11) are the ones that invest the least. However, the companies with the highest number of employees (4, 5, 14, and 15), with the exception of 4, are not those with the largest investments.

4.1.1 Mechanisms: career planning

Table 3 presents the alternatives for career planning adopted by the organizations, given that the elaboration of a career plan for the employees constitutes a competitive differential together with competent professionals (Kuazaqui, 2016).

Table 3 - Frequency and percentage of mechanisms for career planning

Mechanisms for career planning	Frequency	Percentage
"There are courses or events for career planning"	8	61.54%
"There are libraries, manuals, or software for career planning"	5	38.46%
"There is career counseling through structured meetings with immediate management or people appointed by the company"	8	61.54%
"The career plan is structured, formalized and practiced"	10	76.92%
"The company has career paths defined and published for employees"	10	76.92%
"Employees and managers jointly develop an individual development plan (IDP) that aligns the employee's career objectives with the company's goals"	11	84.62%

Source: Study data.

It is observed that, on the one hand, the most frequently observed are: the design of the IDP (84.62%) and a structured career plan (76.92%), along with career paths (76.92%). As mentioned by Freitas (2002) and Arthur et al. (1989), the perspective of growth is a prerogative for professionals in the current context and therefore encouraged by the organizations.

On the other hand, the sporadic presence is seen of libraries, manuals, or software (38.46%), elements highlighted by Hall (2002) as support for the process. This is a worrying factor since the lack of information can lead to a disincentive to growth. As stated by Dutra (2001) and Carvalho et al. (2013), it is essential that organizations make their ways of advancement public so that workers can achieve their goals.

Regarding the mechanisms, from the perspective of the hierarchical level, it is seen that most of the companies have made the six mechanisms available, with a lower incidence at the strategic level (Table 4). It can be inferred, in this case, that the organizations presume a lesser need for investment for those who have already reached the top, unlike those who are still following this course and require more support for their career development. It may be that, since they are the creators and co-participants of the HR policies, including the "career", the need for investment gets minimized. In any case, this is a point of caution on the organization's part since leaders are internal drivers of the process and should not be misinformed. As Dutra (2010) points out, the IDPs, for example, allow leaders to monitor those they lead and this reinforces the leader's role in their development.

Table 4 - Percentage of mechanisms for career planning in relation to hierarchical level

Mechanisms for career planning	Strategic Level	Tactical Level	Operational / Administrative Level
"There are courses or events for career planning"	46.15%	61.54%	61.54%
"There are libraries, manuals, or software for career planning"	30.77%	38.46%	38.46%
"There is career counseling through structured meetings with immediate management or people appointed by the company"	53.85%	61.54%	53.85%
"The career plan is structured, formalized, and practiced"	38.46%	61.54%	69.23%
"The company has career paths defined and published for employees"	46.15%	69.23%	76.92%
"Employees and managers jointly develop an individual development plan (IDP) that aligns the employee's career objectives with the company's goals"	53.85%	76.92%	69.23%

Source: Study data.

Questions were also raised as to whether "there is formally published information about career plans", and six companies claimed to have such practices, two of which do so for directors,

four for managers, and five for other employees. There are two points that draw attention, since only one company adopts the practice for all levels concomitantly, and two adopt it only for



other employees. The fact is also noted that seven organizations do not do so for any level, which can lead to loss of professionals who do not see growth prospects.

Another question arose as to whether "the requirements for access to positions foreseen in the career plan are reported to employees", and 11 of the companies claimed that they provide the information, with only seven informing all audience levels. There are companies that inform managers and other employees, and others only inform other employees. Such information is inconsistent when one considers that Directors and Managers are not informed since as leaders they should be the first to receive this information. In addition, it is noted that in eight of the companies, such a policy has been adopted for more than three years, but it has not yet been disseminated at all levels.

When questioned about whether "changes in career processes are always formally communicated to employees", nine companies claim to communicate them, though only five say they do so for all audiences. The sharing of information is

essential to career development. As stated by Dutra (2010) and Kuazaqui (2016), sustained development must be grounded on the identification of skills to be developed based on the business context, which presupposes continuous knowledge about the career process.

The analysis of the Evidence Books reveals that it is not clear how the companies disclose information, access requirements, and changes. This is a cause for concern because, as it is not possible to confirm the quality and credibility of the channels used by the Evidence Books, it is not feasible to say that they are effective. And employees without clear information are more subject to dissatisfaction and a tendency to leave the organization.

4.1.2 Mechanisms: career development

Regarding development mechanisms, the companies were asked about having "formal programs for development", and Table 5 presents some of the mechanisms used.

Table 5 - Frequency and percentage of mechanisms for career development

Mechanisms	Frequency	Percentage
"Coaching"	11	84.62%
"Mentoring"	7	53.85%
"Counseling"	4	30.77%
"Job Rotation into another location/unit"	8	61.54%
"Job Rotation into another area of activity"	10	76.92%

Source: Study data.

The emphasis is on the coaching process that is present in almost all organizations (11 out of 13), totaling 84.62%. This reinforces the perspective of Graziano et al. (2014) and Sergers et al. (2011) when they discuss the opportunity to improve performance through coaching. Next is the use of mentoring (53.85%). Counseling proves to be the least-used, with only 30.77% adherence. Job rotation actions, carried out as a way to allow direct learning in other areas of activity, are widely used,

totaling 10 companies (76.92%), followed by rotation into another location/unit (61.54%).

Table 6 shows that, unlike planning mechanisms, most companies have provided development actions to the tactical and strategic levels. This reinforces the perspective of Graziano et al. (2014) when discussing their use for professionals with promising potential.

Table 6 - Percentage of mechanisms for career development in relation to hierarchical level

Mechanisms	Strategic Level	Tactical Level	Operational / Administrative Level
"Coaching"	69.23%	84.62%	15.38%
"Mentoring"	38.46%	46.15%	23.08%
"Counseling"	23.08%	23.08%	15.38%
"Job Rotation into another location/unit"	38.46%	46.15%	38.46%
"Job Rotation into another area of activity"	53.85%	61.54%	61.54%

Source: Study data.

Regarding coaching, among these 11 companies, one uses it for all levels, eight for Directors and Managers, one for Managers only, and one for Managers and other employees. It is noted that the combined use for Directors and Managers is the most usual and that, of the group overall, only two claim they do not use the process, constituting a minority.

In the case of mentoring it is interesting to observe its use for all audiences in some companies, though with a lower incidence at the operational/administrative level, since it is a more costly process involving the time of experienced mentors. Thus, it is not so common to note its use for Managers and other employees, without including Directors, in the case of two companies, since these are the highest positions, the ones that



most often use this mechanism, due to the complexity of tasks and decisions (Graziano et al., 2014).

In this same perspective, when it comes to counseling, a remarkable fact is that among the four companies that use it, there is one that does so for all audiences and one that uses it for managers and other employees, which is surprising since it is an activity that involves higher costs. In this case, it is estimated that it is used for professionals in key positions.

Regarding job rotation into another area of activity, a practice advocated by Lacombe (2011) as useful for learning and career development, among the 10 companies that adopt it, five do it for all audiences, reinforcing the idea of gains for the company and for professionals, and being at times less costly than the previously mentioned practices. In the same perspective, but with lesser adherence, job rotation into another location/unit, is used by eight companies and two of them do so for all audiences. This lower incidence may be associated with the fact that this involves higher costs for moving and housing in other locations.

4.1.3 The Evidence Books: complementing information on planning and career development

Reinforcing the statistical data, the Evidence Books allow observation of additional points that can ratify the information. This is the case, for example, in the prioritization policy for internal recruitment for available positions, which occurs in the 13 companies. This is considered a mechanism that enables the employee to make a career in the organization. This policy varies among companies, and as Veloso and Dutra (2010) affirm, it remains fundamental in career planning. In relation to the present study, there are cases in which potential candidates are previously identified by the HR department; there are those in which a survey is taken among managers, who indicate candidates with potential; and there are cases in which openings are widely advertised in internal media channels. In addition, 12 of the organizations have internally published these openings for more than three years.

The Performance Evaluation and Competency Assessment processes are also common practices in the 13 organizations. Although they are not categories selected a priori in this research, they are mentioned here because they touch on the discussion about career and validate the concern with combining other HR management practices that enable career development. It is important that these practices are linked to actions such as IDPs, feedback processes, and development activities.

The Evidence Books also bring out elements that demand care in the analysis. One of them is the fact that most companies use the IDP nomenclature, versus the term "paths" that is very little used, or that is perhaps being used under some other designation and thus skewing the proposed qualitative analysis.

There is also a worrying aspect related to homogeneity in the comprehension of some of the content. Using the "paths" as an example, there are companies that cite this expression to designate the trajectory of opportunities in the company. Other

companies do not mention the expression, but they bring up examples that lead to the understanding that they are paths. The same is true for the question of the Y-shaped career since there are companies that cite this modality as a career development policy and others that do not mention it but deal with "managerial or technical" growth.

In addition, companies claim that they have certain practices such as coaching, mentoring, counseling, and job rotation, but in detailing the development processes used, they pull out data about "traditional" courses and training of a technical and/or behavioral nature.

Finally, it is considered as a positive aspect in the Evidence books, that the organizations often establish some important connections between HR processes, such as development versus performance evaluation. This indicates that, with performance gaps identified in the evaluations, they are directed towards development actions, allowing for a more targeted intervention regarding career. It is worth noting that it is not possible to observe the same connection between other processes, such as recruitment and selection versus resignations.

4.2 The employee perspective: perception about the opportunity for professional growth

In order to contrast the information obtained from institutional questionnaires and Evidence Books, an analysis was conducted using the data collected from employees about their perception of professional growth.

Regarding the question about "what makes me consider a company a great place to work is ...", it is observed that in 12 of the 13 companies (92.31%) the employees indicated, as the primary reason, "feeling satisfied and motivated by the work I do in the company." The other two most frequent reasons given are "realizing that I am learning more and more, and that I have the opportunity to grow" and "agreeing with the company's goals and being proud to work there", with the sum (considering "I agree most of the time" and "I totally agree") of these first three reasons being 74.86%. This reinforces the perspective of Engel et al. (2017) and Silva et al. (2016) when they affirm that learning is demonstrated both in the traditional career perspective and in more modern strategies, such as coaching (Batista & Cançado, 2017). In addition, alignment with the company's goals, and pride in working there, are elements associated with career, since alignment with the business, belief in the company values and in what the company represents in conjunction with the market, are aspects that guide career decisions (Greenhaus et al., 2009).

It is also noteworthy that of the 4,769 respondents in the 13 companies, 3,615 (75.80%, combining "mostly agree" and "strongly agree") agreed with the assertion "I believe that working in this company, I will have the opportunity to build a career and grow". And even 60.87% (combining "I agree most of the time" and "I totally agree") reveal, regarding the question



"the company uses fair criteria for promotion and career", that they agree with the affirmative. It is thus inferred that the opportunity to build a career in the organization through the internal recruitment process is valued, this possibility being an aspect that makes the organization an excellent place to work (Oliveira, 2013), and should be an object of attention for HR department.

Regarding the question "I know what I must do to grow professionally in this company", 78.00% (combining "I agree most of the time" and "I totally agree") say they know how to act to achieve the growth opportunity offered by the organization, considering all hierarchical levels. This reinforces the perspective of Le Boterf (2002) in establishing the metaphor of the navigation route for the desired career development. A contradiction with the answers from the institutional questionnaire is highlighted since only six organizations state they publish the plans for a career in the company.

5. Final Considerations

This study discusses the career in view of the importance of revisiting this theme and its transformations. It was grounded on the database from the "The Best Companies to Work For" survey, analyzing the statistical data of the institutional and employee responses, as well as the qualitative analysis of the Evidence Books.

Its objective is established as "understanding careers in organizations in Minas Gerais (Brazil), considering the positions of the HR department and the perception of the employees regarding the possibilities of planning and developing their careers." Connected to it, the specific objectives were analyzed in the light of the results found.

The specific objective of "describing the formal mechanisms offered by the organizations that help employees plan their careers" is fulfilled when the common actions regarding the development of IDPs, and the existence of structured career paths and plans are identified. Other less common initiatives also emerge, such as conducting courses and counseling. Although they are practiced, these mechanisms do not always seem clear to the employees as to their function. In addition, the absence of information about them tends to generate dissatisfaction and a lack of perspective of growth, being points of caution for organizations.

Still, in relation to the mechanisms, those for career planning (courses, counseling meetings, paths, and IDPs) are more driven at the tactical and operational levels, while those for career development (coaching, mentoring, counseling, and job rotation), at the strategic levels. This reinforces the idea of elitism in the use of such mechanisms of career development, benefiting the groups that are considered essential to the business.

With regard to the objective of "identifying employee perception regarding the professional growth offered by the organization", it can be observed that there is a perception by the employees that the company offers opportunities for

growth and that internal recruitment is a way of stimulating career development. One of the reasons that most favors the employee staying with the organization is precisely the possibility of continuous learning and the challenge in the work, aspects related to the investments of the organizations in the development of their employees. The caution in this analysis concerns the ongoing need for organizations to assure the employee that he is treated fairly and commensurate with his/her role. This is because employees are increasingly pressured by results and accountable for their self-development. It should be noted here that companies with fewer employees tend to invest less in career development mechanisms.

When it comes to the objective of "ascertaining whether employees perceive the investment of the companies in career planning", it can be affirmed that it is accomplished in part. Contrasting the institutional and employee responses and in analyzing the Evidence Books, inconsistencies are observed that are not possible to respond to in this research, and which also constitute limitations of the study.

One of these is the selection of employees who respond to the questionnaires. Although they are randomly selected and the responses are voluntary, it is not possible to assure the variety of this internal audience. This could suggest some bias, especially considering that most companies have many employees who work in units with different characteristics.

In addition, there are aspects pertaining to the perception of employees that are not studied in-depth. Although the questionnaire is quite extensive (85 questions), it does not touch on content that would be useful for better understanding the worker's point of view. This is the case, for example, for contemporary career perspectives, since the "traditional career" universe is favored within the organization itself.

There is another aspect that should not be overlooked in database analysis. This involves a questionnaire answered by companies, with binary response options ("yes" or "no"), which restricts the choices of those who respond and precludes better analysis by investigators. In addition, a certain mimicry is observed in the HR practices of the companies, leading them to fit the market standards and facilitate their selection in the ranking of the *MEPT* Guide itself, which is an object of attention for the researchers.

In terms of contributions, the opportunity to revisit a relevant topic regarding people management actions is highlighted, especially in a turbulent environment such as current. The possibility of considering what the people management practices have been and how these aspects are being received and perceived by employees can feed the search for alternative actions in organizations and research in academia. In terms of a proposed research agenda, it would be important to extend the study to qualitative analysis with each company (or by sampling). In addition, broadening the research to other states of the country could shed light on the peculiarities of each region.



In summary, and reiterating the proposal of the article title, it is concluded that employees recognize the support of organizations in providing and stimulating the planning and development of their careers (when it comes to the traditional career perspective). However, a more localized action is clearly evident with the top professionals, and yet less evident in smaller companies. It is also important to note that, increasingly, employees have been heightening their attention to such mechanisms, prioritizing organizations that stimulate learning and challenges, increasing the need to modernize HR actions.

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