

Individual Career Development Planning: A Survey

Author's Details:¹UCHENNA NJOKU, ²BENEDICT AMADE.,

¹Postgraduate Student, Department of Technology and Workforce Learning Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas State, United States -²School of Management Technology Federal University of Technology, P.M.B. 1526 Owerri, Nigeria*Corresponding Author-benedictamade@yahoo.com. Phone:+2348035698405

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to find out statistically, if and to what extent graduates of a university perceive planning to develop themselves and their careers as relevant to the development of their professional careers or their career advancement. The data for the study was collated from 78 out of 150 graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria. Data was collated via questionnaires using the surveymonkey medium via email to the respondents. Microsoft excel was used in analyzing the descriptive statistics from the study. The findings from the study revealed that 91.9% of the respondents did envisage the idea of ICD/DCP as relevant to professional career advancement. While most graduates received training on IDP/CDP after graduation than as undergraduates. The study finally recommends professionals in HRD to incorporate aspects of IDP/CDP in student's curriculum so as to enable them create a niche for themselves in terms of career planning and development.

Keywords: career development, career planning, individual career, skills development, professional career, occupation, employers.

INTRODUCTION

Individual/Career Development Plans and resulting Individual/Career Development Programs are essential in outlining career goals to be accomplished and steps or resources needed to achieve those goals. Lack of planning and engagement in development activities is seen as one of the factors affecting job fit which further affects performance and productivity resulting in a skills gap. Bailey (2005), suggests that *career planning* and *ongoing skills development* is essential so that young professionals can be generalists, as well as specialize in at least one area. The good news is that, in all professions, all of these efforts on career development are often rewarded. In planning careers, individuals assess themselves in order to understand who they are what they are interested in and steps/resources needed to reach their potentials. In developing your career or yourself, an individual builds on the plans he has mapped out for his career by acquiring knowledge, learning skills and undergoing trainings that will improve him as a person or as an employee. That way, you know what you are

good in or have interest in and you develop yourself on your strengths thereby creating less room for uncertainties, deficiencies and career shuffling or loss of interest half way into your career. With much knowledge and experience, you become an expert or a professional creating opportunity for further growth and career satisfaction.

Ituma & Simpson (2007), propose that “Congruence between what an individual would like to do (anchor) and what he is actually doing(work environment) leads to positive career outcome such as job effectiveness, job satisfaction and high retention while incongruence is likely to lead to job dissatisfaction and high turnover”.

People who have plans are unlikely to move from job to job. Frequent changes in careers or jobs usually means less years of experience on each job, less time or efforts invested in developing oneself in each field, less skills acquired on each job and ultimately, less expertise on each job. Harrington & Hall (2007) found out that the difference between a job and a career lies in the amount of time, money, commitment, knowledge and trainings invested. In a career, you invest so much but in a job you don't. Realistically, no one will invest so much in a place where he doesn't expect to spend so much time and no one will know a place where he is likely to spend so much time if he doesn't know who he is, what his interests are and what it takes to achieve his aim. Consequently, if you don't have a plan, you'll likely end up having multiple jobs and no career or specified field of expertise (career development).

Globally, employers seek experts not just employees. According to Harrington & Hall (2007), “The changing nature of technology has also affected the form and function of career development. Today organizations put a premium on people who can adapt and learn quickly”. They continued by saying “The employment contract between individuals and their employers has changed, and job security is a thing of the past”. As the world gets advanced technologically and otherwise, a deficit in skills gap is a major cause

of lack of expertise which may be caused by minimal knowledge or skills in several jobs and no professional knowledge/skills in a particular field. This has negative consequences on job performance and outcome because everywhere, people are improving their skills every day so employees have to meet up to stay employable. Developing countries, including Nigeria, face insufficiencies in expertise; employees have refused to grow on a particular career, they move to any field in which they are qualified for as long as they are paid better. Excluding the poor economic situation of the country and other similar reasons, another cause for these moves may be because they have no knowledge of how career planning and development can help in shaping their future (which is usually a role of the academic institutions, as the first step of knowledge and acceptance, to instill in students before they become graduates) or they simply do not perceive it as appropriate for them. In order to fully engage in planning and development programs, employees must first perceive it as relevant.

According to Harrington & Hall (2007): "Anyone who works needs no expert to state the obvious: The world of work is in a state of unprecedented change. In today's organizations, change is a fact of life. Even organizations that for many years were static, today, change at a speed never experienced before. In very short period of time, organizations are created, experience dramatic growth, merge or are acquired, downsize dramatically, reinvent themselves, or simply cease to exist." Harrington & Hall continued by saying that the changes occur because of the impact of globalization, new technologies, societal expectations changing employees/customers and stakeholders. In fact, according to a recent study, new graduates probably will change jobs five to eight times during their first decade of employment. This short cycle time requires that regardless of our field of work, all of us have one career skill in common: job hunting". This is based on the fact that the economy in developed countries has witnessed a negative change (crisis), consequently, businesses are experiencing shortage in sales being that customers are no longer financially capable to patronize them randomly and this affects their profitability. Those customers who patronize these businesses are usually employees of other companies who may be experiencing similar changes in pay and

employment and therefore are most likely to patronize the best to save some money in these hard times. Additionally, global competition has risen in the trade market, countries and companies are coming up with advanced products and services and as a result, every company has to establish new ways of providing service or producing goods so as to remain at the peak of the market. This has led employers to create new businesses or reinvent themselves in areas that seem flourishing, merge with other companies or downsize to sustain their capital base, acquire other companies to grow or simply, cease to exist. In all these, employees suffer the most. Employers now seek for the employees with competitive talents or knowledge and skills so that productivity will be maximized therefore, employees viewed as not competent are laid off in order to reduce waste.

The objective of this study is to examine the perceived relevance of Individual/Career Development Planning Program to graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria to their professional careers/advancement. A guide to accomplishing periodical goals is expected to be of importance in acquiring, developing, and sustaining a career to become experts for these graduates. The significance of the problem lies in the real possibility that if a nation lacks enough proficient workers, it will experience a skill gap leading to poor utilization of resources, increased unemployment rate, reduced production of goods/services, diminishing GDP/GNP, import-based economy (imbalance of trade) and slow technological advancement.

Research Question

To further understand the problem of graduates of who move from job to job and the possible relationship to the perceived relevance of developing individual and career plans the primary research question of this study is: *Do graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria think that Individual/Career Development Planning Program is relevant to the development of their professional careers?*

To first establish the extent to which graduates of FUTO are exposed to and aware of the

career relevance of, an IDP/CDP program, the study elicited the following two sub-questions:

Sub-Question 1: Are Individual/Career Development Planning Programs or courses being offered in Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria or by Nigerian Employers?

Sub-Question 2: If given the opportunity, will the graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria participate in Individual/Career Development Planning Programs?

To establish the perceived relevance of the IDP/CDP program by the graduates to their professional careers, the study sought the following sub-questions:

Sub-Question 3: Do the graduates of FUTO who participated in an IDP/CDP program believe it was a contributing factor in their career advancement and/or achievements?

Sub-Question 4: Do the graduates of FUTO who did not participate in an IDP/CDP program believe it would have been relevant in their career advancement?

To establish in part the impact of IDP/ICP programs on the careers of the Nigerian university graduates the study sought the following sub-question:

Sub-Question 5: Have the graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria who have participated in an IDP/ICP program acquired more job-related knowledge and skills and thus feel more competent at work than graduates who did not participate?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's society, individuals are trying to "do it all"—to find life satisfaction through combination of multiple roles and jobs (e.g., career), however, if they are not spending their time in ways that are congruent with their values and interests, they are unlikely to find the happiness they seek (Perrone, Webb & Blalock, 2005). This may be the case of most graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), Nigeria who move from job to job and from career to career in pursuit of "satisfaction", and there lies the problem. The "satisfaction" (self-accomplishment) these individuals seek is most likely to be achieved in the event that resources, interests and values are channeled in the development of skills/expertise in

a particular field which will not only accord them promotions, recognitions and rewards but will also be an asset to them and to their society. In order to create a sustainable knowledge, the learners must first perceive the program as relevant then acceptance and application will be maximized. One such planning tool and strategy that guides individuals in channeling resources and interests appropriately to develop skills and expertise is an Individual/Career Development Planning Program, but it is currently unknown what the perception of graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri is on the relevance of IDP/CPD in the development of their professional careers.

According to (Wikipedia) Career is defined as someone's progression through life. This definition of career tends to relate a range of aspects of an individual's life, learning and work. Another way in which the term career is looked at is in terms of describing an occupation or a profession that involves some kind of special training or formal education and as such is considered to be a person's lifework. In this case, career is seen as a series of related jobs usually pursued within a single industry or sector e.g. "a career in management" or "a career in the building trade". While career development is strictly a process requiring individuals and organizations to create a partnership that enhances employees knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes required for current and future job assignments. Macdonald & Hite (2005). Dijk (2004) opined that career development is an alignment of an individual's subjective career aspects and the more objective career aspects of an organization in order to achieve the best fit between organizational and individual goals as well as personal characteristics and career goals.

Ituma & Simpson (2006) quoted Hall (1976) as referring to four notable but distinct perspectives of career, which have dominated the discourse on careers. These include: career as advancement, which associates the idea of a career with the notion of "vertical mobility", moving upward in an organization's hierarchy; career as profession, which views only certain occupations with "some clear pattern of systematic advancement", such as the legal and medical professions as representing careers; career as a lifelong sequence of jobs, which

regards any person's job history as a career; and career as a lifelong sequence of role related experiences, which is the way each person experiences the sequence of jobs and activities that constitute his work history", that is the subjective career. For this research, we will look at career as a lifelong sequence of role related experiences. This perspective dominates because today's employers are looking for expertise which is usually in a specific field and comes as a result of experience or knowledge in related roles

According to the U.S Department of Commerce (2001), Individual Development Plan is an action plan that identifies your short and long term career goals and what steps you can take to meet those goals. Career planning is beneficial to the individual and employer in that the workplace has been affected by a number of significant changes and trends, which have definite ramifications for your career planning. Amongst these changes is technical knowledge and skills obsolescence – rapid advancement in technology and state-of-the-art knowledge requires employees to upgrade their skills and “retool” themselves to remain current with their job requirements.

Career Planning, Job Satisfaction and Turnover in Nigerian Economy.

Ituma & Simpson (2006) stated that according to the Economic Intelligence Unit Report on Nigeria in 2004, Nigeria is currently the world's seventh largest oil exporter and Africa's most populous nation, representing about 20 per cent of the entire Sub-Saharan African population. Nigeria is currently the tenth largest producer of crude oil in the world at 2.1 million barrels per day. However, despite this wealth in human capital and natural resources (oil), Nigeria is among the world's 20 poorest countries based on GNP per capita. More than one third of Nigeria's export income is used annually to service this debt.

Because of the high unemployment rate the world over, individuals have to compete intensely for the few available jobs. Despite the rate of unemployment, there are differential pay and wide variations in employment conditions (especially in the private sector) and this has some consequences for the quality of work, life and careers produced by these employers. Ituma & Simpson (2006) gave an example with IT workers in the lower paying

companies who aspire and make conscientious efforts to work for the reputable high paying companies. This often results in frequent job-hopping within the industry and beyond the IT industry. For the reasons above, graduates look for jobs wherever it is accessible and do little or nothing to create a path in which their careers should go not to talk about steps to take in developing themselves or their careers. The career decisions of most Nigerian graduates are shaped by financial needs consequently, they hop from one job to the other not spending enough time in a job to acquire enough experience or spending money to gain more skills and without reference to professional development. They become “Jack of all trade, master of none”.

Career/job commitment is usually as a result of job satisfaction, Job satisfaction has been one of the most germane issues facing business organizations in Nigeria Okpara, (1996). Given the significant relationship observed between job satisfaction and work behavior, the increased satisfaction of IT managers can be a bonus to Nigerian organizations resulting in reduced absenteeism, decreased turnover, and increase in productivity. Excessive changes in turnover and absenteeism result in a waste of human power and needless loss in production and profit. Okpara (2004) continued by saying that an extensive review of the literature on IT and job satisfaction issues revealed that the vast majority of job satisfaction studies have been undertaken primarily in the western part of Nigeria. Unfortunately, very little research has been done on this issue in general, and none at all on this specific topic in Nigeria. In his study, Okpara (1996) stated that income was the best predictor of job satisfaction. This is to say that, as the level of income increases so does the level of job satisfaction. Conversely, those that have low levels of income are less satisfied with their jobs. While there may be conflicting results on the importance of money to the Nigerian worker, a strong case can be made for the significance of income in determining the level of job satisfaction.

Popoola and Oluwale (2007), carried out research to investigate the career commitment of records management personnel in a state civil service in Nigeria. The study found that there was significant

negative relationship between job tenure, levels of education and career commitment of the respondents. Going further into the findings of Popoola and Oluwale (2007), employees in Nigeria with low level of education are less committed to their careers and are prone to short job tenures. This means that good education could lead to developing a career and being committed to it and in turn staying longer on a job.

Aremu and Ahmed (1996) reported that staff of old and new generations' banks in Lagos, Nigeria differ significantly in their job satisfaction and commitment. Okorie (1995) submitted that the continued commitment of the employees in Nigerian business and service organizations is positively related to their job performance. Job performance is tied to having adequate job skills/knowledge and since job-change is constant, developing those skills or improving the knowledge to keep up with the changes. Therefore, people who perform better are more likely to be committed and people can only be outstanding in performance if they put in more efforts like planning and development. It must be noted that when a career is rewarding, either in monetary terms or prestige (highly valued by the society), an employee in an organization may be satisfied and thus committed to it. Bozionelos (1996) supported this assertion by submitting that promotion (reward) is the only variable that accounts for a significant amount of variance in career satisfaction. In fact, low salary growth and irregular promotions could be said to be responsible for low career commitment and low productivity among Nigerian workers. The outcomes of low career commitment of an employee in an organization are absenteeism from work, high turnover and low quality performance. Rewards, promotions, good pay and recognition bring satisfaction and all come with high performance. Employees who are educated, experienced and skilled perform highly and employees who are outstanding in performance make extra sacrifices such as planning and development. Being educated, experienced and skilled doesn't just come out of the air.....they come with a plan. For one to plan and improve, one has to understand or comprehend that planning and development is essential.

Perceptions of Career Development

Societal context (e.g. educational systems, labor market structures, national welfare provisions) shapes the career pattern exhibited by individuals (Ituma & Simpson, 2006). In the Nigeria context, key factors that are likely to shape individual career decisions include its specific economic conditions and socio-cultural factors (Ituma and Simpson, 2006). In terms of the former, career decisions are taken in the context of an uncertain and insecure economic environment. The present state of Nigeria's economy is characterized by uncertainty, high unemployment levels in many sectors and a lack of an established welfare system. Ituma & Simpson (2007) mentioned that there is no specified minimum wage for skilled workers in Nigeria and unlike in most Western developed economies, credit facilities are hard to obtain and only available at very high interest rates. As a result, most workers spend a large proportion of their salaries meeting basic food and utilities needs and, as Ituma and Simpson (2006) found, often give priority to career moves that will better their economic circumstance. This may be an explanation for the move from jobs to jobs by Nigerian graduates in search of better paying jobs not as a way to climbing through a career ladder or reach self accomplishment.

In terms of its socio-cultural context, according to Ituma & Simpsons (2007), one of the main features of Nigeria's distinctive culture is the importance attached to the extended family system. Nigerians exert too much value in taking care of financial obligations of their extended families. These values, to some extent, stand in place of the established social security and welfare systems of more developed countries. These factors are likely to impact on the way individuals in Nigeria view their obligations, and hence the meaning attached to their career decisions (planning and development options). The desire for stability and the burden of obligations may mean employees may give greater preference for financial incentives over non-financial incentives such as professional development and growth.

Aremu & Salami (2007) found out that among young adults in Nigeria, high levels of career indecision and career choices based mainly on the wishes and aspirations of the parents in an attempt

to ensure that the children go into occupations that would enable families to solve their economic problems, and not necessarily on their interests, values and abilities are thus likely to interfere with educational and career planning and to disrupt normative career development processes. As a result, young adults may enter into occupations they don't have interest in and will be less likely to develop their careers instead they will remain at the same level from the inception to the completion of their career lives. Aremu and Salami (2007) continued by saying that unlike children in the individualistic culture dominant in the USA, where dependence is viewed as immature, children living in a collectivistic culture like Nigeria derive a greater sense of psychological security from their obedience to and dependence on parents. This may not be the case for all Nigerian individuals or families but in general, this has been dominant. Aremu and Salami (2007) concluded by saying that adolescents brought up in cultures where interdependence is more valued than independence are likely to find that a sense of separation and differentiation from parents will generate emotional problems and poor career development.

Mentoring is part of developing an employee's career, research by Salami (2008) on "Psychosocial factors as predictors of mentoring among nurses in southwestern Nigeria" revealed that self-esteem, locus of control, emotional intelligence, age, job status and tenure are linear predictors associated to mentoring but gender is not. Practical implications of the findings from this study were that counseling and industrial psychologists should let the employees know the importance of mentoring in the workplace. In effect the study says that Nigerian employees see mentoring (which is part of employers' way of career development for employees) as a way of bringing down one's self esteem or showing who is older, more intelligent, and higher in status or more in control instead of seeing it as a way to learn from each other and grow.

Role of Career Expectations and the Nigerian Graduate

A study by Ejere (2010) shows that a survey on work- goal priorities among 330 randomly selected

senior public servants in Nigeria revealed that the respondents ranked good pay, interpersonal relations and job security as their three most important work goals. Interesting work, variety and convenient work hours were accorded lowest priorities. It was observed that the three job factors ranked most highly are those that satisfy lower order rather than higher order needs. This reveals that an average Nigerian graduate will take a job or move to a job where there is good pay without taking into consideration the growth and development or the future of his career. In addition, lack of requisite skills to meet the job requirements of employers have been identified as one of the major reasons responsible for the high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

Ezekiel (2008) wrote that: "There are lots of employers that want to expand their businesses and need people with the right skills. There are people who are changing jobs almost every four months whereas others have been looking for job since the last five years. The reason for this contrasting situation is because of the type of skills they have. People go into the labor market thinking that their Bachelors' Degree is sufficient for them to get a job. This is not enough because the degree only certifies you academically. Employers are in the look-out for people who are qualified professionally to solve professional and not academic problems, there is a mismatch between what the tertiary institutions produce and what employers need, hence the skill gap".

In as much as few Nigerian graduate possess the skills so they easily change jobs (Ezekiel 2008), this movement is as result of lack of focus (Ejere 2010) which reduces the time they spend developing themselves in one job and as such reducing their opportunities of sustaining expertise in a particular career.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study was designed to establish if graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), Nigeria perceive Individual/Career Development Planning Program as relevant to the development of their professional careers and skills or not. This study surveyed graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri Nigeria who are presently

employed or have ever been employed to determine their knowledge/perception of IDP/CDP programs, identify the difficulty/ease the face in identifying and achieving career goals or expectations and determine the impact of IDP/CDP on achieving/sustaining those goals (if applicable). Technically, the researchers gathered and analyzed information provided by eligible participants (present and former employees who graduated from Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria not later than 2007). The limit was placed to get people who have at least witnessed 2-3 years in the workforce. This information was collected via an online survey form consisting of 10 quantitative questions and 5 qualitative questions. The design methodology for this survey was mixed model.

Although the pre-effect and post-effect of individual/career planning program can both be observed and quantified, the researchers has chosen to use subject self-reporting, by means of a written survey, to assess the perceived relevance of an IDP/CDP program. Because of time constraints, the researchers believed that self-reports of participants on perceived or acknowledged impact of IDP/CDP would be an accurate reflection of pre- and post-effect measurements and will ensure true representation and honest opinions.

The theoretical populations are graduates of Nigerian universities employed by various companies in Nigeria while the accessible populations were graduates of Federal University of Technology in Owerri, Nigeria who are or have ever been full time employees in various companies. The researchers chose this representative sample for the reason that the higher institution is a Federal University operated by the federal government of the country and as such should be offering the best programs, producing the best graduates and having most of its graduates in the best jobs in the country. 150 graduates were invited to participate in the survey and a minimum of 78 datasets from the responses were received back. Subjects were identified through the school's alumni and the names were selected at random for generalization purposes (that is to make the representation more realistic) and the participants were contacted via email.

Data collection commenced in April 8th, 2011. The researchers then contacted the Alumni Association of the school which is a strong association among Nigerian universities, and intimated the association with details of the research project and expected participation of members of the association. The researcher also inquired from the institution, if at any point the undergraduate/graduate course curriculum included any form of individual/career development planning class. This was useful in constructing questionnaire with reference to the expected level of knowledge graduates have about IDP/CDP. In the absence of sufficient time to contact and receive feedback from the university or alumni and to have large number of respondents. The researchers created a user account in www.surveymonkey.com (a survey software), created the survey/questions and sent the link to the e-mail address of the secretary of the school alumni and the secretary forwarded the link to the group.

SurveyMonkey.com software was used to create a fifteen-question survey tool consisting of two parts. The first part was an explanation of the terms Individual and Career Development Planning and Programs and the establishment of facts that respondents are aware of and have or have not ever participated in IDP/CDP programs. The second part consisted of questions specific to subject's perceived relevance of individual/career development program as well as subject's job-related skill acquisition and job duration. The researchers selected this online survey technique because the software provides a quick, reliable, and organized method of gathering data from respondents. The privacy agreements of SurveyMonkey.com is authentic and includes non-disclosure of information submitted, thereby violating the rights of the subjects and their privacy. This software also helps in the analysis of data by showing the collective responses to each question in numbered lists and numbered charts. To validate the survey, a pilot testing with a small 2 sample group of subjects was conducted. Upon completion, notifications and questionnaires was sent via e-mail to subjects of the study.

The validity and reliability of this research were based on the data provided by the participants. The researchers used Microsoft Excel Package and

descriptive statistics for data analysis and interpretation. The data relating to the experiences in development planning programs was first identified by the presence of experience and the level of experience. The researchers then used descriptive statistical tests of frequencies/percentages to analyze the level of experiences in development planning programs with the level of inexperience, the level of opportunities to participate with the level of inopportunity to participate, the level of willingness to participate to the level of unwillingness to participate the level of career changes amongst experienced graduates with the level of career changes amongst inexperienced graduates and the general levels of perceptions of IDP/CDP in development of professional career.

Results and Discussions

The findings of the study were presented in the order the questions answer the sub questions of this 1.

study which are written in italics. To first establish the extent to which graduates of FUT0 are exposed to and aware of the career relevance of an IDP/CDP program the study asked the following two sub-questions:

Sub-Question 1: Are Individual/Career Development Planning programs or courses offered in Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria and by Nigerian employers?

Sub-Question 2: If given the opportunity, will the graduates of Nigerian universities participate in Individual/Career Development Planning Programs?

Questions 1 and 2 were designed to answer sub-question 1. Question 1 asked: As an undergraduate, did you ever take any class in Individual or Career Development Planning or an course guiding you on how you can plan for the future? There were 78 responses in all. See table

TABLE 1: An Analysis of Sub-Questions 1 and 2

Sub-Question	Questions designed to answer sub-questions	Total Number of Responses	Number of responses for each option	Response percentage in
(1)Are Individual/Career Development Planning programs or courses offered in Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria and by Nigerian employers?	1)As an undergraduate did you take any class in Individual or Career Development Planning or any course guiding you on how you can plan for the future?	78	Yes= 17 No=61	21.8% 78.2%
	(2) As an employee, have you ever taken any training course on Individual or Career Development Planning or for professional development	77	Yes= 42 No= 35	54.5% 45.5%
(2) If given the opportunity, will the graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria participate in Individual/Career Development Planning Programs?	(4) If your answers to both question 1 and 2 were “no”, why have you never taken an Individual or Career Development Planning program or class?	39	I never got an opportunity= 35 I felt it was not necessary=4	89.7% 10.3%
	(5) If you answered “I never got an opportunity” to question 4, if given an opportunity, would you have participated in Individual or Career Development Planning program or training.	37	Yes= 34 No= 3	91.9% 8.1%

Table 1: To establish the extent to which graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria are exposed to and are aware of the career relevance of IDP/CDP programs.

The research indicates that most graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria did not receive any class on individual or career planning, therefore it was not a mandatory course in the school. As a result, more that 50% of the university's graduates would be ignorant about how to plan their future or develop themselves and their careers unless they get these knowledge from

somewhere else. The researchers contacted the Alumni Relations Officer and lecturer of the university, to find out if the school offers or ever offered a class on Career Development or Planning as part of their curriculum, and contrary to the information from the research, his answer was “Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria never and still does not offer any class on IDP or CDP but these topics are discussed as part of the

course outline for a Human Resource Management Class in the School of Management Technology". Therefore, the students did not receive any class IDP/CDP, some respondents may have assumed that the topics on IDP/CDP discussed in a class was a class taken on IDP/CDP.

Question 2 asked: As an employee, have you ever taken any training course on Individual/Career Development Planning or professional development? There were 77 responses and table 1 showed the responses.

TABLE 2: An Analysis of Sub-Question 3&4

Sub-Question	Questions designed to answer sub-questions	Total Number of Responses	Number of responses for each option	Response percentage in
3) Do the graduates of FUTO who participated in an IDP/CDP program believe it was a contributing factor in their career advancement and/or achievements?	3) If you answered "Yes" to either question 1 or 2, of what relevance was the program to you then and now?	45	Relevant = 44 Not relevant=1	97.78% 2.22%
4) Do the graduates of FUTO who did not participate in an IDP/CDP program believe it would have been relevant in their career advancement?	6) If you answered "If given an opportunity, I would have participated in an IDP/CDP program in question 5, why?"	35	*Quantitatively, everyone felt it would have been helpful in one way or the other =35 *Qualitatively, its relevance was grouped under: *Better performance at work= 5 *Appropriate career choice/decision=7 *Better career path, planning & mgt=11 *Understanding my career & having a focus=2 *Self development & climbing career ladder=7	100% 15.61% 21.88% 34.38% 6.25% 21.88%
	7)If you answered "I felt it was not necessary" to question 4, do you feel otherwise now?	9	Yes= 6 No=3	66.7% 33.3%
	8) Give reasons for your answer in question 7	7	Technically, reasons for a positive answer were 5 Reasons for a negative answer were 2	

Table 2: To establish the perceived relevance of IDP/CDP programs by the graduates to their professional careers.

The research indicates that more than 50% of respondents have been involved in one or more

individual/career development programs as employees. This tells us that more graduates get

professional development planning knowledge as employees than as undergraduates.

Question 4 and 5 were designed to answer sub-question 2 (*Sub-Question 2*: If given the opportunity, will the graduates of Nigerian

universities participate in Individual/Career Development Planning Programs?)

Question 4 asked: If your answers to both questions 1 and 2 were “no”, why have you never taken an Individual or Career Development Planning program or class?

TABLE 3: An Analysis of Sub-Question 5

Sub-Questions	Questions designed to answer sub-questions	Total Number of Responses	Number of responses for each option	Response percentage in
5) Have the graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria who have participated in an IDP/ICP program acquired more job-related knowledge and skills and feel more competent at work than graduates who did not participate?	10)I have acquired much JOB-RELATED knowledge and skills (example: technical, computer, interpersonal, communication, leadership/supervisory etc) in my occupation. PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE GENERAL OR BASIC SKILLS (example: writing reports is a job-related communication skill unlike sending e-mails for a meeting which is general).	78	Agree=64 Neutral=8 Disagree=6	82.1% 10.3% 7.6%
	11) If you have acquired job-related knowledge or skills, was this acquisition as a result of following a plan (example: placing an individual goal and identifying skills, knowledge and resources needed to achieve that goal) or perhaps your organization's employee development plan?	55	Yes=45 No=5 N/A=5	81.8% 9.1% 9.1%
	12) I have followed this plan and it has been profitable to me.	54	Agree=43 Disagree= 2 N/A=9	79.6% 3.7% 16.7%
	13)Having achieved certain goals, I believe I have made a significant difference in my workplace and society as a whole.	54	Agree=52 Neutral=2 Disagree=0	96.3% 3.7% 0%
	14) Employers rate me as competent and	55	Agree=48 Neutral= 7	87.3% 12.7%

	treat me as such.		Disagree=0	0%
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Table 3: To establish in part, the impact of IDP/CDP programs on the career development of graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria.

The research indicates that a very low percentage (10.3%) of graduates who have never engaged in an individual or career planning program or class have done so because they felt it was not necessary. See table 3. Most graduates felt it was necessary but never got the opportunity.

Question 5 asked: If you answered “I never got an opportunity” to question 4, if given the opportunity, would you have participated in an Individual or Career Development Planning program or training?

TABLE 4

Questions	Total Number of Responses	Number of responses for each option	Response in percentage
9) What is the longest time you have spent in an occupation or a job.	77	Less than 5 years=58 5 to 10 years=15 More than 10 yrs= 4	75.3% 19.5% 5.2%
15) If you answered No, Disagree, Neutral or N/A to any of questions 10-14, how many jobs have you changed in the last five to ten years.	19	Less than 3=16 3 to 5=2 More than 5= 1	84.2% 10.5% 5.3%

Table 4: Outlining results of questions 9 and 15.

The research indicates that most graduates are willing to participate in an activity that will enable them plan their future as well as develop their skills and career.

The result from question 1 (under sub-question 1) shows that out of 78 respondents, only 17 (21.8%) received a class in Individual and Career Development Planning throughout their undergraduate studies but information from the school says that IDP/CDP classes were never offered in the school’s curriculum therefore graduates of FUTO had no knowledge of IDP/CDP as undergraduates. See table 1. The result of question 2 shows that out of 77 respondents, 42 (54.5%) received a training or class in IDP or CDP or for professional development as employees. Consequently, more than 50% of the graduates received a training in IDP/CDP as employees and so became aware of how to plan their careers as well as develop themselves and their careers only after they had started a career. This simply means that employers are more interested in developing/shaping the future of their employees than academic institutions and more graduates are

exposed to the career relevance of IDP/CDP programs at employee-level than student-level. Students who have not been employed may not have this opportunity.

The result from question 4 (under sub-question 2) shows that out of 39 respondents, 35 (89.7%) people never got the opportunity to take a class or training in IDP/CDP program and 4 (10.3%) people felt it was not necessary. See table 1. The 35 people may have been part of the 61 respondents in question 1 who did not take an IDP/CDP class as undergraduates and part of the 35 people who never got a training as employees. The 4 who felt it was not necessary may have been part of the 61 respondents in question 1 who did not take an IDP/CDP class as undergraduates because the class was not mandatory, they skipped it or did not enroll in it. The result from question 5 shows that 34 (91.9%) out of 37 respondents, which is a majority, would have participated in an IDP/CDP program if given the opportunity. Though this number (37) should have been the same with the number of people who said they had no opportunity

in question 4(35 people), the researcher confirms that these are genuine results from the survey and it may have occurred due to misunderstanding my respondents. The research indicates that majority would have participated in the program.

Responses to questions for sub-question 1 tells us that IDP/CDP classes are not offered by the university but offered to most employees by employers. Therefore, graduates of FUTO are exposed to IDP/CDP programs as employees not as undergraduates. While responses to sub-question 2 illustrates that some graduates were not given an opportunity to participate in an IDP/CDP class or training program but if given as opportunity, they will be willing to participate.

To establish the perceived relevance of the IDP/CDP program by the graduates to their professional careers, the study asked the following sub-questions:

Sub-Question 3: Do the graduates of FUTO who participated in an IDP/CDP program believe it was a contributing factor in their career advancement and/or achievements?

Sub-Question 4: Do the graduates of FUTO who did not participate in an IDP/CDP program believe it would have been relevant in their career advancement?

Question 3 was designed to answer sub question 3. Question 3 asked: If you answered “Yes” to either questions 1 or 2, of what relevance was the program to you then and now? This question is both qualitative and quantitative because the level of relevance by each respondent cannot be measured and each person’s idea of what is relevant to him or her is different. For instance, a certification is relevant to exhibit expertise but if it doesn’t get me a job, I will assume it is not relevant. Also what was not relevant to me in the past, I will assume will not be relevant to me in the future. The responses are shown in table 2 and it is observed that almost everyone believes the program was and still is relevant. Technically, the number of respondents who said the program was generally relevant are represented quantitatively. There were 45 responses from the distributions.

The research indicates that most graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria believe that the IDP/CDP programs they

have taken in the past were and still is relevant to their career.

Question 6 was designed to answer sub-question 4 (***Sub-Question 4: Do the graduates of FUTO who did not participate in an IDP/CDP program believe it would have been relevant in their career advancement?***). Question 6 asked: If you answered “Yes” to question 5, why? (***Question 5: If you answered “I never got an opportunity” to question 4, if given the opportunity, would you have participated in an Individual or Career Development Planning program or training?***). Question 6 is both qualitative and quantitative because the reason for participation may be due to the fact that the program is now seen as relevant or it may be because it was mandatory (for instance programs made mandatory by employers). Since the aim of the study is to find out if the program is relevant or perceived as relevant, the reasons respondents who previously did not engage in the program give may be because it was relevant or may be biased where mandatory is seen as relevance. The reason for participation for each respondent is different and cannot be measured as due to relevance of the program. The responses showed that everyone believes the program would have helped in different ways concerning career decisions, career plans, individual and career accomplishment. Quantitatively, there is no distribution because there is generally one response to this question. 35 people responded and 35 people believed the program would have been helpful which is 100 %.

Three people did not explain why they would have engaged in an IDP/CDP program if given an opportunity, they simply answered “It is important”. Consequently, the percentages were calculated with a total of 32 instead of 35.

Question 7 was designed to answer sub-question 4. Question 7 asked: If you answered “I felt it wasn’t necessary to question 4 (Question 4 asked: why have you never taken an IDP/CDP program?) , do you feel otherwise now?”. There were 9 responses as shown in table 2.

Though very few people responded to this question, the research indicates that more people feel otherwise now about engaging in an IDP/CDP program than before.

Question 8 was designed to answer sub-question 4. Question 8 asked: Give reasons for your answer in question 7. Only 7 people answered this question and the responses can be seen in table 2.

Question 8: Give reasons for your answer in question 7.

The responses show that 5 people out of 7 obviously answered “yes” to the question that they feel otherwise about not engaging in a development class or program which is more than half of the respondents of this questions.

The results from question 3 (under sub-question 3) show that more than 97% of the respondents who participated in IDP/CDP course or training generally believe it was relevant to them in one aspect of their career or the other.

The outcomes from question 6 (under sub-question 4) show that participants who did not participate in an IDP/CDP program because they did not have an opportunity would have participated for the reasons stated on table 2. This simply means that their perception of the relevance of IDP/CDP programs is high and appropriately placed according to their needs.

The responses from question 7 (under sub-question 4) show that out of the 9 people who felt that it was not necessary to engage in an IDP/CDP program, 6 people feel otherwise now while 3 people don't. This tells us that few graduates did not engage in the program for reasons which would have been beyond their control, fewer graduates felt it was not necessary then and the fewest number of people still feel it is not necessary. The number keeps decreasing. 3 people out of 78 possible respondents is 3.85%.

The results from question 8 (under sub-question 4) show that out of 7 respondents, 5 people gave positive reasons why they feel different about the decisions they made before while 2 people gave reasons why they still feel indifferent about their decisions. A positive response to the relevance of IDP/CDP programs is in the majority.

Responses to questions for sub-question 3 tell us that most graduates who participated in IDP/CDP classes or trainings believe it was a contributing factor in their career advancement and/or achievement. While responses to sub-question 4 illustrates that most graduates who did not participate in an IDP/CDP class or training believe it would have been relevant to their career

advancement and all graduates who would have participated in IDP/CDP classes or trainings if given an opportunity and because they believe the program would have been beneficial in different ways to them as individuals and as professionals in their career lives. Additionally, almost everyone who felt the program was not necessary now feels otherwise and believe that if they had given it a trial, it would have been helpful in certain career decisions and successes.

Question 9 was not designed to specifically answer a sub-question. Question 9 asked: What is the longest time you have spent in an occupation or a job? 77 people responded.

The research indicates that most graduates have spent less than 5 years in a particular job which means that very few graduates have expertise gathered due to years of experience. See table 4.

To establish in part the impact of IDP/ICP programs on the careers of the graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria, the study asked the following sub-question:

Sub-Question 5: Have the graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria who have participated in an IDP/ICP program acquired more job-related knowledge and skills and feel more competent at work than graduates who did not participate?

Question 10 was designed to answer sub-question 5. Question 10 asked: I have acquired much JOB-RELATED knowledge and skills (example: technical, computer, interpersonal, communication, leadership/supervisory etc) in my occupation. PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE GENERAL OR BASIC SKILLS (example: writing reports is a job-related communication skill unlike sending e-mails for a meeting which is general). There were 78 responses.

The research indicates that 82.10% of respondents have acquired job-related knowledge or skills while the rest have not or are neutral as indicated on table 3.

Question 11 was designed to answer sub-question 5. Question 11 asked: If you have acquired job-related knowledge or skills, was this acquisition as a result of following a plan (example: placing an individual goal and identifying skills, knowledge and

resources needed to achieve that goal) or perhaps your organization's employee development plan? There were 55 responses.

The research indicates that 81.8% of those graduates who have acquired job-related knowledge or skills have done so using an individual or career development plan or an employee professional development program. See table 3.

Question 12 was also designed to answer sub-question 5. Question 12 asked: I have followed this plan (according to question 11) and it has been useful to me. 54 people answered this question.

The research indicates that 79.6% of graduates who have ever followed a development plan have done so consistently and it has been useful to them while 3.7% may not have followed the plan or the plan isn't useful and this question isn't applicable to 16.7% of the respondents.

Question 13 was designed to answer sub-question 5. Question 13 asked: Having achieved certain goals I believe I have made significant difference in my workplace and in my society as a whole. There were 54 responses from table 3.

The research indicates that more than 95% of the respondents believe they have made significant differences at their workplace and the society as a whole. This question is both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative aspect has been illustrated above. The qualitative aspect involves the fact that different people have different ways of viewing success at the workplace and very few people can accept that they have not made significant differences in their work if they actually haven't. Consequently the results of this question are based on beliefs, feelings or perceptions of competence.

Question 14 was designed to answer sub-question 5. Question 14 asked: Employers rate me as competent and treat me as such. This question looks at how employees view their competence as compared to how they believe their employers view their competence. There were 55 responses.

The research indicates that about 87% of respondents' employers rate them as competent and treat them as such. This question is both qualitative and quantitative. Quantitatively, competence can be measured during evaluations or performance

appraisals and qualitatively, treating an employee as competent or valuable can be observed in profit sharing, recognition, awards/rewards, promotions, recommendations, more benefits/development and bonuses. Additionally, people have their different opinions about what they view as treating them as valuable or competent. For instance an employee who sees promotion as a way of treating him as valuable will not feel that he is treated as such if he is only recognized or recommended. This may be the reason for those who answered Neutral or this people may not be sure of how their employers rate them.

Question 15 was not designed to answer any specific sub-question. Question 15 asked: If you answered neutral, no, disagree or n/a to any of questions 10-14, how many jobs have you changed in the last 5-10 years. There were 19 responses to this question. See table 4. The research indicates that 19 people out of 78 possible responses have either not applied planning in achieving a job-related knowledge/skill or believe they have applied it and it wasn't profitable to them or believe/are uncertain they have made no significant difference at their workplace.

The results from question 10 (under sub-question 5) demonstrates that 64 people out of 78 possible responses believe they have acquired job-related knowledge and skills. Because the researchers could not verify the exact number of respondents who have not taken the IDP/CDP class or training out of the 64 responses and still believe they have acquired job-related knowledge and skills, question 11 was designed to confirm this.

The results from question 11 illustrates that out of the 55 possible responses, 45 people have acquired job-related knowledge and skills using a plan. Even though the number of people who agreed that they have acquired job-related knowledge and skill in question 10 (64 people) does not equal the number of people who responded to question 11 (55 people), 81.8% of the responses to question 11 have actually used a plan to achieve their goals. See table 3.

The results from question 12 shows that though 2 people have followed a plan, it was not perceived as profitable to them but majority of the respondents which was 43 people out of 54 responses, who have

followed development plans to achieve their goals, perceive the plans as being profitable to them.

The results from question 13 tells us that 52 people perceive themselves as significant in the workplace and the society as a whole out of 54 respondents while 2 people are neutral. In comparison to question 12 where 43 people agree that a plan has been profitable to them and 11 people either disagree or checked not applicable, the analysis shows that 9 other people (added to 43 to make 52 in question 13) who have either checked N/A or disagree to question 12, also believe they have been significant at the work. These people believe that a plan is not necessary to achieve goals that make them significant in their workplaces.

The results from question 14 shows that 48 out of 55 respondents believe their employers rate and treat them as competent while 7 people feel neutral about how they are rated. These numbers are less than the numbers in question 13. In question 13, 52 people feel they are competent while 2 people feel neutral and in question 14, 48 people feel they are treated as competent while 7 people feel neutral. This means that more employees feel significant by self-rating than by ratings from employers. See table 3.

To answer sub-question 5, the results to the questions 10,11,12,13 and 14 draws a conclusion that 82.1% of 78 respondents have acquired job-related knowledge and skills, 81.8% of 55 respondents have utilized a development plan in acquiring job-related knowledge and skills, 79.6% of 54 respondents agree that the plan was profitable to them, 96.3% of 54 respondents perceive themselves as significant in the workplace and 87.3% of 55 respondents perceive themselves as rated and treated as competent by their employers. Additionally, since 81.8% have utilized a development plan and 79.6% agree that the plan is profitable, that means that only about 2.2% feel otherwise. Even though 96.3% perceive themselves as significant, which is more than the number that have used and agree that the plan is profitable respectively, majority of the people who see themselves as competent and are rated as such by employers can only come from those who have used a plan and believe it is profitable. Generally most

graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria who participated in IDP/CDP programs have acquired more job-related knowledge and skills using a plan and they perceive this plan as profitable to them. Also most employed graduates perceive themselves as significant and believe their employers rate them as competent. See table 3.

Questions 9 and 15 were not designed to answer any specific sub-question. Table 4 outlines questions 9 and 15.

Results from question 9 show that 75.3% of 77 respondents have spent a maximum of less than 5 years in a job which means that most graduates do not spent a long time on one job. Results from question 15 show that 19 people have either not had a job-related knowledge/skill or have never utilized a plan in acquiring a job-related knowledge/skill or do not perceive themselves as competent or treated as such. Anyone in this category is either not experienced, or not an expert or not resourceful at work or has not invested in planning for his/her future. 16 out of the 19 respondents have made less than 3 job changes in 5 to 10 years. This may either mean that these people have just entered the labor force or are less resourceful at work or have invested less in planning their future and so have no option but to stick to one job for a period of time. This can also mean that even though people have spent less than 5 years in a job which means they move from job to job, they have acquired expertise and skills and they feel competent at work. See table 4.

Result of the major research question

Do graduates of Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria think that Individual/Career Development Planning Program is relevant to the development of their professional careers?

The answer to this question is yes. Table 1 show that 91.9% of respondents who did not take any class or training in IDP/CDP programs will do so if given an opportunity. Table 2 shows that 97.78% of those who engaged in development programs see them as relevant to their career advancement. Table 3 shows that 79.6% believe that using a plan to achieve career goals was profitable to them and 96.3% perceive themselves as competent having achieved certain goals in their professional lives. Despite the fact that these

graduates spend few numbers of years in a particular job and the belief that they are competent/experts at their works which is qualitative, on an average, more than 90% of them perceive Individual and Career Development Planning programs are relevant to the development of the professional careers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

All conclusions are based upon responses in the study. The study provided an answer to the primary research question and sub-questions.

- Though students were intimated on Individual and Career Development Planning in a Human Resource Management class in the School of Management Technology, the Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria did not offer any full class on Individual or Career Development/Planning.
- More graduates received training in IDP/CDP as employees than as students and so became aware of how to plan their careers as well as develop themselves and their careers only after they had started a career.
- Employers are more interested in developing/shaping the future of their employees than academic institutions.
- FUTO graduates who have not been employed may not have this opportunity.
- If given the opportunity, graduates of FUTO would participate in development planning classes/trainings.
- Almost all respondents who participated in IDP/CDP course or training generally believe it was relevant to them in one aspect of their career or the other.
- Technically, all participants who did not participate in an IDP/CDP program because they did not have an opportunity agreed that they would have participated if given an opportunity because it would be relevant in the advancement of their careers
- Generally most graduates of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria who participated in IDP/CDP programs have acquired more job-related knowledge and skills using a plan and they perceive this plan as profitable to them. Also most employed graduates perceive themselves as significant at their workplaces and believe their employers rate them as competent.
- Most graduates do not spend a long time on one job.
- It is assumed that most graduates who have never used a plan in achieving a career goal or see it as non-profitable or do not rate themselves as competent, have either just entered the labor force or are less resourceful at work or have invested less in planning their future and so have no option but to stick to one job for a period of time.
- Even though some graduates have spent less than 5 years in one job which means they move from job to job, they have acquired expertise and skills and they feel competent at work.

Recommendations

- This study recommends that HRD professionals who specialize in Career Development should place emphasis on the how much new employees know about their career, how well they fit into their jobs and how far they are willing and able to take their careers to become experts as well as competent as work.
- HRD professionals that lecture in colleges and universities that do not teach IDP/CDP classes should seek integration of career and development planning classes to enable graduates have a strong career foundation and focus.
- All educational institutions including Art and Technical Institutes should provide knowledge as well as awareness on how to implement or where to channel such knowledge, that is, guide graduates into the future appropriately. Other sources of knowledge are optional. For instance, it is

up to employers to decide if they should develop the skills and careers of employees and it's up to employees to develop themselves if they choose to. Usually, people get a degree to have a career or a field of specialization/expertise in future. Since research proves that planning programs are necessary for a right path to development, it is important the universities establish such courses as mandatory being one, if not the only place where teaching must be implemented.

- Future researchers could consider examining the actual impact of IDP/CDP on career success and accomplishment. Other researchers could use this information to supplement a secondary research study or to guide the protocol design for a more in-depth approach to this same format.
- This study should be retried with a larger sample of survey respondents. The next researcher can extend the sample size to include students from universities all over Nigeria or in other developing countries and if necessary students from developed countries.

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