# Human Resource Development Using an Individual Development Plan in Project-Oriented Organizations

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**ABSTRACT**

Most of the research on human resource development has focused on education and health industries by employing the individual development plan. The aim of this study is to explain the process of human resource development in project-oriented organizations using individual development plan, for better understanding and identify factors affecting it. For this purpose, using data theorizing method, data from open and deep interviews with 12 employees of human resource division of Power Installation Company were collected and analyzed. The selection of these people was based on sampling. The results show that individual, team and organizational factors like expansionism, competition for progress, performance feedback and obligation to develop leads individuals and organizations to strive for the development of individual competencies. An individual development plan is an efficient tool in coordinating these efforts, which pursue desired outcomes, such as enhancing the capability of hiring and improving individual and organizational performance, or undesirable, such as the emergence of the conflicts of justice.

## 1. Introduction

Today organizations operate in complex, variable and dynamic environment and affect them like globalization, international sanctions, changing tastes of consumers and investors and intensifying market competition. In the past, organizations relied on traditional sources such as technology, natural resources and financial capital that are available today and that it is possible to reach them to other organizations [1-5]. In this context, organizations have a unique look at their internal resources, especially their human capital, as their success involves having potential and proper forces. Thus, organizations pursue their growth and development through the growth and development of human capital [6, 7]. The growth and development of human capital is in its continuous learning, through training courses and various formal and informal activities such as coaching and team learning [8-11]. In this way, the ability of individuals and consequently, the organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes and new opportunities, increases and knowledge of the organization [12-15].

On the other hand, with the specialization of jobs, the number of people employed by higher education in organizations is rapidly rising. Entirely attention to health factors such as salaries and benefits and reward, motivation and job satisfaction does not provide the necessary job satisfaction in educated and knowledge workers. One of the most important motivational factors for them is to provide improvement conditions in the form of human resource development programs [16-19].

In the present era, human resource development is a recognized tool by which managers are able to efficiently manage todays organizations with features such as diffusion channels, growth, reliance on horizontal structures and cooperative networks, a slight difference between managers and employees with each other and decreasing organizational belonging [20, 21]. Inattention to human development has unpleasant consequences. On the one hand, the organization's adaptation to face-to-day change decreases and organizational performance degrades, and on the other hand, the organization's employees and human resources see their abilities, competencies and capabilities within an organization that does not provide opportunities for growth and development, thereby increasing their dissatisfaction and frustration [22, 23].

The efforts made in organizations to develop human resources do not require coordination and integrity, and its trustees will not benefit from appropriate means such as the individual development plan (IDP); they do not have a comprehensive view of it and do not have much insight regarding the factors of facilitator, obstacles or outcomes of development. On the other hand, most studies on the development of individuals and the application of the individual development plan have focused on the field of education and health, and there is not sufficient understanding of this process in a managerial and business environment [24-30]. In this research, in order to better understand the factors, the effective factors, the tools used and the consequences of the development process, by using individual development plan, we seek to investigate and explain this process in order to be more efficient and more effective in the individual development area of employees in the organization. For this purpose, the personnel of the Power Installation Company, which is an active project based organization in the energy industry, were chosen as the statistical community.

## 2. Theoretical Background of Research

### 2.1. Human Resource Development

An overview of the studies conducted in the field of human resource development suggests that in spite of the

great efforts to define this concept, a common definition that is universally accepted is not provided. According to these definitions, in a comprehensive definition, which is close to the present study, the development of human resources is a set of organized actions to identify, evaluate and develop competencies of people in order to improve individual and organizational performance and organizational change [31-49].

Human resource development can also be conceptualized as an improvement process in the organization. In this case, the development of human resources is a five-step process that integrates fully integrated with other organizational processes in the context of the organization and the external environment, to analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation of employee development programs [50-63].

Human resource development, such as other management fields, has numerous research and practical paradigms. Each of these paradigms gives a different view to the development of human resources and present their goals, values, and directives. One can imagine two general paradigms for human resource development:

1. The learning paradigm: In the learning paradigm, more research is conducted across the design of educational programs, learning and learning organizations, with the aim of improving individual learning and enhancing individual and organizational performance through learning. Also, organizational factors and devices which are supportive of learning, are considered to be interfering.

2. Performance paradigm: As the name suggests, the research paradigm research focuses more on the areas of performance improvement and human performance technologies. The most important goals and outcomes expected from researches in this paradigm are to promote individual and organizational performance and non-learning related organizational and individual performance improvement systems are interfering. In order to realize the development of human resources, there are several methods in the form of development activities. We do not believe that one method can be described as more productive than others do. However, development activities include on the job training, training courses, self-guided reading, coaching, attending conference, job rotation, membership in professional institutions and temporary appointments.

## 2.2. Personal Development Plan

The personal development plan is a suitable tool for structured people's learning and effective strategy to develop people. By applying this plan, organizations will be more efficient in recognizing the needs of development and taking appropriate measures to meet them. It defines strengths and weaknesses of employee performance and predicts a series of measures to improve the weaknesses and development of their strengths. By devising a personal development plan, the learning needs, the expected results (learning purposes) and the necessary steps to realize the goals of learning are determined. The development plan can also be considered as an assessment tool employed by the employees and has four basic features that are included:

1. The knowledge, skill, and the past capability of employees will review and determine their learning needs based on future goals.

2. Staffs are involved in the compilation of the individual development plan and each individual project is formulated in collaboration with the individual and with consulting to his/her supervisor.

3. Organized communication facilitates the employees with managers and supervisors. From this way, the possibility of receiving more functional feedback is provided.

4. It provides the necessary information for decision making in different fields; from decision-making to choose the appropriate method for training to make decisions about employee promotion.

In the context of the quality and content of the individual development plan, we believe that any individual development plan must be applicable and usable; it has a time limit and is quite clear and obvious. In general, research on individual development can be divided into two categories:

1. Identify the outcomes of individual development of employees: We demonstrate how to determine the educational needs, training methods, the perceived support of individuals and their view using the individual development plan, which is effective in the continuous professional development of ordinary workers active in the medical care sector. In other studies, the effectiveness of the use of individual development plan in improving the performance of individuals, improving the capability of employment, and winning the war of talents has been investigated. We studied some dark aspects of the application of an individual development plan for the development of individuals. He found that the individual development plan, because of its nature, causes neglect of the issues and macroeconomic strategies. In most cases, this is an ornamental design and has no real application.

2. Identifying individuals and influential factors on individual development: We studied influential factors on individual development and empowerment of employees working in the banking system service sector. After analyzing the data, they identified five factors of individual development and job design, attention to the issues of human resources and work teams, leadership style, attention to formality and transparency and attention to environment and lack of focus as the most important factors affecting the development of individuals. Furthermore, issues such as supervisors' support and individual coworkers were identified as factors affecting the development of human resources.

In another study, it was found that the effectiveness of the individual development plan depends on the individual using it; it means that the person who knows his role in development does not resist changes, is interested in its development and growth, and knows how to coordinate itself and its environment for further learning.

## 3. Research Methodology

Research on the application of individual development projects in organizations is very limited and most studies have focused on organizations operating in the field of education and health. This research has been done by science to these shortcomings and with the aim of further understanding of the design and its application in different industry and organization. In this regard, the method used in this study is grounded theory or data theory. In order to collect data required in this study, unstructured and semi-structured interviews were used. Also, with regard to inductive nature of data method, open questions related to the overall field of study, such as "what experience you have had of growth and development in work or personal life?" in interviews, we were employed. Because, in case of detail and the nominal questions, the way to different possibilities is closed in the discovery of concepts and categories, and the inductive nature of the study is questioned [64-77].

The statistical population of this study consists of employees and managers of the Power Installation Company, one of project-based organizations operating in the field of energy industry. To determine the number of samples in this study, the theoretical sampling concept was used and sampling method was of snowball sampling. In the present study, the sample volume was not determined at first, but based on the emerging theory of samples, selection and data were collected and data collection was carried out until the saturation point. Accordingly, we got a theoretical saturation with ten deep interviews with employees and managers of the human resource unit of the Power Installation Company, but for further assurance, the eleventh and twelfth interviews were also conducted and analyzed to avoid missing anything. In general, 15±10 samples were sufficient to perform an interview [78-87].

In qualitative research, rather than using the validity and stability terms that the root has in the few research paradigm, it is used to assess the quality of the research, from the criterion of reliability or trustworthiness. Trustworthiness in simple words is the extent to which we can rely on the findings of qualitative research and trust its results. We know the trustworthiness of the four criteria that are credibility, transferability, expendability and confirmability. In this study, the above criteria are provided by different strategies. The information received from the interviewees was recorded in the interview session while taking notes. Then, a copy was returned to the interviewees to verify their accuracy. We were continually associated with the participants in the study and the results of each stage of analysis as well as the final model of the research were presented to them and their comments were made. Finally, the results were verified by four human resource management experts [89-103].

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this study, three methods of open, axial and selective coding were used to analyze the data. In the following, the method of analyzing the data with these three types of coding and their results are demonstrated.

At this stage, the data from the interviews were carefully studied and analyzed. Then, conceptualization has been made and the data that are like one another in terms of meaning are labeled with appropriate names; for example, the researcher has achieved the concept of "improving functional performance" by examining the following quote: "I think I have to look at my job more specific. I do the work related to reckoning and contracts, statistics, reports, and records in the organization and I want to promote my expert in this regard. If I get expert in my job, the speed of my work goes up, I will become more careful, and my time will be allocated properly. If a reckoning took a score of twenty minutes before, I can do it with a look, both faster and better". Next, the extracted concepts, referred to as the researcher's belief in a common theme or concept, are listed under a more abstract title, which we call this category. For example, it is highlighted that the concepts of "motivation for development", "personal dynamics", "need to know" and "desire-based growth" refers to one subject, and the individual development process is influenced by the fact that the individual considers the necessity of own develop. In a better way, the individual seeks to develop; therefore, the above concepts were placed in a category entitled "individual expansionism", which is more abstract and also covers these concepts. Overall, 17 categories and 61 concepts were identified and extracted.

At this stage, the relationship between the categories generated in the open coding stage was established. "Developing individual competencies" was selected as a pivotal category; because its footprint was clearly seen in most of the data and quotations from interviewees, and after placing it in the center of the model, other categories became relevant. For axial coding, the paradigmatic pattern of Strauss and Corbin was used.

In this study, based on the components of paradigm pattern, development of individual competencies as a pivotal category, individual expansionism, force to develop, the competition for the advancement and functional feedback as causal circumstances, organizational culture of development-based, supreme management vision and organizational modernization as the dominant ground or bed, job satisfaction, personal characteristics of employee, financial ability and caretaker support as interloper conditions, the deployment of individual development plan as strategies and interactions and improving individual and organizational performance, enhancing the capability of employment and the conflicts of justice as outcomes were identified. The accounts for some of these categories are visible. The relevance of other categories to the pivotal category is in accordance with the paradigm model.

The selective coding is the main stage of theorizing that links the pivotal category systematically to other categories; it makes it clear within the context of a narrative and story, and corrects the categories that need further improvement and development. This is possible through the discovery of the central category. The central category expresses the results of the analysis in a short term consisting of a few words.

In this study, the central category is named as "individual development plan: a means of developing competencies". Then, based on concepts and issues extracted from previous steps, there is a story of how to implement individual development plan to develop competencies.

People see their growth and development in the growth and development of their general and professional competencies. Some of them are always seeking to develop themselves, which experience has shown that they are usually more successful in achieving their goals, while others move in that direction in certain situations, or through a certain factor.

Receive the performance feedback from direct supervisor over performance weaknesses, presence in a team with competitive climate and competition with dynamic and organizational requirements such as low score in performance appraisals, are among these factors. As the frequency and intensity of these factors are higher, the probability of developing people increases.

It should be noted that move and get along with the development path does not necessarily lead to development of people, and some conditions are such as barriers to the way of people. These obstacles may be internal; such as the condition that a person does not consent to work, he may be pessimistic and does not have a high work conscience; or it may be external; as a condition that the supervisor would not cooperate with him in cases such as the necessary arrangements and special time allocation for training. Absent these barriers along the development path of individual competencies, his movement continues on the development path, but success in achieving development is contingent upon the use of a suitable strategy in the process. The deployment of an individual development plan is considered

to be an effective and efficient strategy. The personal characteristics of individuals, of course, influence the support of the supervisor and the organization's financial status, in the application or absence of an individual development plan.

In this project, which is formulated and executed by cooperation of the individual and the organization, the merits which need to be developed are first identified, including knowledge, skill, expertise, competence, and issues such as employees' interests, individual performance requirements, organization's strategic goals, and so on. Then, with the individual's participation and with respect to priorities, the goal is accomplished and, in the end, the necessary steps for development are characterized along with the period and the organization responsibility in this regard. Accuracy and validity in identifying merits which need to be developed is realistic and effective goal and also design a detailed and direct operational plan, the likelihood of success in achieving the development of individual competencies.

The most important consequences of application of individual development plan and development of individual competencies is improving individual and organizational performance. Thus, as the individual's performance errors decrease, the speed and accuracy of job behaviors for the organization increase. These changes may occur in the short term, whereas in the long term, organizational performance improves and the effects of individual competencies are presented in the performance and organizational indicators. On the other hand, by applying the individual development plan in order to develop individual competencies, both his work resume will improve and job opportunities are more appropriate to him and the ability to improve the individual to positions and higher job positions increase. Of course, the implications of design and implementation of the individual development plan are not optimal. The uniqueness of the nature of the development process makes the components of the individual development plan vary according to the characteristics of individuals. Although such differences seem quite necessary and rational, it may not be perceived by members of a team or unit, just to be perceived as being unfair and rooted in an unfair development.

## 5. Conclusion, Useful Suggestions and Future Studies

Overall, the most important separation point of the data-based theory, is to develop an individual development plan on the basis of competencies for development of competencies in the field of universality and integrity. In this context, most of the theories proposed in the field of human resource development have pointed out specific implications of this concept, while in the present study it is discussed from the perspective of causal circumstances, interloper conditions, context conditions, actions, guidelines and outcomes. Some of the findings of this study can be compared with previous research on human resource development and individual development design. We believe that the aim of develop human resources and application of individual development plans are developing individual competencies that include knowledge, skill, expertise, competence, and other obligations of the job.

As mentioned, individual development is a causal factor in the development of individual competencies. We also emphasize the role of an individual in the individual development process. Accordingly, one cannot be passive factor in the development process. Furthermore, the feedback area pundits have focused more on the impact of feedback on people's performance. We found that there is an inverse

relationship between receiving functional feedback (positive) and empowerment and employee development. In this study, the feedback signal is not mentioned but due to its result, it can be predicted that receiving negative performance feedback is the factor for human resource development.

We state that employees do not use the development plan until they have to. Hence, it can be constrained to develop through organizational rules and regulations as one of the causal factors in the individual development process. The results of some studies, however, indicate that if the use of individual development plan is voluntary and not compulsory, its effectiveness will be greater. Reviewing previous researches in this field, we can find that in contrast to present study, they focus more on the interactive climate and participative role and feedback by colleagues and have little attention to the influence of competitive climate among colleagues on their development. That is while the interviewees stressed the importance of the competition between themselves and their colleagues.

Also, innovation and the existence of continuous learning climate and participating nature of corporate culture, as important factors, affect the process of human resource development. In the case of the modern influence of business processes and the attitude of individuals as well as the organization's supreme management vision for development, no case has been found in the literature. Therefore, the study of this relationship can be considered one of the recommendations for future research.

We believe that there is a direct link between the quality and the quantity of people trying to learn and develop themselves. Also the job satisfaction of individuals, support of staff from employees in the development process and the organization's financial status are factors affecting the development of human resources that they are detected as interloper factors in this research. As in this research, as the strategy to realize the development of individual competencies relays on application of individual development, other pundits consider this project as an efficient tool for developing human resources.

The improvement of individual performance, organizational performance and promotion of recruitment are identified with implications for the application of individual development and human resource development in earlier studies. In this research, one of the negative consequences of using the individual development plan to develop competencies was the emergence of the conflicts of justice. The uniqueness of the project makes a difference in the content of the individual development plan, which is considered natural and rational; most people do not perceive it just as fair. In order to express the negative effect of using an individual development plan, the pundits call it Trojan horse. As such, the Trojan horse enters the organization with the application of the individual development plan. Organizations with abundant positive expectations utilize the individual development plan, but as soon as it is used, the content of this horse is revealed; despair and resistance are formed and is known as an ineffective and disconnected play tool that wastes time.

In general, in contrast to the hypothetical-deductive approach in which we examine theories and existing hypotheses, in the data based theory, attention is towards the production of theory and hypothesis. Hence, in future research, we can test the hypotheses of this research. In addition, doing research with similar issues in different

organizations and different industries enhances knowledge in individual development of employees. The study of the relatively of new concepts identified in this study (e.g., selfish expansionism, conflict of justice, etc.) and their relationship to individual development is also awareness. One of the other proposals is to examine the effectiveness of the individual development plan in improving the individual and organizational performance in project - based companies and other organizations.

In the end, human resource managers are advised to avoid proactive efforts to develop human resources and by applying the individual development plan as an accurate tool to identify the strengths and weaknesses of employees, increase effectiveness and coordination of development efforts and prevent the energy and time loss of the organization to develop their human resources.

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