University of Łódź

Department of Economics and Sociology

Aleksandra Piekarska

Abstract of the doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Prof. dr Ewa Rokicka, assistant supervisor dr Julita Czernecka "Career models in human resource management. (Self)reflection on the practice of career counselling and coaching"

The aim of this study was to capture the process of creating models of career realisation behaviour that are indicated as effective and applicable. An analysis of the career realisation activities promoted by the environment, career support and employee development in the broadest sense, promotion of professional behaviour and employee development plans. Also included in the objectives is the analysis and presentation of the self-reflection of HRM professionals on the impact of their knowledge and experience of career path building and employee development in relation to their profession on their own careers, as well as their attitude to career support. The presentation of model career characteristics in confrontation with the real course of careers of the representatives of the HR professionals involved in the creation of these career visions. An examination of the reflections on the course of their own careers by professionals involved in working on the careers of others, as well as their reflections on the process of supporting the careers.

In approaching the research issue that is most concerned with the production and reinforcement of career models by the HRM environment, given the available research streams, it was decided to choose structure theory (Giddens, 2003) as the main theoretical framework. The researcher's task was to subject 2 areas to observation, namely the functioning career discourse and its model character, treated in this study as rules of structuration in juxtaposition with the work practice of the HRM professional, its daily implementation, but also the subjective reflections of the individual involved in the process. Using the idea of the duality of structures, it is possible to ask how the HRM career support procedures used by professionals and their own beliefs, on the one hand, shape their actions and, on the other hand, are a tool for transforming organisational reality. What is the relevance of the unintended consequences of individuals' actions for the reproduction of social practice in career support for employees analysed through the lens of intentional behaviour.

In the first chapter, I present changes in the labour market and changes related to human functioning at work and in organisations. I show the impact of these transformations on the shapes of career models and patterns over several decades, and present the definitional contexts

of careers that have appeared in the classical sociological literature. I then describe the changes in the career paradigm, which gave a different framework and approach to the issue of careers from the traditional ones, and explain the circumstances under which it emerged. I then review the research referencing this paradigm. Next, I present the human resource management environment as an important element in the process of shaping career models and employee support systems, I also introduce the HRM (human resource management) industry in Poland and analyse issues related to the change in career support and approaches to employee careers in this environment.

The research undertaken covered a small part of the institutional system, limited to one area, i.e. the system of employee career support by the HRM environment. They brought new knowledge about the creation of employees' attitudes and actions in the area of careers by the HRM environment. No research had been undertaken so far, which included the study of the participation of the HRM environment in the process of creating model career paths. The present research has provided a picture of the demands placed on employees' careers and the model features of these careers and has captured how HRM professionals contribute to the production of patterns that influence the world of work. Through the use of structuration theory, the research provided an insight into the HRM environment in a new way that had not previously appeared in the literature on the subject. An analysis was made of practices in the area of career support, capturing professionals as actors who create and reinforce the existing institutional system. Thanks to the applied theoretical perspective, the problem posed was analysed at both individual and systemic level. The theory of structure, as a theoretical background, made it possible to explain social phenomena, referring to the perspective of individuals and institutions.