



Strengthening Training, Mentoring, Certification, and Career Pathway Programs to Safeguard Employees' Futures within Organizations

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Abstract

The gap between the design and implementation of career development programs is a critical issue in human resource management. Using a qualitative literature review and thematic synthesis, this study investigates how training, mentoring, certification, and career path programs are executed, based on insights from relevant academic sources. The findings show that real-world implementation often deviates from both organizational goals and employee needs, reducing such initiatives to mere administrative formalities with limited impact on job security or career prospects. Key factors contributing to this gap include a lack of relevance, consistency, transparency, cross-unit collaboration, and continuous evaluation, which together erode employee trust and loyalty. Organizations that neglect these aspects may struggle with talent retention and productivity. The study recommends that policymakers ground career development programs in empirical evidence and employee engagement, with an emphasis on transparency, ongoing monitoring, and adaptive learning. Fostering innovation and transformative leadership is essential to making professional development a meaningful investment.

Keywords: career development, implementation, organization, trust, training, mentoring, certification

Introduction

Ongoing transformations in the field of human resource management have generated a pressing need for career development systems that are increasingly future-oriented. Employees across diverse organizations now seek greater clarity regarding the trajectories of their professional growth, ranging from opportunities to enhance skills, access to high-quality training, mentoring support, and formal recognition through transparent certification. They expect an integrated system that connects multiple dimensions of professional development with career pathways that can be realistically designed and navigated. According to Martinez (2022), structured project-based learning enables employees to acquire twenty-first-century competencies, thereby allowing organizations that provide modern training programs to strengthen the competitiveness of their workforce.

The implementation of training programs grounded in actual workplace needs is an imperative to ensure that every employee perceives professional development within their company as substantive rather than merely procedural. This is underscored by Abdullah et al. (2021) and Mardikaningsih (2024), who argue that innovative human resource management compels organizations to continuously adapt learning and development strategies to sustain employee motivation, active participation, and tangible career advancement. Adaptation and transformation through technology-based training, exemplified by the application of augmented reality in vocational education (Chiang et al., 2022), demonstrate the necessity for companies to innovate in delivering relevant and practically applicable learning experiences.

The increasing awareness among employees regarding the value of certifications in enhancing their employability demands that organizations construct competence development portfolios recognized externally. This phenomenon is supported by the findings of Infante and Darmawan (2022) concerning women in human resource management, where access to professional development expands opportunities and future perceptions within the organization. Nevertheless, formal recognition of certification should be accompanied by genuine competency improvement rather than serving as a mere administrative requirement.

The success of career development programs is fundamentally determined by the consistency of mentoring processes and the clarity of career pathways provided by the organization. As explained by Chasanah and Mardikaningsih (2023), organizational structures that design comprehensive development systems frequently fail to achieve implementation aligned with employee expectations. In several organizations, such programs lack effective communication and involvement from top management, resulting in employees perceiving development efforts as not being a genuine priority (Darmawan et al., 2024).

A persistent challenge concerns the discrepancy between career development program design and its realization within organizations. This gap is evident in the misalignment of training content with actual job requirements, inconsistency in mentoring processes, and certification efforts that serve merely as administrative supplements without substantial contribution to competency enhancement (Martinez, 2022; Abdullah et al., 2021). Career pathway programs are, at times, implemented in a non-transparent manner, leading employees to perceive promotional opportunities as limited and unclear.

Further issues arise when the execution of career development initiatives does not involve genuine management commitment (Eddine et al., 2023). According to Mardikaningsih (2024), without comprehensive support and regular consultation from leadership, development efforts tend to be unilateral. Ineffective communication often results in weak employee engagement, fostering a sense of being undervalued or deprioritized. Consequently, development programs devolve into administrative routines lacking meaningful impact.

Moreover, employees' perceptions of their future are frequently distorted due to the absence of clear career pathways and insufficient recognition of their developmental efforts. Growing frustration and distrust towards the organization accompany the divergence between program realization and employee expectations. Ultimately, employees increasingly seek opportunities outside the organization, which may strategically disadvantage the company in the long term.

The realities of adapting to the expectations of a new generation of workers who require openness and transparency necessitate that organizations comprehensively explore professional development aspects.

Every human resource development policy should be based on genuine workplace needs so that training, mentoring, and certification yield tangible benefits for both individual and organizational progress.

In an increasingly competitive global labor market, companies cannot disregard the importance of clear and structured career pathways. Failure to facilitate employee aspirations will result in decreased retention and loyalty. Therefore, examining the inconsistencies between the design and implementation of career development programs has become ever more pertinent.

This study aims to analyze the causes of the gap between the design and implementation of career development programs within organizations, as well as its impact on employees' perceptions and trust regarding their future. The findings are expected to provide empirical insights for policymakers to devise relevant and transformative professional development strategies, serving as a foundational reference for the formulation of human resource management policies authentically oriented toward growth.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach based on literature study as the main method, which aims to obtain a factual and argumentative understanding of the issue of the gap between the design and implementation of career development programs in organizations. The literature study allows researchers to conduct a comprehensive analysis of various scientific sources, both in the form of books and credible academic journals. This method provides flexibility in reviewing a variety of previously published perspectives, so that researchers can extract data critically and systematically according to research needs. Creswell (2014) asserts that literature review provides an important foundation in the development of conceptual and theoretical frameworks through the review of widely recognized research results.

Additionally, this literature-based study employs thematic synthesis, a methodological technique for organizing data and ideas into principal themes aligned with the central focus of the discussion. The process begins with data collection from primary and secondary sources, followed by codification, categorization, and the organization of findings

into interrelated central themes. Thomas and Harden (2008) emphasize that thematic synthesis is highly effective in articulating the relationships among findings and exploring the dynamics present within the literature, thereby strengthening the validity of results through the comparison of various theoretical frameworks and prevailing factual practices.

The application of a qualitative approach in the literature review further facilitates an integrative dialogue between theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, without being dominated by statistical measures. Researchers are thus able to extract deeper meaning through narrative interpretation that relies on well-validated data sources. Yin (2016) asserts that qualitative literature studies possess the capacity to construct novel understandings of emerging phenomena in the field of human resource management, while maintaining both objectivity and argumentative accuracy through rigorously corroborated references.

Result and Discussion

Implementation Gap of Career Development Program

The gap between the design of career development programs and their implementation in organizations is a complex and far-reaching fundamental issue. Many organizations have invested heavily in professional development through training, mentoring, certification, and carefully designed career paths to provide future clarity for their employees. However, on-the-ground implementation often encounters barriers that result in reduced relevance and effectiveness of these programs. Popova et al. (2022) state that there is a significant difference between empirical evidence of professional development best practices and the reality in organizations, where the implementation structure does not always follow scientific recommendations so that many individual development potentials are not accommodated.

Ideal career development requires synergy between the actual needs of individuals and organizational strategies. In practice, training provided is often overly generic and fails to address the specific challenges encountered by employees in their daily work. Rivaldo and Nabella (2023) demonstrate that the effectiveness of training is profoundly influenced by the alignment of content with real-world issues in the workplace. Without consideration of contextual needs, training programs are prone to being

perceived as mere formalities, thereby failing to enhance substantive competencies. Regarding mentoring, the availability of qualified mentors is frequently limited. Karlberg and Bezzina (2022) identify that mentoring is not conducted systematically due to excessive mentor workloads and insufficient organizational commitment to sustained guidance.

Certification serves as a form of recognition for individual quality, yet in some organizations, certificates are awarded merely to meet regulatory requirements or as part of routine quality assurance. González-Pérez and Ramírez-Montoya (2022) underscore the importance of certification that genuinely reflects mastery of relevant skills. However, in reality, certification processes often lack stringent assessment mechanisms, resulting in a skills gap as certificates do not always correspond to functional competence.

The dimension of career pathways is often a primary source of employee dissatisfaction. Prada, Mareque, and Pino-Juste (2022) describe how non-transparent and uncommunicated career development pathways foster perceptions of exclusivity and discrimination. When information regarding promotion opportunities is restricted to certain individuals, other employees perceive limited prospects for advancement within the organization. Such situations diminish commitment and contribute to increased turnover. Oluwatoyin and Mardikaningsih (2024) further note that establishing career pathways without employee involvement inhibits internal promotion and stifles innovative aspirations.

Organizations frequently neglect workplace culture and decision-making structures when designing career development programs. Rojak (2024) reveals that, in several organizations, human resource development is not fully aligned with policies on technology and innovation, leading to fragmentation between program objectives and day-to-day practices. Vertical and horizontal communication among stakeholders often encounters obstacles, thereby impeding the timely incorporation of employee feedback on their actual needs.

The misalignment between career development objectives and workplace realities also highlights weaknesses in organizational monitoring and evaluation systems. Popova et al. (2022) emphasize the necessity of continuous evaluation of training outcomes, mentoring effectiveness, and the impact of certification on job performance. The absence of systematic

evaluation produces perceptual biases between management and employees, ultimately resulting in organizational failure to identify root problems and a preference for merely pragmatic solutions.

Moreover, budget allocation and managerial support for professional development programs are often overlooked factors. Essa and Mardikaningsih (2023) indicate that a lack of long-term management commitment may transform developmental initiatives into administrative burdens devoid of strategic value. Frequently, training facilitation is implemented solely to comply with external demands or government regulations rather than being based on the genuine competency development needs of employees.

Limited access to learning infrastructure, such as digital technologies and online learning platforms, further exacerbates disparities between employees at headquarters and those in remote locations. González-Pérez and Ramírez-Montoya (2022) highlight the need to integrate digital technologies into human resource development in order to ensure that every individual has equal access to training, mentoring, and certification programs. Nonetheless, many organizations continue to reflect significant digital divides, resulting in differentiated skill acquisition.

A culture of collaborative learning has yet to be fully developed across organizations. Prada et al. (2022) found that programs emphasizing team learning, openness, and cross-unit collaboration generate positive effects on individual development and employee engagement. Ironically, in many organizations, training and development remain individualized, thereby restricting the potential for collective advancement. Ultimately, individualism further widens the gap between employee aspirations and organizational policy.

The demands of Industry 4.0 also increase the complexity and require the acquisition of new, dynamic skills. Oluwatoyin and Mardikaningsih (2024) affirm that organizations failing to adapt by developing technology-based training, problem-solving, and creativity risk obsolescence. Employees lacking opportunities to cultivate digital and innovative capabilities become stagnant and lose their competitive edge in the era of industrial transformation.

Another contributing factor is leadership that has yet to fully recognize the importance of developmental leadership. Popova et al.

(2022) show that leaders focused solely on maintaining the status quo fail to motivate employees to engage actively in developmental programs. Mentoring, at times, proceeds passively without supervision or meaningful follow-up from supervisors. Such management approaches are likely to diminish enthusiasm and foster skepticism among employees.

The aforementioned analysis demonstrates that the gap in career development program implementation originates from multiple factors: programs that are irrelevant to specific needs, certification mechanisms lacking accurate assessment, non-transparent career pathways, limited participation and leadership support, scant evaluation, uneven infrastructure distribution, and insufficiently collaborative learning environments. Addressing these issues requires genuine commitment, enhanced communication systems, and the integration of innovation in management-employee relations. Thus, the transformation of professional development paradigms transcends normative policy and ought to focus on cultivating cultures and processes that truly empower individuals.

Historically, in the management of human resources, the persistent question regarding the recurrence of these gaps points to the necessity for accelerated cultural change and adaptive organizational systems. The inability to reconcile employee aspirations with developmental strategies will invariably perpetuate the divide between idealism and reality. Consequently, recent studies call upon management to reposition professional development as a transformational agenda rather than a stagnant administrative routine.

The Effect of Implementation on Employee Future Perceptions

A mismatch in the implementation of career development programs has been empirically proven to affect employees' perceptions and beliefs about their future. Employees who perceive that training, mentoring, certification, and career paths are not being implemented as expected generally begin to experience decreased motivation and loyalty (Darmawan et al., 2020). Irfan and Kurniawan (2024) state that inconsistent human resource development processes tend to create psychological uncertainty and erode a sense of security in the future career. Organizations that fail to adjust practices in the field with the development design offered will be faced with the problem of decreasing employee engagement and employee confidence.

The findings of King et al. (2021) emphasize that organizational investment in continuous development must be accompanied by a commitment to consistently adapt learning and mentoring methods to the actual needs of both individuals and the organization. When employees perceive training as a mere routine with no tangible effect on their professional advancement, this diminishes their appreciation for the organization and may even foster intentions to seek opportunities elsewhere that appear more promising. Many workers begin to doubt their potential for personal growth within the organization, particularly if certification does not reflect genuine enhancement of meaningful competencies.

Chuang (2021) highlights the psychological dimension in the implementation of adult learning, stating that professional development based on individual needs engenders high levels of trust in the organization. Unfortunately, if mentoring is conducted without clear direction and commitment, and if the training evaluation system remains inadequate, employees may feel that their efforts are undervalued. Such conditions entrap them in prolonged career stagnation and give rise to widespread dissatisfaction within the workplace.

Furthermore, limited access to transparent and equitable promotion pathways exacerbates negative perceptions concerning future prospects in the organization (Ozerturk, 2016). Mardikaningsih and Darmawan (2022) elaborate that situational leadership strategies in team management can drive organizational change and boost employees' confidence in the organizational structure. However, when management remains opaque about development opportunities or when promotion selection is exclusive, employee trust gradually deteriorates.

The misalignment in implementation also fosters perceptions of discrimination in developmental opportunities (Nag et al., 2022). Saktiawan et al. (2021) assert that ethical principles in human resource management must create equal growth opportunities. Otherwise, injustice is amplified, reinforcing employees' negative outlook regarding their future within the organization. The result is a sense of marginalization and diminished motivation to contribute further.

Research conducted by Mardikaningsih, Masnawati, and Aisyah (2021) demonstrates that non-adaptive development patterns, which do not accommodate the advancement of global citizenship, erode employee confidence concerning the direction of organizational policy. Young professionals, in particular, tend to demand clarity and open opportunities to support their career aspirations. In the absence of genuine support, organizations risk losing highly productive talent crucial in an era of global competition.

Khairi and Darmawan (2022) explain that the management of analytical skill development within organizations is a benchmark for the quality of innovation and the speed of adaptation. When training is provided without regard to the relevance of emerging competencies, employees' confidence in their own advancement within the organization declines. They may perceive the organization as unprepared for new challenges, influencing their decisions to remain or depart.

Another layer of complexity emerges from several studies on human resource audit practices, where inconsistent implementation results in perceptions of limited transparency and fairness in recruitment and career selection processes. Irfan and Hariani (2023) stress the necessity of integrating human resource audits in professional development to ensure that all decisions regarding development and promotion are accountable. A lack of accountability contributes to diminished trust in the organization.

In the context of organizational bureaucracy and culture, perceptions of employees' futures are highly shaped by patterns of communication and the management of change. Mardikaningsih, Masnawati, and Aisyah (2021) underscore that an adaptive work environment promoting continuous learning can foster a sense of security and robust trust among employees. When communication is hindered and career development proceeds without direction or sufficient managerial support, most employees tend to seek alternatives outside the organization.

According to Saktiawan et al. (2021), the failure to cultivate professional integrity leads to a decline in collective morale, directly impacting organizational trust. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of clear recognition mechanisms for individual achievements in

professional development. Together, these factors erode group confidence and weaken the organization's capabilities to pursue its long-term vision.

In summary, the management of career development programs that fails to address the genuine expectations and needs of employees ultimately results in the loss of a positive outlook for the future. Employees cease to view the organization as a place capable of accommodating their personal and professional visions, thus leading to fragile long-term relationships that are easily disrupted by external factors.

In such circumstances, the transformation of career development should be pursued through an approach grounded in openness, transparent promotion pathways, sustained mentoring, and adaptation to the specific needs of every individual within the organization. Companies aspiring to foster trust and expectations for the future among their members must affirm their commitment to authentic development and promote the creation of a collaborative and dynamic learning ecosystem.

Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive literature review, it can be concluded that the gap between the design and implementation of career development programs generates multidimensional impacts on employees' mindset, motivation, and trust in their future within the organization. Although instruments such as training, mentoring, certification, and career pathways are systematically designed to provide clear prospects, their actual implementation frequently fails to align with individual needs and organizational demands. This disconnect causes programs that should hold strategic value to be reduced to mere administrative formalities, diminishing the substantive meaning of career development in the eyes of employees.

The findings of this analysis underscore the imperative for organizations to reform by focusing on cultivating a professional development environment attuned to the genuine needs of both employees and the business. Policy implementation that lacks transparency, continuous evaluation, and cross-unit collaboration will perpetuate the gulf between idealism and operational reality. Career development must be positioned as a long-term investment that not only

secures competencies but also fosters trust, security, and employee loyalty regarding their future within the organization.

This study recommends reconstructing career development systems by emphasizing active employee participation, transparent communication, integration of technology, collaborative decision-making, and the reinforcement of merit-based reward mechanisms. Organizations should also ensure relevance, sustainability, and accountable monitoring at every stage of implementation. Innovations in learning, continuous mentoring, and the strengthening of transformative leadership capacities are key to assuring employees that their future within the organization is clear and meaningful.

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