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## **THE IMPORTANCE OF INTRA-ORGANISATIONAL RELOCATION IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The changes occurring in organisations make them more likely to engage in various shifts of their resources to operate effectively. One of these shifts is intra-organisational relocation. Its aim is to change the position and/or activities performed in the work situation in the organisation. The development of workers in the relocation process involves not only acquiring new knowledge and skills, but also improving their existing competences. Relocation can be a way of staff retention. The aim of the article is to present the importance of the essence of intra-organisational relocation in the process of employee development. To achieve this objective, empirical research was conducted by means of CAWI online survey on a sample of 158 Polish workers. The results indicate that intra-organisational relocation plays an important role in the professional development of the employee; however, it is not dependent on characteristics such as gender and seniority.

**Key Words:** intra-organisational relocation, professional development of employee

### **INTRODUCTION**

Changes in an organisation mean that more and more often that organisation has to shift its resources in a variety of ways to operate effectively. These transfers include not only material or financial resources, but focus primarily on human resources. Shifts in the context of human resources in organisations are held usually during the intra-organisational relocation. The main purpose of this is to change workplace and/or the activities performed in a work situation. It is now recognised as one of the best practices in the process of employee development and is an important component of the economic market (Gianella, 2014, p. 1265). In addition, relocation may be the answer to a growing need for flexible workers in the organisation.

Employee development in the relocation process applies not only to acquiring new knowledge and skills, but it can above all mean improving existing skills. It also involves a change in the competence of employees and is a way to achieve staff retention. It can also be one of the elements of talent management.

Taking into account the above considerations, the purpose of the article is to present the essence of intra-organisational relocation in the process of employee development. To achieve the objective of this study, research was conducted by means of CAWI online survey on a sample of 158 Polish workers.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN THE ORGANISATION**

Interest in employees, especially in the context of their development, is now considered one of the key issues of human resource management. Modern treatment of workers as a resource and capital or strategic factors gives them a whole new value in the context of the management of organisation (Armstrong, 2002, p. 19). The identification of development of human resources as a component of the intangible assets of the organisation and a source of competitiveness is the basis of the distinguishing features of human resources management in the context of a specific approach to the HR function; this causes the development of human resources to be

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treated as an integral part of the development of an organisation, and is part of the human resources management strategy (Pocztowski, 2008, p. 272). One of its elements is to determine which employees will be needed by the organisation in the future, and on this basis the organisation plans its course of action. We can also talk about specific feedback on the line worker–organisation, because through learning processes in the organisation, employees transfer their acquired knowledge into the organisation, which in turn has a chance to take advantage of their unique competence. Inclusion of human resources development in organisation strategies can be regarded as a positive effect both on the organisation and on individuals. In addition to satisfying future staffing needs, this means, among other things, an increase in work efficiency, motivation and commitment, the appreciation of employees and the better use of their inherent potential, and an increase in their loyalty to the organisation. Employees can also focus on their actions and concretise their goals, aspirations and ambitions (Armstrong, 2002, p. 23).

Employee development therefore means “efforts to prepare them – in the period of employment in the organisation – to do the job and occupy positions of greater responsibility” (Listwan, 1995, p. 73). These are also actions aimed at “enrichment of knowledge, development of skills and abilities, building up motivation and physical and mental condition of employees, which should lead to an increase in their individual human capital and human capital in the organization” (Król, 2006, p. 436). From the point of view of an employee, the process of organisational formation and improvement is a series of planned, systematic measures aimed at developing specific elements of work potential and increasing the ability of workers to cope with the changes that are taking place, with constantly growing internal and external requirements (Rybak, p. 251). Employee development usually takes place in organisations through their participation in various forms of training and professional development. It can also be implemented by using four specific strategic approaches to human resources development (Pocztowski, 2008, p. 275-276, as cited in Taylor, 1983):

1. The organisation’s undertaking of specific activities only at times of problematic situations; these actions are random, taken *ad hoc* to solve the problem, which is a barrier to the functioning of the company;
2. Conducting a deliberate policy, aimed at creating relevant reserves of knowledge and skills in the organisation, assuming that it is an important strategic factor of the entire organisation, thus associated with employment of high-potential young employees, and then running by the organisation’s deliberate policy to develop this potential;
3. Employing prepared employees with some professional experience, whose suitability for various workplaces is then verified by the organisation which directs selected activities at the development of certain elements of the employees’ potential; and
4. The last approach does not expect the activity of the organisation in the field of human resources management, but it assumes buying potential by acquiring employees from the outside. In case of their failure to meet expectations, further cooperation with them is terminated.

Since the development of employees is also a “process of replenishing by workers the knowledge necessary for the proper performance of the activities for the current workplace and creating opportunities for additional development of knowledge, skills and competencies for promotion, relocation or organizational change” (Kostera, 2000, p. 109), it can be realised by making intra-organisational relocation.

### **INTRA-ORGANISATIONAL RELOCATION: BASIC ASSUMPTIONS**

Relocation is most often analysed in the literature in terms of the relocation of the labour market (Nenov, 2015; Starr-McCluer, 1993). Martin (1999) defines job relocation as “the process of a

simultaneous job and geographical move” (p. 231). It is also seen in the context of the movement of employees between organisations (Nan, 2015).

Relocations inside the organisation are, however, significant, as this flexibility in the workplace is necessary and particularly desirable (Halpern, 2004). These movements are characterised by “relatively high controllability by relevant actors of human resources management and they include changes in jobs by individual employees or certain groups of them within their specific organizational units and between them” (Pocztowski, 2008, p. 278). Relocations are therefore an important element of personnel policy in the organisation. They are also one of the rationalisation measures taken as an alternative or complementary approach to optimisation of employment. They can be also called a “system of horizontal mobility of employees” (Marciniak, 2009, p. 94). It seems, therefore, that the internal relocations can be identified with internal mobility, which means “all movement opportunities within an organization, including promotions, lateral transfers, and downward movement” (Noe, Steffy and Barber, 1988, p. 560). Relocation, like internal mobility, will therefore apply to every shift of every worker in the organisation. Thus, it appears that upward relocation is related to the promotion of the worker, downward relocation with their demotion, and sideward relocation with the use of their potential in another equivalent position.

These types of relocation in the development of the employee may, however, be determined by such characteristics as gender, age or able-bodiedness. As shown by numerous studies, gender, age, physical attractiveness or able-bodiedness primarily determine the promotion and decisions taken regarding the employee (Cabrera, Sauer and Thomas-Hunt, 2009; Dion, Berscheid and Walster, 1972; Van Selm and Van der Heijden, 2013; Watermeyer, 2014).

Relocation can occur at the initiative of an employee or of the organisation. While from the perspective of an employee it is, for example, voluntary participation in internal recruitment and reporting to the management, from the perspective of the organisation, relocation of the worker aims at a gradual process of the worker’s relocation, determined in terms of time and direction (Gianella, 2014, p. 1265). Its implementation means above all the use of existing professional potential, various orientations of the professional interests of employees, flexibility and complementarity of workers in teamwork, an increase in the exchange of professional experiences within the organisation, and a gradual shift towards new, more attractive professions in the internal labour market (Marciniak, 2009, p. 95). Therefore, the organisation should attach great importance to activities related to the relocation. In this situation, there should be so-called staff development programs in the organisation, including programs associated with internal shifts of employees. They contribute mainly to conducting optimal rationalisation activities in the sphere of employment and may increase the level of workers’ loyalty to the organisation (Curry, McCarragher, and Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THE SCOPE OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

Taking into account the above considerations, surveys were undertaken on the role of intra-organisational relocation in the professional development of employees. The study was conducted in June 2016 using a CAWI survey, circulated via the Internet. The research tool was an authorial questionnaire. The study used purposeful sampling. The survey was sent to 554 people working professionally in Poland, and 158 questionnaires were received back. The interviewees were composed of 109 women (69%) and 49 men (31%). Of the respondents, 81% occupied non-manager positions, while 19% occupied a managerial position. Participants in the study were primarily employees with a seniority ranging from 1 to 5 years (58.9%). Almost every fifth person had been employed for less than a year (18.9%). Approximately 10% were people with a seniority from 5 to 10 years. The least groups were people with a seniority

from 10 to 15 years (7%) and those characterised by over 20 years of work experience (4.4%). When completing the survey, respondents could choose more than one answer.

The aim of the study was to answer the question of how and to what extent intra-organisational relocation impacts on the professional development of the employee. The following hypothesis was formulated:

*H: It can be assumed that intra-organisational relocation plays an important role in the professional development of the employee and is dependent on gender and seniority.*

In designing the study, it was assumed that the independent variables, which have adopted the status of explanatory variables, are gender and seniority, and the dependent variable is intra-organisational relocation. When determining the dependencies and checking the hypothesis, the chi-square test was used at the intended level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## FINDINGS

When analysing the findings concerning intra-organisational relocation in the professional development of employees, it should be noted that, for the issue in question, the respondents strongly affirm that any shift of the worker (up, down, sideways) within the organisation affects their professional development. Replies represent over two thirds of indications (79.1%). Nevertheless, the negative responses constituted 19%. The rest of the respondents did not have an opinion on this subject.

When analysing the results of studies related to the intra-organisational relocation in the context of the characteristics of employees (the gender of the subjects), it is noted that there is no relationship between this variable and the shift of the employee in the organisational structure and its influence on professional development ( $p = 0.848$  \*). The results show that, in the respondents' opinion, intra-organisational relocation influences the professional development of the employees regardless of their gender. This is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: The impact of employee relocation in the organisational structure on professional development, depending on gender**

Employee relocation (up, down, sideways) in the structure of the organisation, and its impact on professional development	Gender $p=0.848$		Total
	woman	man	
no	22	8	30
have no opinion	2	1	3
yes	85	40	125
Total	109	49	158

$p = 0.848$ , where  $p$  is the probability in the chi-squared test of independence. Dependence statistically significant ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

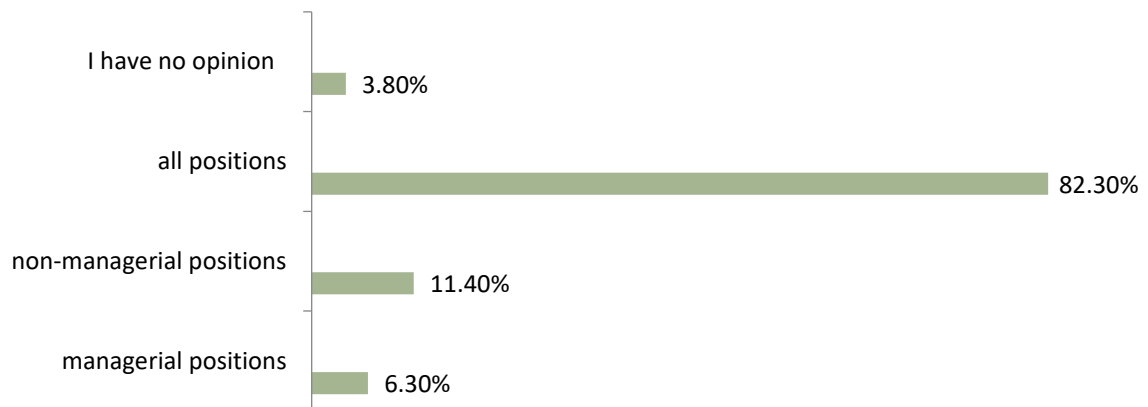
**Source: own calculations based on data from studies of workers [N = 158].**

With regard to the effects of the employee relocation (regardless of its nature), respondents most frequently pointed to the expansion of current knowledge and/or skills and the acquisition of new knowledge and/or skills (72.8%). Of the respondents, 19% said that the effect of the relocation was the acquisition of new knowledge and/or skills, and 6.3% believed that the shifts are associated only with the expansion of current knowledge and/or skills.

When it comes to staff positions in the organisation, which should be subject to intra-organisational relocation, more than three quarters of respondents believe that all positions in

the organisation should be included in the action. The chart below shows the data which allows for assessing which positions in the organisation should be subject to relocation.

**Figure 1: Positions including intra-organisational relocations, as seen by respondents**

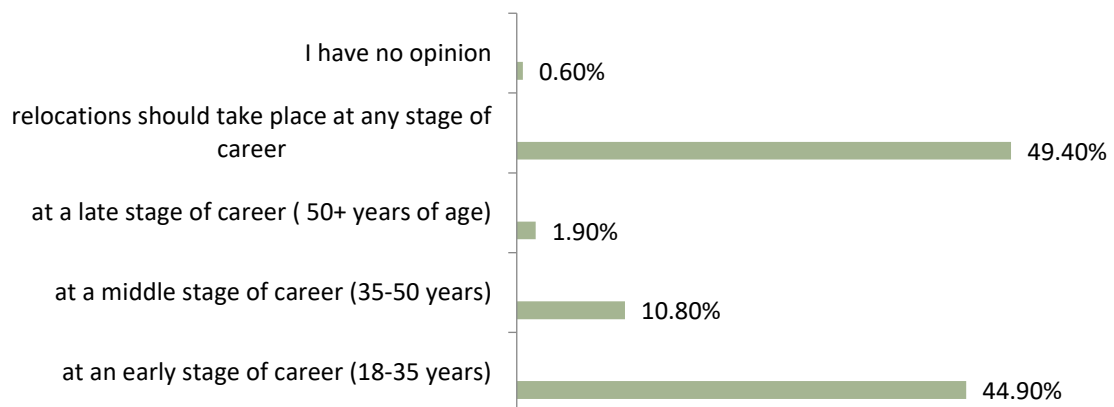


**Source: own calculations based on data from studies of workers [N = 158].**

As is shown by the data regarding the posts that should be subject to intra-organisational relocation, the surveyed indicated all positions, both managerial and non-managerial, at 82.3%. It should be noted that differences in the incidence of other responses are significant. The respondents relatively rarely (about 11%) indicated only the non-managerial positions. The smallest percentage (6.3%) concerns the replies of the respondents indicating only managerial positions.

The next chart summarises the data for the implementation of intra-organisational relocation depending on the career stage of the employee.

**Figure 2: Intra-organisational relocation and the stage of the employee's career, as seen by respondents**



**Source: own calculations based on data from studies of workers [N = 158].**

Almost half the respondents indicated that the intra-organisational relocation should take place at every stage of the employee's professional career (49.9%). However, when analysing other responses, it should be noted that 44.9% respondents also believed that the intra-organisational relocation should dominate mainly in the early stage (18–35 years) of a professional career. Slightly fewer respondents (10.8%) indicated the middle stage of career

(35–50 years). On the other hand, only 1.9% of respondents believed that intra-organisational relocation should include persons at a late stage of their career (50+ years old).

When analysing the results of studies relating to the existence of employee turnover/relocation programs in the organisations in which the subjects are employed, it is noted that they exist in organisations of more than half of the respondents (54.4%). However, a third of respondents (34.8%) believe that such programs do not exist in their organisations, and 10.8% of respondents did not know whether they operate at all.

With regard to the actual intra-organisational relocation, more than half of the respondents (51.6%) were not subject to such actions in the organisation. In contrast, almost half (47.1%) of the respondents admitted having experienced such a relocation. Only 1.3% of the respondents did not know whether such activities occur in the organisation where they are employed.

Taking into account the correlation between the gender of the respondents and their subjection to the intra-organisational relocation, it should be noted that it is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that the gender does not affect the operations of both the individuals and the organisation in terms of decisions about the intra-organisational relocation ( $p: 0.078$  level).

Those who have experienced intra-organisational relocation (76 persons) were also asked to determine the extent to which they were affected by such relocation (they could choose more than one answer). In 65.9%, it was associated with the promotion of the employee; 2.4% related it to a demotion; 41.2% to horizontal relocation, or an equivalent position; and only 8.2% indicated other shifts. This means that these subjects experienced different kinds of relocation in the organisation in which they are employed.

The type of shift is not affected by sex ( $p = 0.58$ ). It is not statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Nevertheless, one can point to some differences regarding the type of shift and gender of the respondents. More women than men are promoted and experience the intra-organisational relocation.

Nor does seniority not affect the type of intra-organisational relocation ( $p = 0.96$ ); it is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, it may be indicated, as in the case of a variable (sex), that certain differences occur within the sample. Most often shifts (upwards and sideways) happen to employees who have worked in the organisation for 1 to 5 years (29.7%). Slightly less frequently subjected to relocations were the workers with a seniority of 5 to 10 years, up to 1 year and from 10 to 15 years respectively. The workers least frequently subjected to intra-organisational relocation were workers characterised by more than 20 years of work experience.

## **DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY**

The data obtained paints an interesting picture of intra-organisational relocation. Most of the respondents believe that it affects the employee's development, considering it as a positive development. This means that they do not identify the development only with participation in various forms of professional training, but they also include relocation in this element, which contributes to the growth of the employee's potential. Most of the employees are also aware that one can acquire new knowledge and skills in the workplace through a form of intra-organisational relocation, or that one can simply expand existing competences.

According to the majority of respondents, such actions should include all positions in the organisation, regardless of their location in the organisational structure. The surveyed employees are therefore aware that, in the context of ongoing changes in the environment of the organisation and its functioning, in precarious conditions there is a need to use various forms of professional training among all employees, including relocation, especially if such actions are initiated by the organisation.

However, it is interesting that there were also responses indicating the exclusive presence of intra-organisational relocation only in managerial positions or non-managerial positions. Perhaps this is due to the belief of respondents that managers should not be subject to relocation, since they have already reached a certain status, and because of this should be overlooked in this type of activity, as opposed to those holding non-managerial positions. On the other hand, even when occupying certain managerial positions, one can surely be moved to an equivalent position, or even demoted.

Programs for the relocation of employees in the organisation occur only in a little over half of the organisations studied. This result is not optimistic, because organisations that want to take care of the development of their employees should include such programs in their operation strategy. The use by the organisation of the so-called internal labour market, and promoting the best employees through internal relocations, is conducive to their greater involvement and productivity in the workplace. Also, these employees are less likely to leave the organisation (Webster, 2013). Accordingly, it appears that organisations which use relocation programs operate in a deliberate way, and their behaviour in this regard means ordered action in accordance with the determined policy of human resources management.

The respondents' opinions on the relation between the intra-organisational relocation and the stage of career can be considered optimistic, because it is connected with professional development. Nearly half of the respondents believe that relocation should take place at any stage of their career. It is therefore consistent with the idea of learning throughout life. However, a lot of responses restricted relocation exclusively to the early stage of a career. Omitting the relocation of older workers with high seniority is in line with the claim that they are inflexible, difficult to train and too expensive to invest in developing their potential by the organisation (Wrenn and Maurer, 2004).

Those respondents who experienced relocation in the organisation were characterised by a seniority of from 1 to 5 years. Probably this is because the organisations believe that young workers learn faster, and are more willing to change and be more flexible. On the other hand, as indicated by the results of research conducted by K. Mignonac among 584 managers in France, older workers can be more flexible and have a creative approach to their own career management (Mignonac, 2008).

Strikingly, only half the respondents experienced intra-organisational relocation. It seems that organisations do not attach too much importance to this form of employee development, a fact confirmed by previous research results on the incidence of relocation programs in the organisation. It can be regarded as positive that the intra-organisational relocation in the case of most of the respondents firstly concerned a vertical shift and was thus connected with the idea of promotion, followed in frequency by the horizontal shift.

When interpreting the data related to variables like sex, it should be noted that the data obtained is surprising: the results show that women are more likely than men to be promoted, but the literature review points to something quite different – men are paid higher salaries and more promoted than women (Cabrera, Sauer and Thomas-Hunt, 2009; Warzecha, 2014). Probably this discrepancy is due to the small study sample and the study's lack of representativeness. On the other hand, it may also indicate a gradual change of perception in the role of women, their qualifications and competences by today's organisations.

To conclude, the hypothesis has been partially confirmed. Intra-organisational relocation affects the development of the employee, but no correlation between relocation and gender has been ascertained. Gender does not determine the type of relocation. Seniority also does not differentiate between employees in terms of decisions made by the organisation regarding their relocation. This is very surprising, because it would seem that the length of employment in the organisation can have influence on the decisions about relocation. The respondents, however, regardless of seniority, were usually subject to shifts upwards. Perhaps

this is due to the overall strategy of the organisation, which will have a specific promotion policy (the so-called career path).

On the basis the above considerations, intra-organisational relocation is important in the development of an employee and in shaping his career. It should be noted, however, that the organisation which decides to create a program of relocation should first answer the following questions:

- What position or group of positions should be subject to relocation?
- How can the existing potential of human resources be used?
- What range of relocation may take place in the organisation?
- What key skills should be taken into account when deciding on the relocation?
- How should the information system associated with the intra-organisational relocation work?
- Should relocation be linked to the remuneration policy?
- Who and when should be subject to relocation? and
- Who decides about relocation within the organisation?

Answers to these questions can help create an appropriate system of intra-organisational relocation to use the potential of each individual employee in the organisation and form the optimal area of employment.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The conducted study is not without limitations. One limitation is that the data was analysed in a cross-section, rather than longitudinally. The choice of the sample and its non-representativeness may also be problematic. It would therefore be advisable to conduct in-depth studies characterised by representativeness and heterogeneity of the study population in terms of other features, e.g. age or industry. It is also important to use more sophisticated statistical techniques.

The conducted study also took into account only certain aspects of intra-organisational relocation. For example, the impact of employee commitment and efficiency in the workplace on relocation has not been examined. Also, the impact of different types of intra-organisational relocation on employee development has not been diagnosed.

It should also be noted that the data collected and the conclusions derived from Poland, and so need not be confirmed in other countries.

These restrictions, however, can be an incentive to undertake further work aiming for a better understanding of the essence of intra-organisational relocation and its impact, both on the employees in relation to their behaviour, and on the organisation in terms of its utilisation of existing intellectual potential.

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