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TO MOVE OR NOT TO MOVE?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER MANAGEMENT AND PREFERRED CAREER MOVES

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores professional employees' career move preferences and the impact of both individual and organizational career management. Departing from theoretical work on the "new career", different types of career moves employees can make on the internal labor market are discussed (i.e. vertical moves, lateral moves, job enrichment and temporary moves). Next, these are related to the literature on both organizational and individual career management. Hypotheses are formulated about professional employees' preferences for making distinct types of internal career moves and about the extent to which these preferences are affected by (a) employees' individual career management initiatives and (b) four distinct bundles of organizational career management practices (succession management, potential assessment, feedback and development). The results of a study among 472 professional employees from one company are presented, which indicate that the preferences for both vertical career moves and moves relating to job enrichment and temporary moves are significantly affected by individual career management, but not by organizational career management practices. The preference for making lateral moves could not be explained by our antecedent variables, but was affected by managerial ambition and variables relating to respondents' family situation. The implications of our findings for stimulating internal career mobility are discussed, and suggestions for further research are made.

INTRODUCTION

Practitioners and researchers generally agree that effective career management policies are important for organizations and for their employees (Baruch, 2004; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Colling & Young, 2001; Eby, Allen & Brinley, 2005; Doyle, 2001; Eby, Butts & Lockwood, 2003; Sullivan, 1999). Over the past decades, changes in the socio-economic environment have dramatically changed the concept of a career and have contributed to the development of new models for career management. New career concepts such as the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and the protean career (Hall, 1996), have emerged. Central to the notion of the so-called "new career" is that organizations can no longer offer employees careers structured along a well-defined and fairly predictable linear upward trajectory that parallels their increasing tenure within the organization (Arthur, Kapova & Wilderom, 2005; Hall, 2002). Lateral or horizontal movements, temporary movements, and movement "in place" by job enrichment are gaining importance as valid alternatives for the traditional linear career trajectory. Indicators of subjective career success, such as increases in competence, recognition from peers and learning opportunities hereby become more important than the traditional indicators of objective career success such as status, income or level of responsibility (Arthur et al., 2005). Taken together, this new perspective on careers implies increased prospects for inter-organizational mobility and a broader definition of intra-organizational mobility (Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). Still, in many organizations vertical career paths are the only formal career structures that exist and in many company cultures moving up the (managerial, technical or professional) ladder is still valued more highly than horizontal career trajectories.

Previous research has made it clear that a number of individual factors, such as career ambitions, values, individual career management initiatives, and socio-demographical characteristics such as age, gender or marital status impact individuals' career mobility (e.g. Beehr & Juntunen, 1990; Stroh, Brett & Reilly, 1992; Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). However, careers are usually made within organizations and, therefore, career dynamics are influenced to a considerable degree by organizational factors.

Research has shown that characteristics of the internal labor market structure, the type of career system, organizational size, structure, and technology shape mobility patterns and the career development opportunities an individual can have (Garavan & Coohalan, 1996; Hurley & Sonnenfeld, 1998; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988). What is missing in this line of research, however, is the extent to which both organizational career management (OCM) and individual career management (ICM) initiatives affect the type of career moves that individuals are willing to make. A better understanding of the role of ICM and OCM processes in impacting employees' career moves is important in environments where opportunities for vertical promotion are becoming scarce and organizations are seeking for alternative ways to offer their employees perspectives for career development.

This paper reports the findings of a study which examined the impact of (a) employees' experiences with regard to different bundles of OCM initiatives and (b) employees' career self-management behavior on their willingness to make both vertical and non-vertical career movements. In the career literature there is currently a shortage of research that addresses employees' willingness to make diverse types of internal career moves in addition to the traditional vertical career moves and that relates career moves to both individual and organizational career management. This study fills this gap by examining the type of career moves employees are willing to make on the internal labor market and by investigating the extent to which these preferences can be explained by both ICM and OCM factors. By exploring these relationships, this paper makes a contribution to the literature on career management and on career mobility. First, as far as we are aware, this study is one of the first to operationalize employees' preferences regarding career mobility on the internal labor market in line with the notion of the new career. By assessing their interest in diverse types of movements in addition to the traditional vertical career movements, this paper provides insight into the ways in which the "new career" can be studied within internal labor markets. The existing literature on the "new career" is limited by the fact that empirical data are missing to support many of the theoretical concepts. Those empirical studies that do focus on the new career concept tend to consider increased movements on the external labor market as the only operationalization of the new career, and contrast this with vertical advancement on the internal labor market without taking into account alternative types of internal career movements. However, for organizations it is important to know if and how they can stimulate the extent to which employees embrace alternative career moves as "valid" career steps that they are willing to take on the internal labor market.

A second contribution of this paper is the theoretical framework and empirical assessment of how organizations can realize the idea of the "new career", i.e. stimulating an interest among employees in making both vertical and non-vertical career moves, both directly throughout their OCM practices and indirectly by stimulating individual career initiative (ICM). First, despite the fact that the relationship between diverse types of OCM practices and employee outcomes is gaining increased attention in the career literature, as to date studies have been limited to assessing the relationship between (perceived) OCM practices and employee attitudes like commitment, intention to leave and feelings of career success (e.g. Arnold & Mackenzie Davey, 1999; Noe, 1996; Orpen, 1994; Sturges, Guest, Conway & Mackenzie Davey, 2002; Sturges, Guest & Mackenzie Davey, 2000). Second, despite the increasing interest in ICM (or "career self-management") within the careers literature also in this area research has been limited to the role of ICM in explaining outcomes like employee commitment, career satisfaction (e.g. Eby *et al.*, 2003; Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001).

By addressing the relationship between both ICM and OCM and career mobility this paper provides relevant information for researchers and practitioners about the extent to which organizations can impact their employees' decisions about internal career moves either directly through their OCM practices and indirectly by stimulating ICM initiatives amongst their employees. Moreover, by assessing the impact of both OCM and ICM initiatives, we provide empirical data on the relative importance of OCM compared to ICM in affecting employees' preferences for career movements. We hereby address some of the questions articulated by Hall (2002: 44) about the need for future research about the role of the organization in shaping the new career contract: "What is the emerging role of the organization in the new protean career contract?" "What is the appropriate role of the organization in the individual's career if the organization cannot manage the career?" 'How can an organization that in the past controlled employees' career shift to providing resources, support and autonomy?".

CAREER MOBILITY ON THE INTERNAL LABOR MARKET

Following Hall (2002: 12) we define a career as "the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life". This definition of a career differs from more traditional conceptions of careers as a succession of jobs in a vertically structured way. It accommodates a view of career success based on an individual's upward mobility within a single organization, but also as a special case of broader possibilities. These can include upward, horizontal, or in some cases downward mobility (Arthur *et al.*, 2005).

Career structures in organizations traditionally focused on advancing people on vertical ladders, in line with the traditional perception that a successful career involves successive linear movement up the organizational career ladder, gaining along the way additional increments in formal authority, prestige and rewards. (Garavan & Coolahan, 1996). In this traditional view, career success was evaluated based on the rate of upward mobility and external indicators of achievement. Stability of structure and clarity of career ladders implied clear career paths, which were mostly linear and upward focused (Baruch, 2004).

However, opportunities for advancement in terms of moving up the hierarchical ladder within organizations are becoming scarce. In flattening organizations, many intermediate layers of management have been eliminated and more control is placed in the hands of frontline workers. With fewer midlevel management positions around, fewer opportunities exist for people to move up the traditional career ladder (Baruch, 2004; Kaye & Farren, 1996). In view of these changes, organizations have focused on alternative ways to stimulate career mobility on the internal labor market. Stimulating career mobility can be important for several reasons. First, the career perspective offered by the organization appears to have a significant impact on employee outcomes like commitment, satisfaction and intention to stay (e.g. Hsu, Jiang, Klein & Tang, 2003; Steel, Griffeth & Hom, 2002). Second, from an organizational point of view mobility can foster cooperation between different units, departments, locations or functional areas since horizontal movements throughout the firm can decrease the borders that, certainly in large organizations, often exist between these.

There are several types of non-vertical movements that organizations can offer their employees as alternatives to the traditional vertical movement. First, *lateral or horizontal movements* can be a relevant alternative. A lateral move involves a change in jobs but not necessarily a change in pay, status, or level of responsibility.

Sideward, rather than upward, moves can broaden an employee's base of knowledge and skills and help develop new competencies (Kaye & Farren, 1996; Schein, 1978). In many flattening organizations, lateral movements are encouraged and even necessary as a means of acquiring the necessary broad experience before moving up the management ladder (Garavan & Coolahan, 1996).

Another career mobility option is often called *"growing in place"*, or *job enrichment*. This refers to revitalizing people's interest in their work by replacing rigidly defined, overspecialized jobs with positions that enable them to exercise greater responsibility and autonomy. Job enrichment can be a relevant option for those employees who do not want to leave their current position or organization, by giving them the opportunity to expand their responsibilities in their current job in order to develop new competencies. Job enrichment enables employees to master important skills and build more productive relationships with colleagues and customers. These challenges can contribute to their career satisfaction and a sense of personal accomplishment.

For example, the attitudes and behaviors of plateaued managers have been found to be significantly more positive when their job is richer and offers an opportunity to participate in decision making (Tremblay & Roger, 2004).

A third non-vertical career movement are the so-called *temporary movements* that people can make, e.g. taking short-term job assignments or participating in project teams and task forces. This option is most recognizable in a project environment. It offers people the chance to explore what they are good at and it might be a relevant option for those interested in variability and change throughout their career. By participating in temporary projects, employees can learn both about themselves and they can extend their network within the organization and their knowledge about the organization in a much broader way (Kaye & Farren, 1996).

These alternative career movements concretize the notion of "careers as lifelong learning" and respond to the idea that career success should be defined in terms of psychological success: the realization of ones individual career values and dreams, which can be much broader than moving up the vertical ladder (Arthur et al., 2005; Eby et al., 2003). By offering alternative directions for making career moves, organizations can offer employees different options for realizing career success. It also provides a solution for the problem that if only vertical movements are structurally embedded in the organization, a career perspective is only created for those "happy few" who are eligible for making vertical promotions, while the majority of people in the company might get frustrated by a lack of career perspective.

In this study, we focus on career move preferences in a sample of engineers in an R&D-oriented company. This is typically a group of workers with a strong attachment to their (technical) field of expertise who prefer opportunities to engage in research activities and projects within their field of expertise, irrespective of promotion (Allen & Katz, 1986; Debackere, Buyens & Vandenbossche, 1997). Stimulating alternative types of career movements might be especially challenging for this group of professional employees. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses on the strength of their career move preferences.

Hypothesis 1: R&D-professionals have the strongest preference for job enrichment, rather than for vertical, lateral or temporary moves.

Hypothesis 2: R&D-professionals have the weakest preference for lateral moves, rather than for vertical, enrichment or temporary moves.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER MANAGEMENT AND PREFERRED CAREER MOVES

Career management refers to those activities, undertaken by the organization and the individual, aimed at planning and managing the employees' careers (Sturges *et al.*, 2002). While traditional research has mainly focused on organizational career management (OCM) as an antecedent of work-related employee outcomes and career effectiveness, the recent career literature is characterized by an increasing interest in the role of individual career management (ICM) in explaining these outcomes (e.g. Seibert et al., 2001; Eby *et al.*, 2003). As a result of recent changes in the employment relationship and the changing psychological contract between the employer and the employee, individual responsibility for ones career has become one of the central assumptions inherent in theory and research about the "new career" (e.g. Arthur, Inkson & Pringle, 1999; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996). On the other hand, even though individual career initiatives might be a relevant variable to explain career-related outcomes, the organization still forms the context in which career development takes place. As a consequence, OCM activities cannot be neglected when explaining employees' preferences for making career moves. Therefore, in this paper we address the role of both individual and organizational career management activities as antecedents of employees' preferences for making career moves on the internal labor market.

Individual Career Management and Preferences for Internal Career Moves.

Individual career management, also called career self-management in the career literature, refers to the proactivity employees show with respect to managing their own careers (Kossek, Kossek, Roberts, Fisher & Demarr, 1998; Orpen, 1994). It includes employees' personal efforts to realize their career objectives, which can or cannot correspond with the organization's objectives and it includes activities such as collecting information about existing or possible career opportunities, searching for feedback about one's performance and competencies, and creating career opportunities through networking and actions aimed at enhancing ones visibility. ICM thus involves those activities that allow individuals to make a realistic self-assessment of their own talents, capabilities in view of organizational career opportunities as well as concrete actions (e.g. networking, self-nomination, creating opportunities) undertaken to realize these ambitions (Noe, 1996; Sturges *et al.*, 2000; 2002). While organizational career management is largely planned and managed by the organization, individual career management is under the control of the individual. It involves behaviors that are related to improvement in one's current job as well as behaviors related to movement within or outside the company (Kossek *et al.*, 1998; Sturges *et al.*, 2002). In this study, we focus on ICM activities focused at furthering one's career within the organization.

Inherent to the notion of ICM is a proactive attitude of the individual employee towards his or her career (Kossek *et al.*, 1998). Moreover, it is assumed that individuals who take more initiatives to manage their own career, will be more successful in their career. Seibert *et al.* (2001) have provided empirical support for this idea. They found that individuals who took more initiative to develop their own careers, e.g. by seeking out career-oriented feedback, experienced a more satisfying level of career progression. Based on the available literature on ICM, we propose that ICM will be related to employees' preferences for making internal career moves. We expect that those employees who are more active in undertaking ICM initiatives, in line with the notion of the "new career", might develop a broader definition of "career success" than one which is purely based on vertical advancement. Based on the fact that ICM includes the notion of employee proactivity, we expect that ICM will be related to employees' interest in making career moves in general. Moreover, because of the information employees might collect about themselves as well as about the different career opportunities and career directions they can take in the organization, we propose that ICM will enhance employees' preference for making career moves that depart from the traditional vertical career path.

Hypothesis 3: The extent to which employees engage in ICM activities is positively related to both vertical and non-vertical career move preferences.

Organizational Career Management and Preferences for Internal Career Moves.

Organizational career management refers to those activities undertaken by the organization, in order to plan and manage the careers of its employees (Sturges *et al.*, 2002). It includes a wide range of programs and interventions that focus on matching individual and organizational career needs. Earlier research has shown that OCM affects employee attitudes like feelings of career success, satisfaction, intention to stay and organizational commitment towards the organization (e.g. Arnold & Mackenzie Davey, 1999; Noe, 1996; Orpen, 1994; Sturges, Guest, Conway & Mackenzie Davey, 2002; Sturges, Guest & Mackenzie Davey, 2000). These studies all included a composite measure of OCM. Other studies have demonstrated positive effects of specific OCM practices on career outcomes. Examples are research on the impact of mentoring (e.g. Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000) and career management assistance (Callanan & Greenhaus, 1990). In a recent study, Eby et al. (2005) demonstrated that specific combinations or "bundles" of OCM practices had both direct and interactive effects on individuals' feelings of career success. Although in practice it is clear that organizations tend to use combinations of several OCM practices, as to date no generally accepted typology of OCM practices exists. While a few authors have proposed a typology of OCM practices (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Eby et al., 2005; Gutteridge, Leibowitz & Shore, 1993), most authors use an ad hoc selection of questions to assess OCM practices from the organizational or individual viewpoint (e.g. Orpen, 1994; Sturges et al., 2000). The items used in this type of studies usually are a part of the more elaborate typologies proposed by the former authors. A review of the literature on OCM practices suggests that these can be categorized into two types of OCM: on the one hand, those activities that from an organizational viewpoint aim at ensuring the "pipeline" of employees at different levels of the organization's hierarchical layers and on the other hand those activities that aim at providing employees the feedback and support they need to further develop themselves. Whilst traditional practices mainly focused on advancing the individual throughout the different hierarchical layers of the organization, contemporary career management implies a wider range of activities adapted to the changing needs of organizations and new types of psychological contracts (Baruch, 2004). Inherent in this contemporary view is that both HR-professionals and line managers are responsible for OCM.

The first category includes activities that depart from the organizational need for career development, i.e. the assessment of employees' potential for moving up the organizational ladder and systems to ensure the succession for key positions and more general systems for career planning that allow internal vacancies to be filled in by the right persons. *Assessment of employee potential* is a strategically important process for organizations because it informs them about the extent to which they will be able to solve the organization's future needs for human capital at different layers of the hierarchy with the current group of employees (Gutteridge *et al.*, 1993). It includes tools such as development centers, and interviews or tests to evaluate the employee's potential for promotion. *Tools for job matching and succession planning* allow organizations to match the competencies and potential of their current employees with the jobs that are or might become available on the internal labor market. They include activities that facilitate employees to obtain successive often hierarchically structured jobs within an organization and that encourage promotion from within, such as job posting systems, information on career ladders and paths, skill inventories per department and succession planning (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Gutteridge et al., 1993).

The second category includes those OCM activities that aim at providing employees the feedback and support they need to further develop themselves. *Development opportunities* allow employees to achieve career goals through structured learning experiences (Noe, 1996). The goal of these activities is a change in employee knowledge, skill, or behavior on the job. Efforts include in-house training activities or external training opportunities. Another group of OCM activities focuses on *feedback* given to employees about their current performance and competencies. Examples of practices are on the job learning, and feedback received from line manager about ones performance and competencies. This type of feedback informs employees about their strengths and weaknesses and offers the opportunity to discuss these with their line manager in view of their future career development.

The type of OCM practices that employees experience can be important in determining their interest in making different types of career moves. Organizational career management is used to assess employee skills, to develop competencies, and to facilitate internal mobility within the organization (Eby et al., 2005). OCM practices allow individuals to exercise initiative in, and control over, their own career development and see how their career goals fit with the organization's future needs. By focusing on particular types of OCM practices, organizations might implicitly convey the message that certain types of career movements are more or less feasible and might foster to a greater or lesser extent the perception that non-vertical career moves can also be an interesting option.

Therefore we expect that the type of OCM practices employees experience will affect the extent to which they are interested in making different types of career moves. While the first category of OCM practices may best fit the older career development model with a central focus on vertical movements, the second category of OCM practices is more focused on the idea of careers as lifelong learning. For example, OCM practices such as promotability forecasts, career ladders and succession planning systems promote the opportunity for upward mobility which should positively influence employees' interest in this type of career move. On the other hand, training and development activities aimed at career development might be relevant for stimulating lateral moves because they can provide employees with the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to take on a different role or change to a different unit or department. These activities might also be informative for making choices about career moves and might foster a broader interest than purely vertical moves. Feedback from line management is an important form of counseling which helps employees to reflect on their future career as a function of their current competencies and interests, i.e. to develop a career identity and to foster career adaptability. Based on these considerations, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: The experience of OCM practices that focus on potential assessment and succession management are positively related to a preference for making vertical career moves.

Hypothesis 5: The experience of OCM practices that focus on feedback and on development are positively related to a preference making lateral or temporary moves and to job enrichment.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

The sample for this study consisted of engineers working in diverse departments and business units in different countries of a large international company active in the field of design and development of displays and visualization. In total 1036 employees were invited to participate to this study by filling out an online survey. They received a motivating invitation mail by the general manager of the company.

Of these, 472 employees were found willing to participate in the survey and filled out the survey (i.e. a 46% response rate). These are the respondents that are included in our analyses.

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. A majority of the sample is male (88 %) with an average age between 35 and 44. Almost 85 percent is married and 70.8 percent has children. The average seniority is around 5 years.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Measures

Individual career management. Ten items, derived from Noe (1996), were used to assess ICM practices. These items refer to two types of actions individuals can undertake to manage their career within the company: Creating Visibility (e.g. 'I have made my boss aware of my accomplishments') and Networking (e.g. 'I have got myself introduced to people who can influence my career'). Respondents had to indicate to which extent they had engaged in each of the ten activities listed. A five-point response scale was used ranging from (1) = 'to a very small extent' to (5) = 'to a very large extent'. For the purpose of this study all items were collapsed into one global career self-management scale. The Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale was .82.

Organizational Career Management. Respondents were asked to what extent their organization offered them a number of OCM practices. The career management bundles assessed reflect a range of career management practices that contemporary organizations might use and are selected from a list of items reported by Baruch & Peiperl (2000) and Gutteridge et al. (1993). We included four specific types of OCM practices in this research. Table 2 provides the factor structure of these four bundles. *Succession Management* refers to organizational practices that try to match available competencies with open vacancies within the company. It was measured by 4 items (e.g. 'To what extent do you believe your organization has an inventory of available skills within a department') and has a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .82. *Potential assessment* reflects the degree to which employee competencies are assessed. It was measured by 5 items (e.g. 'To what extent do you believe your organization provides development centers to evaluate your potential'). The Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale is .85. *Development* reflects the amount of training and development activities that are provided to employees in order to enhance their competencies.

This practice was measured by 5 items (e.g. “To what extent do you believe your organization provides in-house training and development programs”). A five-point response scale was used ranging from (1) = ‘to a very small extent’ to (5) = ‘to a very large extent’. The Cronbach Alpha for this scale is .79. Finally, *Feedback* reflects the amount of career support employees experience from their supervisor and was measured by 3 items (e.g. ’To what extent do you have career discussions with your line manager’). Cronbach Alpha for this scale is .78.

Preferred career moves We distinguished between four types of preferred career moves. *Vertical career moves* refer to employees’ willingness to move up the hierarchical ladder and was measured by 8 items (e.g. ‘To what extent would you want to promote to a senior management level within your division if the opportunity would be offered to you by your organization’) The Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale is .88. *Lateral moves* refer to employees’ willingness to take up a new job or role, without making any formal promotion (e.g. ‘To what extent would you want to take on a different job within your division without having a formal vertical promotion’). Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale is .84. *Job enrichment* has been assessed by 3 items (e.g. ‘To what extent would you want to further develop yourself in your current job by taking on new tasks or responsibilities’). Cronbach Alpha is .86. Finally, *temporary moves* was measured by 5 items (e.g. ‘To what extent would you want to participate in temporary project groups outside your current job’). Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale is .83.

Career motives. Three scales were included to rule out alternative explanations for respondents’ preferred career moves, which related to their management ambition, the importance they attached to security of employment and to the importance of work-life balance.

The items used to measure these are based on the career anchor scales developed by Schein (1993). A five-point response scale was used ranging from (1) = ‘to a very small extent’ to (5) = ‘to a very large extent’. The Management scale was measured by five items (e.g. ‘I will feel successful in my career only if I become a general manager in some organization’). Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale is .80. The Security scale was measured by five items (e.g. ‘I am most fulfilled in my work when I feel that I have complete financial and employment security’). Cronbach Alpha is .80. Finally, the work life balance scale was measured by 5 items (e.g. ‘I feel successful in life only if I have been able to balance my personal, family, and career requirements’). Cronbach Alpha obtained for this scale is .72.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations between the four organizational career management bundles and preferred career moves. The means for the OCM bundles are rather small, indicating that OCM practices are not very extensively worked out in the company under study. Correlations between the OCM bundles are quite high. However, the rotated component structure (see Table 3) provides evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the OCM bundles. Each of the items load substantially on the bundle they reflect, while the cross loadings with other bundles are lower than .20.

Insert Table 2 & 3 About Here

Table 2 provides the mean scores on the career move preferences. The table indicates that the R&D-professionals in our sample indeed show strongest interest in job enrichment (M = 4.29; sd = .75) and lowest in lateral moves (M = 3.33; sd = .78). Table 4 indicates that the differences in preferences are statistically significant, which supports Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Insert Table 4 About Here

Table 5 shows the results of the regression analyses that were conducted to assess the relationships between on the one hand career self-management and OCM bundles and on the other hand employees' career move preferences, while controlling for socio-demographic variables and employees' career motives. These analyses were executed separately for each of the four career move preferences we distinguished.

Insert Table 5 About Here

<u>Relationship between ICM and Career Move Preferences.</u>

Table 5 indicates that career self-management is positively related to employees' vertical ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$), enrichment ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$) and temporary ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$) move preferences, but not to the lateral move preference ($\beta = .03$, $p > .05$). Thus, we find partial support for Hypothesis 3.

Most noteworthy is that employees' career self-management intensity shows to be the only factor that relates to job enrichment preferences. This indicates that, at least in this sample, employees who care very much about their career and spend a lot of time and effort into it, see job enrichment as a viable career option.

Relationship between OCM and Career Move Preferences.

Table 5 also indicates that the unique contribution of OCM bundles in explaining employees' career move preferences is very marginal. None of the regression coefficients related to OCM bundles reaches significance and on average, only slightly more than one percent of the explained variance in career move preferences can be attributed to differences in OCM bundles. Moreover, we do not find any indication suggesting that potential assessment and succession management would relate differently to the vertical preference than to the other preferences. The same counts for the relationship between training and line feedback and lateral, enrichment or temporary moves. Thus, Hypotheses 4 and 5 are not confirmed. One of the reasons for this rather counterintuitive finding might be that OCM practices are in general not extensively developed in the company under study. Table 2 provides evidence for this, as the mean scores on each of the OCM bundles do not exceed 2.84 on a five point scale.

Depending on the career move preference under study however, Table 5 reveals some interesting findings concerning the role of the control variables. First, our results indicate that the vertical career move preference is strongly influenced by the motive to develop a management career ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$). In conjunction with career self-management, this variable explains 24 % of the variance in vertical career move preference. Secondly, the lateral career move preference is clearly influenced by socio-demographic characteristics. Age is clearly negatively related ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .01$) to lateral preferences. Also, employees having children show to be less prone for lateral movements ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$). We also find a clear relationship between the importance of work-life balance and preference for lateral movement ($\beta = .12$, $p < .01$). This suggests that employees are willing to move to another job when they see this as a solution to preserve or reinstall their work-life balance. Finally, we find that temporary move preferences clearly relate to socio-demographic characteristics. Age ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$), marital status ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$) and having children ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$) all are significantly and negatively related to employees' preference for temporary job assignments.

DISCUSSION

It was the objective of this study to address the preferences of professional employees for making distinct types of internal career moves and to explicate the relationship between individual and organizational career management and employees' career move preferences. Despite the growing importance of "new career" concepts such as boundaryless careers, careers as lifelong learning, and individual responsibility for ones career within the career literature, more research is needed that provides (1) empirically sound operationalizations of these concepts, (2) empirical assessments of the extent to which they are already embedded in employees' and organizations career-related thinking and behavior, and (3) empirical research that addresses the relationships between them. This research provides a first, and rather explorative attempt to address these issues. Even though only partial support for our hypotheses was found, and further research is needed to further explore the proposed relationships, there are some relevant findings that are important for scholars and practitioners within the career field.

First, as hypothesized, we found that in our sample of R&D professionals, job enrichment is the most preferred career move while a lateral move is the least preferred. This confirms the idea that increasing experience and impact in ones field of expertise is more important for R&D professionals than either managerial career steps or career steps focused on broadening ones base of experience (Allen & Katz, 1986; Debackere et al., 1997). Though we did not include other specific job holders in this study, we expect that the strength of preferences might substantially differ in distinct job families. This implies that it is useful to take into account, or at least control for specific job characteristics when investigating career management practices and preferences and their relationships.

Second, our results indicate that career move preferences are related to individual characteristics. Employees' ICM initiatives showed to be the most consistent and important predictor of employees' career move preferences, except for lateral career moves. This suggests that employees' interest in internal career mobility is to a large extent individually-based. The positive relationship we find supports the recent literature which states that employee proactivity is an important variable in explaining behavior in the workplace (e.g. Seibert *et al.*, 2001). As expected, those employees who are more active in managing their own career are the ones who report most interest in taking different steps on the internal labor market (i.e. vertical, enrichment and temporary moves). Furthermore, we found clear relationships between socio-demographic characteristics and career move preferences.

Most noteworthy is the positive relationship between the importance of work-life balance and the lateral career move preference. This finding suggests that employees are willing to take a challenging cross-functional career step as long as it provides them with the opportunity to regain their work life balance. At least, this provides evidence that work-life balance is indeed a crucial issue for human resource management in general, and career management in particular. The important role of socio-demographic characteristics provides further prove for this. Career move preferences, and more specifically temporary and lateral moves, seem to be heavily influenced by age and family situation (having children or not).

Third, our results indicate that, at least in this sample of R&D professionals, OCM bundles and employees' career move preferences are very weakly related. It seems however dangerous to conclude that such a relationship would not exist. As mentioned before, one clear indication that may have substantially impacted our findings is that OCM practices in the company under study are not extensively developed. Further research in other samples (e.g. other job types) and companies (e.g. where career management practices are clearly developed and implemented) might show a totally different picture.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has a number of limitations that should be noted and that should be addressed in subsequent research. First, and most importantly, the lack of significant relationships between OCM and career move preferences might be due to the fact that only one organization was involved in this study. Although the fact that a sample consisting of only one homogeneous group of respondents (all engineers) from one organization offers the advantage that situational factors were kept constant, it also limits our results. As shown by the descriptive results, the average score on each of the OCM variables was low. Even though the variances were sufficient (SDs ranging between .78 and .90, this apparent lack of OCM practices experienced by our respondents might explain the lack of a significant relationship between these variables and career move preferences. In order to rule out this alternative explanation, it is important for future research to examine the relationship between bundles of OCM practices and career move preferences of employees within a larger sample of organizations. The four distinct bundles of OCM practices that were found in our study might be a relevant point of departure for further research.

Ideally, a cross-level study could be conducted in which the OCM practices in a sample of organizations and the ICM initiatives of employees within those organizations are related to employees' career move preferences. Related to this, future research should broaden the scope of the current study by including different type of respondents, e.g. professional employees other than engineers working in R&D and other types of employees. For instance, the fact that the motive for developing a management career was positively related to the interest in making lateral moves, might suggest that for managerial employees the relationship between career management and preferred career moves might be different.

Second, this study included only a restricted number of antecedent variables to explain career move preferences. One additional relevant variable that could be included in future research, is the organizational culture with regard to career development. Apart from the OCM practices that organizations might install, and the ICM initiatives that individuals can undertake, the context within which these take place might determine the extent to which these affect career move preferences. Interviews with some of the respondents, conducted in order to better interpret our findings, indicated that the culture with regard to career movements was mainly characterized by "staying where you are" even though the HR department reported to do much efforts to change this mentality. This might explain why, within this specific organizational setting, OCM did not have any significant impact on career move preferences.

Finally, this study investigated cross-sectional relationships and therefore should be complemented by a longitudinal investigation of the relationship between career management (both ICM and OCM) and career move preferences as well as the actual internal career moves that employees make over time.

IMPLICATIONS

Despite its limitations, this study has a number of practical implications. First, we would recommend that organizations attend to the type of career moves they want to stimulate their employees to make on the internal labor market. If organizations want to apply the idea of the "new career", and encourage alternative career moves in addition to the traditional upward moves on the (managerial or professional) career ladder, they should realize that employees differ in the extent to which they are attracted by these alternative movements. First of all, assessing employee preferences within different segments of the workforce might be an important first step for encouraging internal mobility.

Second, within the knowledge economy characterized by global organizations operating on an international scale, it might become important for organizations to define to which extent they want to broaden the field of experiences and expertise of their knowledge workers. The results of our study demonstrate that within the company under study, making lateral movements (either cross-functional, cross-departmental, international or across business units) was the least preferred career step for professional employees. When discussing this with career managers within other knowledge organizations, the preference for job enrichment over career moves that imply a change in job content or a development of different competencies was very recognizable. If organizations want to stimulate knowledge exchange and cooperation between different parts of the organization, and in this way also ensure the employability of their professional employees in the long run, it will be important to work out active career policies in this regard. Based on the results of this study, we cannot conclude that the OCM practices put in place by organizations impact employees' career move preferences. Further research within a larger sample of organizations should be conducted in order to collect empirical data about the extent to which OCM practices impact career preferences. However, our results do show that ICM initiatives employees undertake, do relate to their preference for making vertical moves, for temporal moves and for job enrichment. This implies that career managers can indirectly affect career move preferences by the extent to which they stimulate their employees to undertake initiatives to manage their own career. The relationship between ICM and career move preferences fits within the concept of the "new career", which is characterized by individual responsibility for ones own career as well as a broader conception of career success as psychological success. Finally, the fact that within our sample employee preferences for making lateral movements could not be explained by OCM or ICM implies that further exploration is needed for organizations to understand how they can foster lateral career movements.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study offers a first explorative attempt to investigate employees' preferred career movements in relationship with both organizational and individual career management. Despite the fact that a substantial body of literature addresses the idea of the "new career", and emphasizes the importance of careers as lifelong learning, individual responsibility for career development and a different definition of career success, to date empirical research that relates career management to employees career move preferences is scarce. Even though further research is needed to examine the proposed relationships and to rule out alternative explanations for our findings, our results are a first step to empirically address some of the important theoretical statements on the "new career" concept as elaborated within the contemporary career literature.

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TABLE 1

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Sample (Percentages)

Sex		**Education**	
Male	88.8 %	High school	12.4 %
Female	11.2%	Bachelor	25.1 %
Age		Master	58.4 %
18 - 24 yrs	00.6 %	Ph.D.	04.1 %
25 – 34 yrs	29.0 %	**Seniority**	
35 – 44 yrs	41.3 %	< 1 yrs	00.0%
45 – 54 yrs	21.4 %	2 – 3 yrs	16.6 %
55 – 64 yrs	06.1 %	4 – 5 yrs	29.5 %
		5 – 10 yrs	22.4 %
		> 10 yrs	31.5 %

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations between Variables[a].

Variable	M	SD	Pot	Train	Fdbck	Succes	Vert	Lateral	Enrich	Temp
Potential	2.43	.90	*.85*[b]							
Development	2.47	.78	.59	*.79*						
Feedback	2.84	.90	.55	.55	*.78*					
Succession	2.26	.86	.55	.57	.47	*.82*				
Vertical	3.92	.87	-.02	-.04	-.04	-.10	*.88*			
Lateral	3.33	.78	.07	.04	.06	.05	.22	.84		
Enrich	4.29	.65	.01	.02	.04	-.02	.38	.20	.86	
Temporary	3.79	.75	.01	-.07	.00	-.02	.29	.46	.31	*.83*

[a] $N = 472$.
[b] = Entries on the diagonal are Cronbach's alphas.
[c] = Correlations > .076: $p < .05$; correlations > .10: $p < .01$

TABLE 3

Rotated Component Solution Organizational Career Management Practices.

	Component			
	Potential	Developm.	Success.	Feedback
Eval_1	,717			
Eval_2	,724			
Eval_3	,800			
Eval_4	,764			
Eval_5	,508			
Eval_6				,682
Eval_7			,712	
Eval_8			,738	
Eval_9			,749	
Eval_10			,634	
Eval_11				,820
Eval_12				,660
Eval_13		,511		
Eval_14		,628		
Eval_15		,736		
Eval_16		,687		
Eval_17		,738		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

TABLE 4

Results Career Move Preferences

		Mean	S.D.	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Enrichment - vertical	,368	,87	,04153	8,869	437	,000
Pair 2	Enrichment - temporary	,500	,82	,03923	12,764	437	,000
Pair 3	Enrichment - lateral	-,961	,91	,04350	-22,112	437	,000
Pair 4	Lateral – vertical	-,593	1,03	,04942	-12,012	437	,000
Pair 5	Lateral - temporary	-,461	,79	,03799	-12,141	437	,000

Enrich > temp > vert > lateral

TABLE 5

Antecedents of Employees' Career Move Preferences

	Model 1 Vertical	Model 2 Lateral	Model 3 Enrich	Model 4 Temporary
Step 1				
Individual controls				
Age	-.03	-.12**	-.07	-.14**
Gender	-.01	.03	.07	-.04
Marital status	-.01	-.08	-.02	-.13*
Children	.03	-.15**	-.05	-.18**
	$F^{\#}$= 0.69	F = 2.38*	F = 1.28	F = 3.58**
	R^2=.01	R^2=.02	R^2=.01	R^2=.03
Step 2				
Career Motives				
Management ambition	.39**	-.02	.00	.03
Security	-.06	-.08	-.08	-.06
Work life balance	.01	.12**	.01	.01
	F = 16.79**	F = 2.03*	F = 3.86**	F = 2.91**
	ΔR^2= .14	ΔR^2= .01	ΔR^2= .00	ΔR^2= .00
Step 3				
Career Self Management	.15**	.03	.23**	.11*
	F = 9.58**	F = 1.99	F = 5.78**	F = 4.12**
	ΔR^2= .10	ΔR^2= .00	ΔR^2= .05	ΔR^2= .02
Step 4				
Org. career mngt bundles				
Potential assessment	-.00	.08	-.02	.08
Development	.02	-.03	.00	-.14
Feedback	-.01	.01	.05	.02
Succession management	-.06	.04	.01	.04
	F = 11.27**	F = 1.63	F = 2.64	F = 2.37**
	ΔR^2= .03	ΔR^2= .01	ΔR^2= .00	ΔR^2= .01

[#] Degrees of freedom associated with the F-tests equal (4, 428)