Chapter 5

Embedding Career Competencies in Learning and Talent Development: Career Management and Professional Development Modules

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ABSTRACT

The chapter researches theoretical positions and practical applications that enable educationalists to equip students with the knowledge and skills to self-manage their careers and develop professionally, thus facilitating the successful transition of students from the academic environment to the workplace. It locates the discussion within a context which recognises the different models that business schools can adopt when providing learning and talent development generally, and career and professional development specifically. The main focus of the chapter relates to three inter-related themes that underpin career management and professional development. First, situating career management and professional development within a contextualising discourse. Second, exploring the contemporary career concepts that influence career management and professional development. Third, considering career management and professional development from three varying perspectives. Issues and solutions are offered to educationalists through the integration of theory and practice.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2820-3.ch005
INTRODUCTION

Phenomena such as globalisation, boom/bust cycles, technological advances, workforce diversity, organisational delayering, outsourcing and off-shoring, downsizing and redundancy, and a variety of contractual agreements, have transformed the work environment and how people manage their careers within this arena (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Traditionally an individual’s career was described in terms of a person’s relationship to an employing organisation, with the hallmark of this association typified by uninterrupted linear progressions occurring in stable surroundings in a single setting (Arnold & Cohen, 2008). Modern career conceptualisations, however, depict a multiplicity of opportunities available to workers in a myriad of fluid and fast-paced employment situations, with advancement contingent on the continual acquisition of personal portfolios of knowledge and skills (Inkson, Heising, & Rousseau, 2001). Within this contemporary conceptualisation, change is deemed to be a constant feature, with career actors characterised by the presence of agency when confronted with an abundance of options and choices (Inkson, 2006; LaPointe, 2013). In these circumstances, individuals require lifelong learning and talent development to acquire the necessary competence and competencies to manage their careers in an adaptable manner. Simultaneously, organisations need to provide appropriate structures, systems, policies and procedures to facilitate such self-management in a flexible way.

The chapter takes account of this fluctuating backdrop by relating the teaching of learning and talent development in educational establishments to both the needs of undergraduates and postgraduates entering dynamic workplaces, and the requirements of contemporary organisations employing such workers. It researches the theoretical positions and practical applications that enable educators to equip students with the knowledge and skills to self-manage their careers. Providing career management capabilities potentially facilitates a student’s successful transition from the academic environment to the workplace.

BACKGROUND: EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT TO LEARNING AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Connecting learning and talent development theory and practice, particularly in the domains of career management and professional development, tends to fall under the remit of a business school. It has been suggested that the activities of a business school can be conceived in terms of how it balances two binaries – its teaching and research agendas; and its organisational and scholarly impact (Starkey & Tiratsoo, 2007). This leads to a four-fold typology with a quartet of potential models and
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