

Career development – a ‘chaired’ responsibility.

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What are the main impacts of physical disability on an individual's career development?

ABSTRACT

Career development is a proactive and dynamic process aimed at meeting the needs of both the organisation and the individual. The limited literature suggests the relationship between career development and disability is complex. Individuals with a physical disability still face discrimination through stereotyping.

However, career development is not seen by individuals with a physical disability as wholly an organisational responsibility. Management needs to support career development opportunities by providing training that is structured towards future employment prospects. The ability to use a computer improves an individual's earning capability. This is an area that physically disabled individuals and organisations alike, should consider with regards to career development opportunities and programs.

Keywords: career development, disability, HRD, career management.

INTRODUCTION

What constitutes a 'career' has become a vexed issue and managing people in terms of career development has become increasingly complex. Conventional definitions of career such as that proposed by Klatt, Murdick & Schuster (1985), that 'a career is an upward advancement in an organisation or professional hierarchy' do not have the relevance in the new millennium. Australian research (Marchant, 1998), indicates that part-time and casual employment has increased is fast becoming the main work option. It is also Marchant's belief that careers will take on the

'boundaryless' career concept. According to Parker & Inkson (1999) career progress will occur out of inter-organisational self-development rather than intra-organisational hierarchical advancement which has been the norm. Labour market conditions, workforce flexibility, and restructuring will invariably impact on both the individual and organisational career development boundaries (Parker & Inkson, 1999).

What the impact is for individuals with a physical disability is not evident, however, this proposes a disparity between career ideology and career reality for an individual with a physical disability. From their perspective, career aspirations may be quite legitimate. However, employment barriers exist in the form of lower status, lower income jobs. In light of reported employment conditions within Australian workplaces, further impediments exist. The changing face of the employment landscape is affecting how Australians work and the presence of physical disability further influences career development goals.

Human resource literature (DeSimone, Werner & Harris 2002; Stone 2002) highlights some of the intricacies involved for management when devising career development programs within their organisations. Dealing with individuals who have a physical disability adds yet another dimension for managers who are concerned with this function.

This paper examines the impact of physical disability on an individual's career development by considering the question *what are the main impacts of physical disability on an individual's career development?*

Issues that deal with personality and behaviour are not considered in this research, although these types of issues have potential to impact on individuals and their decisions to be or not to be career minded.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before exploring the concept of career development, it is important to consider the meaning of 'career'. The first distinction is what is the difference between a career and a job. Marchant (1998) proposes that a job has no or little change or development and a career is an unfolding sequence of an individual's work experience over time, which involves continuous learning.

DeSimone et al (2002) also have a similar viewpoint and suggest that a career involves a sequence of related jobs. According to Marchant (1998), however, this sequence will not always occur with the same or similar organisations. Klatt et al (1985) also describes a career in terms of upward advancement. Therefore, a career could be defined as the ongoing pursuit of professional growth, in a related area of employment, that involves continuous learning and evolution.

Career development

Having established a working definition of career, it is now important to understand the paradigm in which a career can be developed. The traditional view of a career implies that upward movement will occur within the one organisation with management having a major input (Klatt et al, 1985). A more contemporary view, however, suggests that the individual should be taking responsibility for planning their career, which may involve vertical movement between organisations in order to achieve advancement (DeSimone et al, 2002; Marchant, 1998; Parker & Inkson, 1999). Therefore, there are two paths along which a career may unfold.

Other concepts that should be distinguished when exploring career development are career planning and career management. Career planning is something the individual can do by choosing the occupation, organisation, and route their career will follow (Klatt et al, 1985).

Nankervis, Compton & Baird (2002) suggests that it is useful for the individual to gain an understanding of the organisation's mission and strategic objectives in order to engage in meaningful

career planning. The organisation can provide career management by assisting the individual with information about the organisation, career opportunities, and giving feedback on performance (Nankervis et al, 2002). Career management is an integration process that involves the design and implementation of strategies aimed at satisfying organisation HR needs and individual career goals (Klatt et al, 1985).

Career development provides a framework for planning and shaping the progression of an individual in line with organisational needs and their own potential and preferences (Armstrong, 1991). It should be a program that features a proactive approach designed to meet the needs of both the organisation and the individual (Nankervis et al, 2002).

By incorporating the programs and activities undertaken by an individual it is then possible to empower them to achieve a personal career plan expanding their entire working career. Career development then, is an ongoing process whereby the individual progresses through a series of stages that combine a unique set of issues and tasks (DeSimone et al, 2002).

Highlighting the complexity involved with career development was National research released in 1999 by DBM Australia. Their findings revealed that 80% of HR professionals believed the responsibility for learning and development rests with the individual. However, 44% reported that their employees rejected the idea that it was their responsibility to maintain and develop their skills and competencies to achieve goals set by the organisation (HR Focus, 2000).

Hansen (1996) regards staff as the last remaining competitive edge possessed by an organisation. Understanding this equips the organisation with the foresight to keep pace with staff development needs. The organisation can also provide the support needed for the individual to reach their personal goals (Hansen, 1996). Poor alignment of individual and organisational goals, values and competencies is costly, and often leads to diminishing motivation, commitment and performance and an increase in staff turnover (HR Focus, 2000). Managers play an important role in career development, as they

have knowledge regarding an individual's ability and limitations and can provide relevant information about career paths and opportunity within the organisation. (DeSimone et al, 2002).

Physical disability

There have traditionally been two approaches to defining physical disability. Firstly, the health approach which targets conditions or limitations that impair normal functioning, and secondly, the work disability approach which examines conditions that limit or prevent an individual from working (Davies & Dipner, 1992).

In accordance with the health approach, Stone & Collea (1996) define disability as a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)*, defines disability, in relation to a person, as *the total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions*. For the purpose of this study, physical disability is examined with regards to the loss of an individual's bodily function impacting on career development.

The Act serves to define disability in terms of the employment contract, in effect addressing the work disability approach. Discriminatory practices, both direct and indirect and which are in essence unlawful, are identified by the Act. The intention of the Act is to provide an equal employment workplace, whereby, all things being equal, opportunity for employment, training, promotion, etc is provided on the basis of 'merit'. In HR terms this equates to the right person for the right job at the right time.

Reported impacts of physical disability on career development

The relationship between career development and physical disability will vary between individual and disability, within different labour markets, and the individual's stage of life (Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996). Career development is a lifelong developmental process that is influenced by an

individual's learning experiences and characteristics of different environments. Factors such as an individual's abilities, gender, education, interests, and culture may influence relationships and performance in a working environment. When these factors are applied to the career realm, the implication is one of a complex and dynamic relationship between disability and career development (Szymanski, Hershenson, Enright & Ettinger, 1996). How a physical disability influences an individual's career development is dependent on the interplay and magnitude of influences such as lack of confidence, few role models, and limited occupational selections (Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996).

They note that having a disability may exert little influence on the career development and plans of some individuals, whereas others may find that the same disability affects their career aspirations, self-esteem, and life experiences in general. By their explanation, 'a disability, in and of itself, does not determine career development but is more accurately perceived as a risk factor potentially influencing career development' (Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996, p. 49).

To ensure maximum benefit is derived by both the physically disabled individual and the organisation, it is important to closely monitor career development. Anna Diamantopoulou, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission, reported that for those people with disability who do find employment, many have limited career paths and career options, largely due to their more limited access to education and training opportunities (Disability World, 2000). She recommends that the focus on education and training must shift to that which is structured, valid, and able to provide worthwhile employment opportunities.

Klatt et al (1985) point out that career management is related to all HRD functions that include training and development and promotion. This is an area where the organisation can assist with career development opportunities. Management do not have to take responsibility for career development, however, they can seek a joint venture between the organisation and the individual with a physical disability. The presence of a physical disability may impact on the dynamics of career development

and result in the need for a more proactive part by the organisation. It may be that keeping within a more traditional career context, where career development lies within the one organisation, is more practicable for an individual with a physical disability.

This may also prove beneficial to the organisation. Parker & Inkson (1999) assert that an increase in career mobility usually brings a cost to the organisation due to the loss of talent and labour turnover.

Therefore, they suggest that the organisation provide learning via non-traditional internal career moves as a way to offset the cost and encourage loyalty. Retain the best staff and provide continuous skill development, aimed at increased productivity, is another option suggested by Anderson (1999). These alternatives place the focus on equipping the individual and providing development opportunities. If mobility is not an option for some individuals with a physical disability, simply due to the nature of the injury, then encouraging career dependency may be advantageous to the organisation.

A challenge facing organisations is the integration of employees with a physical disability into the workforce in accordance with disability legislation. Legislation is aimed at ensuring facility/design to accommodate individuals with disabilities will improve and become the norm (Davies & Dipner, 1992). It can assist individuals with physical disability in obtaining jobs, but it does not necessarily mean this will lead on to a career.

The nature of the job elicits stereotypical images about the requirements of the job and the way in which it is performed. Physically disabled people are more likely to be stereotyped and therefore, the generating of a set of beliefs about them is more likely. For example, Odone (1998) reported that a survey conducted by the Leonard Cheshire Foundation in the UK showed one-third of the respondents thought that a person in a wheelchair was less intelligent than an able-bodied person. It was also revealed that one-half thought it would be virtually impossible for a disabled person to get any kind of job (Odone, 1998). This type of stereotypical thinking can result in physically disabled people not

being selected for a job, not being recommended for promotion, and not receiving rewards (Stone & Colella, 1996).

According to O'Brien & Howard (1998), having a physical disability is also a social condition where men face the stigma of being perceived as weak, passive, and dependent. Men are denied recognition as 'men'.

As perceived 'failed men' they occupy a position in the gender order similar to gay men, men of colour, and women. This results in prejudice and discrimination in the labour market, despite qualification. Given their lower status and power position, physically disabled men can not control how they are perceived by the able-bodied, again causing barriers in the labour market (O'Brien & Howard, 1998). Career development for people with disability may be affected by organisational belief systems and culture rather than the lack of opportunity or the ability to progress (Stone & Colella, 1996).

The development of high-technology solutions is an area where individuals with a physical disability have been able to work towards gaining their highest level of professional accomplishment (Davies & Dipner, 1992). For example, American research examining the effect on earnings for people suffering spinal cord injuries (Krueger & Kruse 1995), found that there is no apparent gap for those individuals employed in positions that required computer usage.

Working with computers improves employment outcomes because computer technology can negate the limitations of many disabilities and the lack of computer skills itself restricts work in a number of occupations. Although their research indicated that people who suffered a spinal cord injury generally experienced a steep decline in employment, hours worked and weekly earnings, it was not to the same extent of individuals not employed to use computers at work.

People with a disability have mainly been employed in part-time, low status jobs that offer little chance for advancement and their income level is as much as 35% below that of their non-disabled counterparts (Stone & Colella, 1996). Australian research (Marchant, 1998), indicates that part-time and casual employment has increased and temporary contract employment is fast becoming a work option. It is also Marchant's belief that careers will take on the 'boundaryless' career concept.

Labour market conditions, workforce flexibility, and restructuring will invariably impact on both the individual and organisational career development boundaries (Parker & Inkson, 1999). What the impact is for individuals with a physical disability is not evident, however, this does indeed pose some dissonance between career ideology and career reality for an individual with a physical disability. From their perspective career aspirations may be quite legitimate, however, employment barriers are existent in the form of low status, low income jobs. In light of reported employment conditions within Australian workplaces, further impediments exist. The changing face of the employment landscape is affecting how Australians work. The presence of physical disability further influences career development goals.

Issues for Consideration

To further explore the reported impacts on career development found within the literature, the following issues arose for consideration. Firstly, are people's perceptions of an individual influenced by the presence of a physical disability and does stereotyping occur within the workplace which can impact on career development, especially through equitable training and promotion opportunities. Secondly, will confidence and self-esteem issues associated with having a physical disability have any impact on career development. Thirdly, who is perceived to be responsible for career development, that is, the individual, the employer, or is it a joint partnership and does management support career development and does it apply equitably. Furthermore, what training and development has been provided as part of career development and has this had an impact on career development. Additionally, what is the individual's attitude towards career advancement and how do they see

opportunity arising, eg is there any and if so, will it be upward or horizontal. Also to be considered, is the question of whether or not the ability to use a computer reduces the gap between inability and independence, therefore reducing the impact of physical disability on career aspirations. Finally, have individual's earnings improved by using computers in the workplace.

From these issues a questionnaire was developed in order to gather information concerning the impacts associated with having a physical disability on career development.

METHODOLOGY

All respondents have a physical disability that involves a spinal cord injury. Participants were divided into two categories, those with an acquired physical disability (subsequently referred to as APD's) and those with a congenital physical disability (subsequently referred to as CPD's). This was done primarily to compare a female and a male with similar circumstances, that is, individuals who had to change their career focus due to a catastrophic event that resulted in their confinement to a wheelchair with paraplegia. Secondly, to compare these with another individual who is confined to a wheelchair through physical disability attributed to a spinal condition from birth.

Working with computers is reported to improve employment outcomes because computer technology can negate the limitations of a spinal cord injury (Davies & Dipner, 1992; Kruger & Kruse, 1995).

Therefore, the respondents were also chosen because they used a computer in their daily work activities.

Research procedures

Structured interviews were conducted with the three participants. Each interview consisted of three main sections - section one addressed perceptual bias, section two addressed partnership, and section three obtained information regarding computer skills.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The following data was collected from the questionnaire pertaining to the structured interviews. The study is based on the analysis of qualitative data that reflects the response to twelve propositions by the participants.

Have people's perceptions towards you changed, since you acquired disability? How?

All respondents answered yes to this question and believed that this was the reality for them. Their answers indicated that people were surprised that they could do as much as they could, that people were wary of their ability and that they must also have some form of intellectual disability. This supported findings by Odone (1998), that people perceive a person in a wheelchair as less intelligent than an able-bodied person and that there is a belief that it would be virtually impossible for a disabled person to get any kind of job.

Research has found that people with a physical disability are stereotyped as being less intelligent, gender neutral, unable to perform at the same level of people without disability.

Have you encountered this type of stereotyping within the workplace? Has this sort of stereotyping impacted on your career development?

Within the context of the workplace the APD respondents felt that stereotyping occurred to a small degree and only associated with initial contact. The CPD respondent believed that stereotyping wasn't really an issue but pointed out that intellectual disability was usually associated with the wheelchair. All respondents were of the opinion that for themselves, their career development was not impacted by stereotypical ideas because the limited occurrences were not from people with influence.

Although stereotypical thinking can result in physically disabled people not being selected for a job, not being recommended for promotion, and not receiving rewards (Stone & Colella, 1996), this research revealed that it seems to be dependent on the organisational power of the particular individual.

In what ways has your physical disability impacted on your self-esteem or confidence? How has this affected your individual career development aspirations?

There was a noticeable difference in the response to this question. The CPD respondent believed that they were of a less outgoing nature. The physical disability tended to impact on their personality, whereby they listened more than participating in conversation. They did feel, however, that over time and because of some training, there was improvement.

The APD respondents revealed that there have been times that they have doubted their ability within the workplace because of their physical disability. However, there was a difference as to why this doubt is perceived. The female attributed her doubt, as being due to the changes in her body and routine, which resulted in self-consciousness. The male, however, felt that he had to do things better in order to prove his ability. For example, if a mistake was made he believed that he was not justifying his position.

For all respondents the affect on career development aspirations differed. The CPD respondent thought there was no impact, they are just seen as a quiet personality type. The female APD respondent identified that there have been occasions where she has not sought higher duties or responsibility because she thought that she is not capable. The male APD respondent tends to operate in a state of paranoia, believing that he must perform constantly at one hundred percent in order to impress and be considered for future development.

Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell (1996) suggest that the relationship between career development and physical disability will vary between individual and disability, within different labour markets, and the

individual's stage of life. This was evident in this research. There was a variation in the impact of physical disability on self-esteem and confidence between the type of disability as well as the gender of the respondents.

Have you been given the opportunity for advancement through access to training and promotion opportunities? Explain.

All respondents felt that they are receiving the same opportunity as their colleagues for advancement. Currently all are in higher positions within their particular organisations than when they first started. It is in the training area where respondents believed they were not receiving enough opportunity. It was revealed, however, that this is not due to the disability but rather because management fail to see the importance of training on the whole and see this as an area to save on the organisational budget. This then raises questions about inherent organisational short comings. If, as Hansen (1996) suggests, staff are the last remaining competitive edge possessed by an organisation, it is important to have the foresight to keep pace with staff development needs.

Who do you feel is responsible for your career development, i.e. individual, employer, or a joint partnership? Why?

All respondents recognised the need for partnership between themselves and their employer concerning their career development. What was revealed is that the personal onus inhabits a different position for each of them.

One respondent stated that they were the one who ultimately had the power and control over the decisions to get to a certain place and find alternative career paths if need be. The employer certainly played a part to an extent, however, it was the individual's responsibility in collaboration with a sympathetic or cooperative employer.

Another believed that in the first instance they had to ensure that they got the training needed for development, but the employer must actually supply the training opportunities. They believed it was up to them, followed very closely by management.

The third respondent saw career development responsibility as a two-way street. However, they saw the initial responsibility lying with management then themselves. This was the CPD individual.

The traditional view on career development would place both the responsibility and the provision of a career path with the organisation rather than the individual (DeSimone et al, 2002). Authors such as Anderson (1999) believe that to nourish and retain staff a strong partnership between the individual and the organisation is vital. In this instance, the respondents support Anderson's opinion, as none of them see career development wholly as an organisational responsibility.

How does management support career development within your organisation? Has this applied equitably to you? How?

Respondents provided a similar answer to the first part of the question. There was a consensus that management supported career development and saw it as an essential part to all employees' growth within the workplace. There are clear guidelines, with regards to training, in all three organisations that highlight management support. If an employee identifies training or advancement courses that have a direct relevance to the position or career path an application to management is encouraged. One respondent, however, highlighted the fact that their position was unique and few opportunities existed outside the particular organisation. This was of concern to them because although they are receiving support and training it will not assist them to move into other areas of the organisation. There may currently be promotion opportunities, however, future progression will be limited.

All respondents believed that career development applied equitably to themselves as to all other employees. This was because their organisations had EEO policies in place. One respondent,

however, noted that on the whole real career opportunities for people with physical disability in their organisation were limited.

They described the employment of people with a physical disability as the 'give a cripple a job scheme' whereby someone with a physical disability was given a position made up of menial tasks or those other employees did not wish to do. This form of employment for people with a disability is highlighted by Stone & Colella (1996), who believe that they have mainly been employed in part-time, low status jobs that offer little chance for advancement. For the respondent, personally, their career was developing because the organisation invested time and money in a traineeship that provided the required industry skills that equipped them in a merit based environment. This supports Klatt et al's (1985) earlier writings that training and promotion are areas where management can assist with career development opportunities.

What training and development have you received as part of your career development?

How has this impacted on your career development?

All respondents have received some form of training as part of their ongoing career development. The level of training varied for each of them. Some respondents had received significant training at tertiary level, whereas others had been provided only with industry specific training opportunities. An APD respondent made the point that their career had developed despite not having been able to utilise a great deal of training in the past. In their current position, training opportunities have improved.

What was highlighted by the respondents was that all training and development added value to them in terms of their career development. This was a positive impact and all respondents believed it was the training opportunities that had led to their advancement in their respective organisations.

Diamantopoulou (Disability World, 2000), recommends for organisations that employ people with a physical disability the focus on training should be structured, valid, and able to provide worthwhile employment opportunities.

This is because, too often, people with a disability who do find employment have limited career paths and career options, largely due to their more limited access to education and training opportunities. The findings support her view and uphold the need for training and development as part of career development within the organisation.

What is your personal attitude towards your career advancement?

All respondents had made an upwards movement within their careers. There were some variances, however, in how they saw their respective futures. The female APD respondent had undertaken the option of mobility to obtain her current position and saw no reason not to make future moves if she deemed it necessary. According to Parker & Inkson (1999) changes to the employment environment may result in a shift in career progress. They suggest it will occur out of inter-organisational self-development rather than intra-organisational hierarchical advancement which was traditionally the norm.

Both the male APD and CPD respondents were not as confident to look outside their respective organisations although they believed that upward promotions were limited and horizontal moves within their organisations may be necessary. These respondents highlighted the fact that prior to joining their organisations they had undergone a significant period of unemployment and receipt of a Disability Allowance. This contributed to their cautiousness about venturing out in the future. Both of these respondents had also received their education and training with support from their organisation. This was different to the case of the female who put herself through university in order to follow a new career path after her accident.

How a physical disability influences an individual's career development is dependent on the interplay and magnitude of influences such as lack of confidence, fewer role models, and limited occupational selections (Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996).

They note that having a disability may exert little influence on the career development and plans of some individuals, whereas others may find that the same disability affects their career aspirations, self-esteem, and life experiences in general. By their explanation, 'a disability, in and of itself, does not determine career development but is more accurately perceived as a risk factor potentially influencing career development' (Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996, p. 49). This was shown in the findings.

Are you able to use a computer?

All respondents are able to use a computer. This was a requirement for participation in the research.

Have computer skills reduced the gap between inability and independence for you? How?

All respondents agreed that computer skills provided them with a 'level playing field' in terms of the workplace. The ability to use a computer meant that the wheelchair's impact was negated and it was their skill that was the issue.

Both the male APD and CPD respondents had developed quite advanced computer skills. They were at a point where their skills were being used for such things as training of colleagues and web site development within their organisations. The development of high-technology solutions is an area where individuals with a physical disability have been able to work towards gaining their highest level of professional accomplishment (Davies & Dipner, 1992). The respondents supported Davies & Dipner's (1992) line of thought.

Has using computers reduced the impact of physical disability on your career aspirations?

How?

All respondents answered yes to this question. They all identified that using a computer has done away with any barrier or impact associated with their physical disability and the fact that they are all confined to a wheelchair.

All respondents also identified that computer skills were inherent to the positions that they held and without such skills they would not be there. Subsequently they would not be experiencing career advancement opportunities. The ability to use a computer has provided a pathway and assisted each respondent to move into higher level positions as well as providing increased employment opportunities.

Again, this supports Davies & Dipner (1992) who espouse that technology allows for individuals with a physical disability to improve their accomplishments. It also supports Stone & Colella, (1996) who believe that technology may influence the degree a disabled individual is viewed as suitable for the work and that the concealability of a disability influences the level of reaction to it.

Have your earnings improved since using computers in the workplace? Why?

All respondents have had improved earnings since using computers.

The acquisition of computer skills has allowed them progress upwards or move into new and different areas which has led to their current positions within their organisations. All respondents now have well paid positions. The respondents believed that without computer skills they would not have had the opportunity to take up meaningful employment. Two-thirds of the respondents were in receipt of a Disability Allowance prior to employment in their current organisations. They indicated that this was a significantly lower income than that which they currently receive.

One APD respondent also made the point that within their organisation, the HR pay system remunerates according to the amount of higher duties. Their level of computing skill has led to them obtaining higher duties and therefore, increases in their salary. This supports the research conducted

by Krueger & Kruse (1995) who found that the earnings of individuals suffering spinal cord injuries were not affected if they were employed in positions that required computer usage.

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this research was to determine the main impacts of a physical disability on an individual's career development. In order to ascertain the results of the main research question, a structured interview process was conducted with people with a physical disability who are confined to a wheelchair. The reasoning behind applying a qualitative approach to the study was to gauge perceptions and compare these to current insights and research findings.

Traditionally careers have been viewed in terms of horizontal rather than vertical movement. The impact of physical disability on career development adds a complex dynamic. Traditional and contemporary thoughts on career development do not explore the impact of physical disability and therefore, do not provide a definitive answer. Individuals with a physical disability still face discrimination through stereotyping and this was supported in this research. If perceptions of the person do not match up to perceptions of the work and the requirements to carry it out, individuals with a physical disability risk being overlooked. A significant finding within this research, however, revealed that this only impacts on career development if the person with the perceptual bias holds a position of power within the organisation.

The problem facing individuals with a physical disability is that historically they have been under employed in low status jobs. An emerging trend towards part-time and casual employment within Australian organisations has been researched and may pose another potential barrier to career development opportunities. Findings highlighted the reluctance of respondents to move outside their current organisations. If employment trends and career opportunities move in the direction that Marchant suggests they may, this will stretch the comfort zone of individuals reluctant to take up career mobility.

An option for an individual with a physical disability is to develop a partnership with the organisation with regard to their career development aspirations. They can express their desired career goals and the organisation, through management, can provide information pertaining to opportunities. Findings in this research supported the view that career development is not wholly an organisational responsibility. It was also evident that management need to support career development opportunities for individuals with a physical disability and provide training that is structured towards future employment prospects.

To further improve career prospects, technology provides a means to negate the limitations created by the loss associated with a physical disability. This study supported existing research that explored the ability to use a computer and the reduced effect this had on individual's earnings. Exploring career options in areas that utilise computers may be useful for individuals as well as organisations.

What is evident from this research is the need for best practice HRM that incorporates EEO driven recruitment, training, and promotion. A meritorious system will ensure the person with the right knowledge, skill, and ability gets the job and the impact of physical disability will be diminished.

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