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**The Impact of Organisational
Career Management on
Productivity in North East England
MSMEs: The Perception of
Managers**

Boluwarin Kolawole

PhD

2022

**The Impact of Organisational
Career Management on
Productivity in North East England
MSMEs: The Perception of
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Boluwarin Mary Kolawole

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the University
of Northumbria at Newcastle for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Business and Law

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Abstract

This doctoral research investigates the impact of organisational career management on productivity in North East England MSMEs from the perception of both the organisation and managers. The study is underpinned by main theoretical constructs of Two-dimensional Model of Career Management Practices, Career Active System Triad Model and Three-dimensional Factor Structure of Organisational Career System. This research adopts an interpretivist approach using a qualitative research methodology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 line and senior managers in MSMEs of various industry sectors. An in-depth understanding of organisational career management across organisations in different MSMEs industries enriched the data. Rather than obtaining data from a single industry, this study provides a rich mixture of insights from MSMEs in different industries operating at varied organisational capacities. Data generated from the interview transcripts were subject to template analysis.

The key findings of the study are: a) organisational career management as an entity does not directly improve productivity; however, the dimensions of career development and career progression impacted productivity directly; and b) training and development were widely engaged across the MSMEs and they emerged among the primary drivers of productivity. Based on the research findings and empirics of the study; this research makes novel theoretical and practical contributions to literature by developing an advanced organisational career and development system which integrates vital HR functions and cuts across organisational boundaries in MSMEs. In addition, the study develops a productivity framework which captures major drivers of productivity in MSMEs. The managerial implications of the study findings are that MSMEs should invest more in learning, training and development activities and focus on creating a friendly and positive organisation culture. The study findings present current management practices existing in MSMEs, and with these findings MSMEs practioners can make informed decisions regarding creating policies favourable to MSMEs growth and productivity.

Key Words: *MSMEs, Human Resource, Organisational Career Management, Productivity*

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Acronyms

BAM- British Academy of Management

CAST- Career Active System Triad

CIPD- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

CPM- Career Planning and Management

EU- European Union

FAME- Financial Analysis Made Easy

FSB- Federation of Small Businesses

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

HOC- Higher Order Codes

HRD- Human Resource Development

HRM- Human Resource Management

ICM- Individual Career Management

IES- Institute for Employee Studies

IPA- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPPR- Institute for Public Policy Research

ISBE- Institute of Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship

KPI- Key Performance Indicators

LEP- Local Enterprise Partnership

NEEC- North East England Chamber of Commerce

OCD- Organisational Career Development

OCM- Organisational Career Management

OCS- Organisational Career System

OCTs- Organisational Career Theorists

PBCO- Protean and Boundaryless Career Orientations

PDP- Personal Development Plans

SHRM- Strategic Human Resource Management

SIC- UK Standard Industrial Classification Codes

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the School Ethics Committee on 3 May 2019.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 74, 326 words

Name: Boluwarin Kolawole

Signature:

Date: 23 December 2022

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces this doctoral study which investigates the presence of organisational career management (OCM) in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The study further seeks to explore the impact of organisational career management on productivity in MSMEs. The rationale of the study; research question, aim and objectives; methodological approach; potential contributions and structure of the thesis are outlined in subsequent sections of this chapter.

1.2 Background to the Study

MSMEs constitute a large share of the private sector in the United Kingdom (UK) economy (Merchant Savvy, 2021) and are uniquely categorized by their size and turnover (Carvalho et al., 2021). According to the UK government, MSMEs are enterprises with less than 250 employees and an annual turnover under €50 million (European Commission, 2021). With MSMEs accounting for over 99% of all businesses in the UK (Merchant Savvy, 2021), MSMEs have made substantial contributions in private sector employment, export promotion, gross domestic product (GDP), innovation and have been identified as a building block for economic growth and development (Gupta et al., 2013; McGovern et al., 2017; Umer, 2012). MSMEs cut across all sectors in the economy- service, manufacturing, health, education, construction, information, and communication, and many others.

Human resource (HR) or employees play a vital role in sustaining competitive advantage (Brand & Bax, 2003) and human resource management (HRM) is crucial for an organisation's competitive success (Harney & Nolan, 2014). Moreover, with strategic human resource management (SHRM), firms can achieve and sustain competitive advantage through the strategic and continuous development of employees (Crawshaw et al., 2017). However, in the past, the study of HRM focused mainly on large firms (Dundon & Wilkinson, 2009; Umer, 2012). This was because HRM functions in MSMEs were perceived to be inefficient due to their small size and large degree of informal practice (Dundon et al., 2001; Harney & Nolan, 2014). Since it has been established in theory and practice that MSMEs make substantial contributions to private sector employment and are building blocks for economic growth and development (Gupta et al., 2013; McGovern et al., 2017; Umer, 2012). HRM scholars have begun to realise that the efficient management of HR in MSMEs is vital for the ultimate economic growth of the economy. This has therefore led to the recent interest and increase of research exploring HRM in MSMEs (Dundon & Wilkinson, 2009; Maheshwari et al., 2020; Umer, 2012). Apart from sustaining a firm's competitive advantage, HRM is important in MSMEs because it is useful for the achievement of a firm's goals and objectives (Zimyo, 2021). Through the strategic management and development of people, employees are well-skilled and are able to achieve business objectives. Therefore, it is imperative to study HRM when considering improvement in productivity of an organisation. Thus, this research builds on existing studies which have explored HRM in MSMEs (Brand & Bax, 2003; Dundon & Wilkinson, 2009; Harney & Nolan, 2014; Maheshwari et al., 2020;

Umer, 2012) and seeks to explore how a specific HRM practice (organisational career management) can be used as a strategy to improve productivity in MSMEs

Organisational career management (OCM) is a function of HRM (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch & Budhwar 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003) which refers to set of policies, programmes or activities facilitated by an organisation aimed at the career development of its employees (Baruch & Budhwar 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Hernaus et al., 2019). OCM is a SHRM approach aimed at promoting employee engagement and commitment (Baruch & Budhwar 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Lazarova et al., 2012). Review of extant literature shows that OCM has been linked to improved motivation, employee retention, productivity, career satisfaction and increase in overall firm performance (Dehghani 2014; Moon & Choi, 2017; Salman & Khan, 2014; Wesarat et al., 2014). Creed and Hood (2009) asserted that engaging in OCM programmes gives room for employee development and this ensures that an organisation has sufficient numbers of highly skilled and motivated staff to meet its current and anticipated future needs. Thus, OCM is important in MSMEs because it can be used as a SHRM approach to develop employees which ultimately improves the productivity and competitiveness of a firm.

As MSMEs are the backbone of the UK economy (Prowle et al., 2017), productivity in MSMEs is important because it determines and measures the economic performance of the nation (Round et al., 2019). Productivity generally refers to “a ratio to measure how an organisation converts input

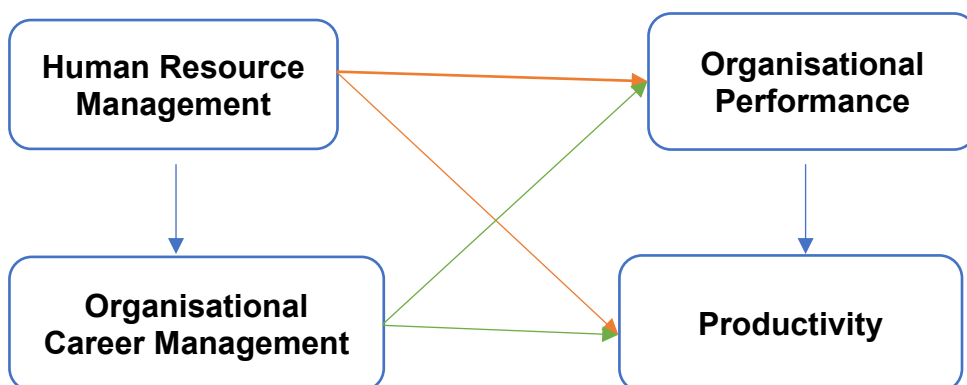
resources (labour, materials, machines, money) into goods and services” (Green, 2017, p. 340). It also refers to the combined productivities of labour force and fixed assets (plant, equipment and space) of an organisation (Prowle et al., 2017). As the principal focus of this research is on OCM which is a function of HRM, this doctoral study focuses on labour force (employee) productivity.

Productivity takes its root in the firm performance literature (Gerba & Viswanadham, 2016; Otley, 2002; Singh et al., 2016). Firm or organisational performance is defined as a set of financial and non-financial indicators capable of assessing the extent to which a firm’s goals and objectives have been achieved (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Singh et al., 2016). Financial indicators of firm performance include but are not limited to net profit, earnings per share, return on sales (ROS), return on assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE) (Carton, 2004; Darwish & Singh 2013; Kaplan & Norton 1992; Singh et al., 2016; Snell & Youndt 1995; Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986). While non-financial indicators of firm performance include but are not limited to customer measures (customer satisfaction), employee measures (job satisfaction, commitment and others) quality measures (service quality), organisational outcomes (productivity, employees’ turnover, delivery time, market share, sales volume, new product development and others), innovation and development of human capital measures (Gerba & Viswanadham, 2016; Otley, 2002; Singh et al., 2016; Verbeeten & Boons 2009). However, since a number of SMEs are always reluctant to reveal their actual financial status (objective measure) publicly, researchers saw the need to use subjective

measures (perceived perception of performance or non-financial indicators) to measure organisational performance (Zulkiffli & Perrra, 2011). Whether a researcher employs an objective, subjective or both methods of performance measurement depend on the researcher's choice (Singh et al., 2016). This study therefore adopts a subjective performance measure, using productivity as a measure of MSMEs firm performance.

This doctoral study takes its root in the HRM and organisational performance literatures and specifically explores how organisational career management (a function of HRM) impacts productivity (a measure of organisational performance) in MSMEs. Figure 1 shows how HRM links to OCM literature as it has been previously established that the SHRM of employees leads to increased employee productivity and overall organisational performance in the long run. The MSMEs, HRM, career and productivity streams of literature are further reviewed in Chapter 2.

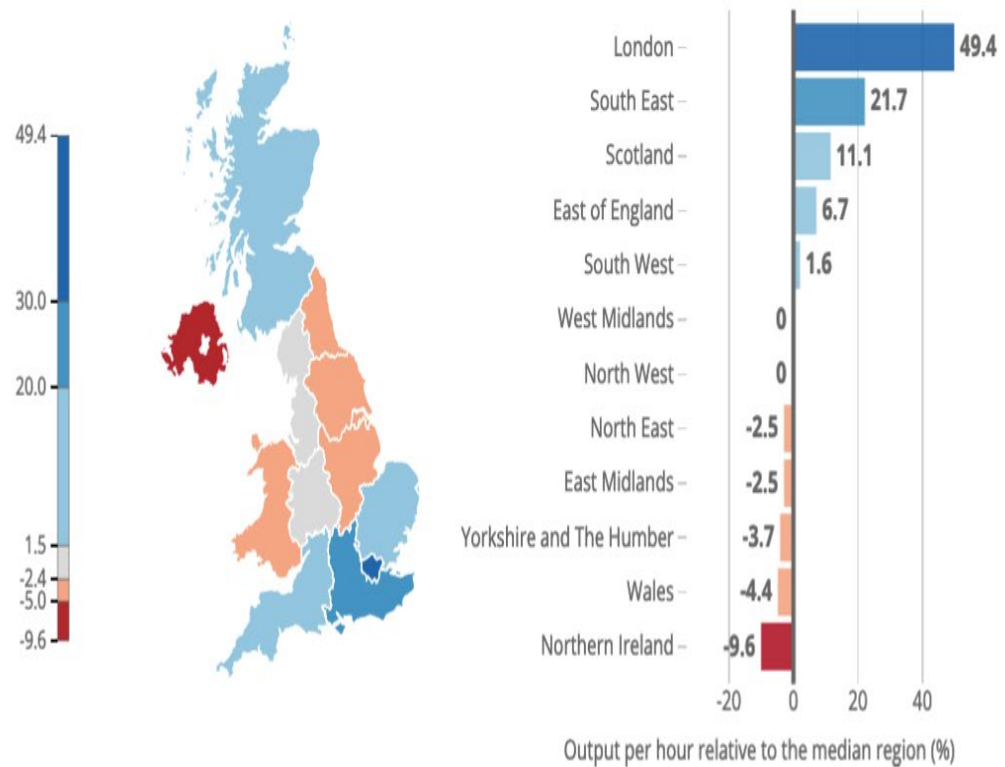
Figure 1: Linking HRM to Organisational Performance Literature



1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study

The UK is faced with a 'productivity problem' and productivity growth has stalled since the 2008 financial crisis (Round et al., 2019). Since the economic downturn in 2008, the North East England has suffered low productivity levels compared to other regions in the UK (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018). According to a recent report on UK SME data and statistics conducted by Merchant Savvy, the North East England had the third lowest average turnover per employee (£111, 902) compared to other regions in 2020 (Merchant Savvy, 2020). The North East also suffered a drop in the average turnover by business while London had the highest turnover by business standing at £1, 102, 958 (Merchant Savvy, 2020). Figure 2 shows UK regional productivity in terms of levels of labour output per hour. From the figure, London had the highest productivity of any region with about 49.4% higher than the median region (ONS, 2019). While the North East England productivity rate was 2.5% less than the median region. Therefore, the productivity gap in the North East England region is a challenge that requires to be addressed.

Figure 2: Labour Output per Hour Relative to Median Region in 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2019

Existing literature reveal that research has been conducted on productivity in UK SMEs (Maioli et al., 2020; Prowle et al., 2017) and productivity in North UK SMEs (Round et al., 2019), yet there are insufficient productivity studies focusing on the North East England region. With this gap in literature and North East England MSMEs struggling with productivity, there is therefore a call to investigate the productivity challenges faced by businesses in this region.

Organisational career management has been established as a core HRM function that helps to promote employee engagement, commitment and firm

productivity in the long run (Baruch & Budhwar 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Lazarova et al., 2012). However, majority of prominent career studies focus on large organisations (Baruch, 1996; Baruch 2004; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Hall, 1976) giving little or no attention to MSMEs. The reason for this neglect is because it is assumed that there are no formalised HRM policies and procedures in small organisations let alone organisational career management (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Hence, a gap in literature as there are insufficient studies addressing organisational career management in MSMEs. Due to this neglect, MSMEs are left to struggle with the challenges of handling organisational career management. Furthermore, MSMEs are faced with the challenge of low employee retention due to limited promotional opportunities and flat organisational structure (Baruch, 1997). To this end, there is a cogent need to explore organisational career management in MSMEs and also its impact on productivity in North East England MSMEs.

The final rationale for this study is the researcher's personal motivation and experience. The first personal motivation was the researcher's past research in human resource management. Secondly, the researcher worked in a North East England SME for over 3 years and experienced first-hand operational and managerial practices. The challenges faced by both the SME and employees instigated the motivation for this study. The challenges faced by the organisation were high absence levels, low retention of skilled staff and low employee productivity. While, the employees were concerned with limited career progression opportunities, organisation culture, pay-rise and leadership

styles. The limited career progression opportunity was a major source of concern to the researcher, and thus propelled the researcher to explore organisational career management in MSMEs. With this insight, the study aims to explore if engaging in OCM would improve employee motivation, retention and productivity in MSMEs. Carrying out this research is therefore significant as it addresses practical problems faced by an SME in North East England.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

The previous sections established the importance and need to study OCM in North East England MSMEs. Moving on, this section states the research question which underpins this doctoral study, highlights the research aim and outlines the research objectives. The foundation for this doctoral study is laid by defining the research question. The following research question is established:

RQ: How impactful is organisational career management to the productivity of North East England micro, small and medium-sized enterprises?

This research question seeks to know if OCM impacts productivity and also seeks for an in-depth exploration and understanding of how OCM impacts productivity in North East England MSMEs. As managers occupy important positions in any organisation, the aim of this doctoral research is to explore organisational career management from the perception of managers (HR

managers, talent managers, owner-mangers, CEOs and MDs). Furthermore, the study aims to explore the impact of organisational career management on motivation, employee retention and productivity in North East England MSMEs. It has been established in section 1.2 that organisational career management also known as career planning and management (CPM) refers to set of policies, programmes or activities facilitated by an organisation aimed at the career development of its employees (Baruch & Budhwar 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Hernaus et al., 2019). From this definition, it is deduced that career planning and career development are major components of organisational career management. Kakui and Gachunga (2016) posited that career revolves around three important themes: advancement in career position, stability within an occupational field and evolving sequence of an individual's work experience. From this definition, this study focuses on advancement in career position or career progression as it relates to organisational careers. Thus, based on this insight, this doctoral study explores organisational career management in three dimensions: career planning, career development and career progression. These dimensions are discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

To address the above research question and aims, the following objectives are proposed:

1. To explore the presence and efficiency of organisational career systems in MSMEs.
2. To explore the organisation's perception of employee productivity

3. To explore the impact of career planning, career development and career progression on productivity.
4. To explore the perceived barriers hindering MSMEs from engaging in organisational career management practices.
5. To develop a conceptual organisational career framework based on the empirics of the study.

The above objectives are discussed and achieved in Chapter 4 (study findings) and Chapter 5 (discussion).

1.5 Methodological Approach of the Study

This exploratory research adopts an interpretivist approach and uses a qualitative research methodology to gain an in-depth understanding of the organisational career management phenomenon in North East England MSME firms. The researcher's philosophical positions in relation to ontology and epistemology are subjectivism and interpretivism respectively. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 line and senior managers of different MSMEs industries in the North East England. Data generated from the interview transcripts were subject to template analysis. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed discussion of the methodological approach of the study.

1.6 Potential Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

Firstly, this research makes vital contribution to the career literature by exploring organisational careers in MSMEs. Salau (2022) stated that OCM programmes are designed to improve employee performance, develop skills and abilities, clarify available career options within an organisation and enhance overall organisational performance. Despite the relevance of OCM in organisations, review of extant career literature reveals that the study of OCM in MSMEs is limited as a large number of career studies focus on large and public organisations (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Bagdadli & Gianecchini 2018; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; ; Lyria, et al., 2017; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Salau, 2022). Hence, sufficient knowledge on OCM in MSMEs is lacking in the career literature. Whilst Salau (2022) examined career management in Nigerian SMEs, his study only explored career management in terms of experience and personal growth. This doctoral study moves beyond the concepts of experience and personal growth, and aims to provide an in-depth insight on the mode of operation of OCM in MSMEs. Furthermore, undertaking this research contributes to the knowledge of OCM in MSMEs in the career literature.

Secondly, this study aims to develop a conceptual framework of organisational career system based on the characteristics of MSMES and empirics of the study. In the past, career planning and management was seen as a major responsibility of individuals (Arthur et al., 1989; Arthur & Lawrence 1984; Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992) before the focus shifted to organisations (Baruch, 2004; Gutteridge et al., 1993) and then finally moving back to individuals by the

end of 2000s (Baruch, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Because the career literature focuses more on individual careers, majority of career theories are centred on individual career development (Egan et al., 2006; Holland, 1959, Kram, 1985; Krumboltz, 1994). Moreover, contemporary individual career concepts of protean career attitude (Hall, 1976, 1996, 2002) and boundaryless career attitude (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur 1994) are well known and proclaimed in the career literature. These individual career concepts are reviewed in Chapter 2. Organisational career theorists (OCTs) have therefore asserted that the theoretical base of organisational career management is considered quite thin and organisational aspect in career theory still lacks a comprehensive framework (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003). Therefore, to address these shortcomings in the career literature, OCTs developed models of organisational career systems. Thus, this research is grounded on theoretical constructs in the organisational career management literature. It builds on the works of organisational career theorists Baruch (1999), Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Maheshwari (2010). The theoretical constructs are discussed extensively in chapter 2. However, these models of organisational career systems were developed based on organisational characteristics of large organisations and might not be entirely useful for MSMEs. Hence, this study draws insight from existing models of career systems in literature and aims to develop a conceptual framework of organisational career system based on the characteristics of MSMEs. This career framework would integrate vital HR functions based on the empirics of the study.

Moreover, this study addresses the productivity gap challenge in North East England MSMEs. It is recalled in section 1.3 that there is insufficient literature on productivity in North East England MSMEs. Furthermore, there are limited studies addressing the challenge of productivity gap in North East England MSMEs. According to the research objectives in section 1.4, this study would explore the perception of employee productivity in MSMEs and by extension investigate the cause of the productivity challenge in North East England MSMEs. Based on the empirics of the study, this study aims to capture drivers of productivity existing in MSMEs and develop a productivity framework which could serve as a useful tool for improving productivity in North East England MSMEs.

In practice, the study aims to capture existing managerial practices operating in MSMEs. Specifically, the study aims to explore existing OCM practices, HRM functions and management practices which improve motivation, employee retention and productivity in MSMEs. Furthermore, the study aims to explore hindrances to the adoption of OCM practices and the challenges faced by MSMEs. With these findings, MSMEs practioners are aware of the current state of managerial activities and policy makers are able to make informed decisions regarding creating policies favourable to MSMEs growth and productivity.

The review of extant career literature shows that career studies with purely qualitative research method are limited. A significant number of career studies employ quantitative (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Ikechukwu et al., 2016; Kakui &

Gachunga, 2016; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018; Salau, 2022; Yahya & Meruda, 2004) or mixed methods (Guo et al., 2019; Katsuro et al., 2015; Lyria et al., 2014; Patrick & Kumar, 2011) research approaches. Hence, knowledge in the career literature focus on causal relationship, testing of theories and hypothesis, and sometimes lack depth (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Gabriel, 2013; Schonfeld & Dreyer, 2008). Qualitative studies are known to provide in-depth understanding of people's personal experiences of a lived phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, adopting a solely qualitative research method bridges the research method gap in the career literature and provides a different perspective of the career phenomenon. Moreover, qualitative academic researchers in the career field might find this study useful for future research as this study employs purely qualitative research method.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is outlined below:

Chapter One provides an introduction and background to the study. The theoretical frameworks which underpin the study and the streams of literature in which the study is rooted in are highlighted. The research aims, objectives, significance, contributions and methodological approach are all discussed. This chapter provides an overview of the remaining chapters.

Chapter Two begins with the review of the entrepreneurship and small business literature, then moves on to the human resource management and productivity literature. Thereafter, the most important literature in this research which is the career literature is reviewed. Paradoxes in the career literature

are reviewed as well as in-depth review of career development theories, traditional and contemporary models of career systems, individual career management, organisational career management and dimensions of organisational career management. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning this doctoral study are identified and discussed in detail. Furthermore, literature that explores barriers to adopting OCM in organisations and which links OCM to productivity and organisational performance are reviewed. The chapter concludes with reviewing empirical studies that examined organisational career management from employees' perception or both the employee and managers perceptions and identifies gaps in the literature.

Chapter Three presents the research design employed to answer the research question and achieve the research objectives. It also provides justifications for the chosen methodology strategy. The researcher's philosophical positions and paradigms in relation to ontology, epistemology and axiology are discussed extensively. The chapter continues with a rigorous discussion of the research design, data collection strategies, data analysis, ethical considerations, validation strategies and reliability procedures. Comparison between the two methods of data collection (face-to-face and telephone interviews) is highlighted. The chapter concludes by highlighting the challenges the researcher faced during data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four presents the study findings obtained from the responses of research participants and analysis of data. Key themes relevant to the

research question, aims and objectives are highlighted and discussed. Discussion of themes are buttressed with quotes (extracts from interview transcripts) to support each claim.

Chapter Five interprets, explains and draws conclusions from the key study findings. It provides an in-depth synthesis of the research findings with relevant existing literature. And from this synthesis, the theoretical and practical contributions of this research study are identified. The chapter begins with reiterating the research question and objectives and discusses the study findings in relation to each research objectives. The chapter concludes by highlighting this doctoral study's major contribution to theory and practice (development of a conceptual organisational career and development framework based on the characteristics of MSMEs).

Chapter Six concludes the thesis outlining the implications, recommendations and conclusion of the study. The study's contributions to theory, management practice and public policy are outlined. The limitations and recommendations for future research are highlighted. Finally, the thesis concludes with a personal reflection of the researcher's PhD journey.

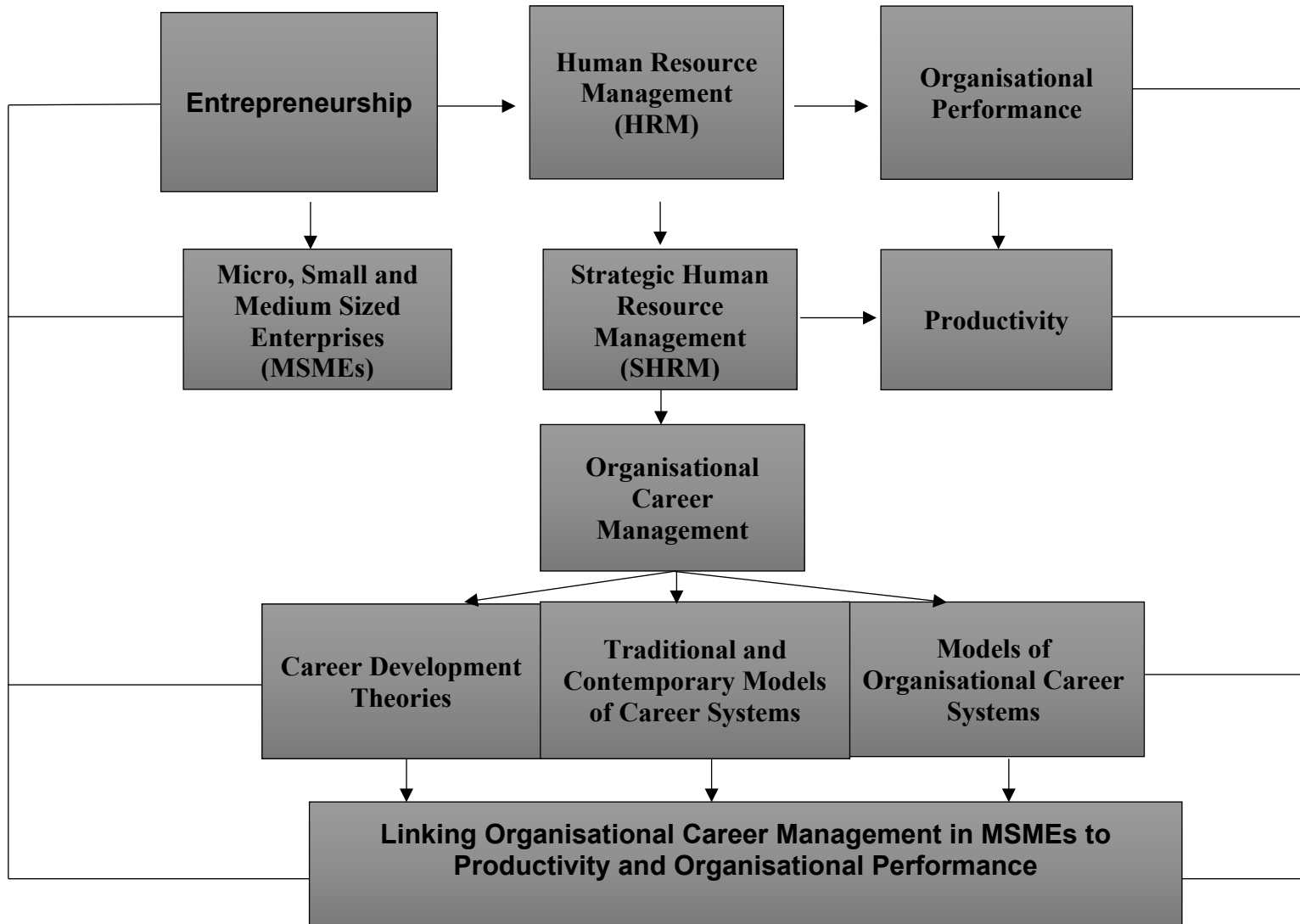
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The review of extant literature underpinning this study is explored in this chapter. Based on the title of this doctoral thesis and key words, four streams of literature are identified. Hence, the literature review chapter is divided into four main sections. In this chapter, the four streams of literature: MSME, human resource management, productivity and career literature which underpins this research are reviewed and connected. The first section begins with the review of the small business literature. Here, the foundation of the study is laid as the literature regarding MSMEs are explored. Also, characteristics of MSMEs, growth of MSMEs in the UK and North England are explored. The chapter then goes on to review the human resource management literature. Here, literature on strategic human resource management is reviewed. Major HRM practices are outlined and their operation in MSMEs are explored. The HRM literature then links into the third section which is the organisational performance literature. This section reviews firm performance in MSMEs and subsequently reviews the productivity literature. For this study, productivity is used as a measure of firm performance as established in Chapter 1. The impact of HR practices on organisational performance is examined too. The fourth section which is the most important section centres on the organisational career management literature. The main theoretical constructs underpinning this study are identified and discussed extensively. The core career theories and models existing in literature are reviewed. Their drawbacks are discussed as well. Studies relating to impact of organisational carer management on

organisational performance or productivity are explored. Furthermore, organisational career management studies that engaged only the manager's perspective or both the employees and managers perspective or only the employees' perspective were explored. The chapter finally concludes with a synthesis of all the previous sections and major gaps in literature are highlighted. Figure 3 shows the literature review framework.

Figure 3: Literature Review Framework



2.2

MSMEs

Entrepreneurship takes its root in classical economic literature (Hisrich & Drnovesk, 2002) and the history of entrepreneurship research began with economists such as Cantillon (1680s-1734), Quesnay (1694-1774), Baudeau (1730-1792), A.JTurgot (1721-1781) and Say (1767-1832) (Grebel, 2004). Entrepreneurship refers to any innovative activity (Schumpeter, 1934) that creates value (Say, 1824) and is profitable. Innovation is the core element of entrepreneurship (Drucker, 2002; Srikanth et al., 2021) and entrepreneurs use innovation and creativity to create business ventures (Kuratko & Rao, 2012; Srikanth et al., 2021). Interest in the entrepreneurship and small business research have increased significantly among academics, practioners and policy makers in the past decade both in Europe and USA (Hisrich & Drnovesk, 2002). Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) which are classified under small businesses are discussed below.

Definitions of MSMEs vary across countries and at national level (Masri, 2013). These differences stem out of the different legal, statistical, and organisational requirements in each economy (Strathclyde University, 2011; Masri, 2013). MSMEs constitute a large share of the private sector in the United Kingdom (UK) economy and are uniquely categorized by their size and financial turnover or balance sheet (Fakieh, 2018). According to the UK government and European Union (EU) definition of MSMEs, MSMEs are enterprises with less than 250 employees and an annual turnover under £25.9 million or €50 million (Companies House, 2015). Table 1 shows the categorisation of MSMEs.

Table 1: UK and EU Classification of Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Business Size	Number of staff	Turnover	Balance sheet
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ £25.9m / ≤ €50m	≤ £12.9m / ≤ €43m
Small	< 50	≤ £6.5m / ≤ €10m	≤ £3.26m / ≤ €10m
Micro	< 10	≤ £632k / ≤ €2m	≤ £316k / ≤ €2m

Source: (Companies House, 2015; European Commission, 2021)

MSMEs are said to be responsible for driving innovation and competition in many economic sectors (Gupta et al., 2013), progenitor of large businesses (Abor & Quartey, 2010; Sanu & Anjum, 2021) and acknowledged to be a source of innovative ideas (Gilmore et al., 2013). MSMEs accounting for over 99% of all businesses in the UK (Merchant Savvy, 2021) have made substantial contributions in private sector employment, export promotion, gross domestic product (GDP), innovation, enhancing entrepreneurship, process improvements and have been identified as a building block for economic development (Gupta et al., 2013; McGovern et al., 2017). MSMEs cut across all sectors in the economy- service, manufacturing, health, education, construction, information, and communication, and many others.

2.2.1 Characteristics of MSMEs

It has been stated in Chapter 1 that this doctoral study aims to develop a conceptual framework of organisational career system based on the characteristics of MSMEs. Hence, the knowledge of the characteristics of MSMEs provides a deeper understanding of the context of organisational career management within MSMEs. This insight would be useful when building the career framework in Chapter 5.

Practitioners and academic researchers acknowledge that the mode of operation in MSMEs is different from large organisations (Carson & Gilmore, 2000; Gilmore & Carson, 2007; Gilmore et al., 2013; Hansen & Eggers, 2010). MSMEs are often defined by their constraints and are referred to businesses that have small size, limited resources (human or capital), lack of formal management structure, limited access to complex or international markets and pressures on owner-managers (Boocock & Anderson, 2003; Buckley, 1989; Gilmore et al., 2013; Marlow 1998; Sanu & Anjum, 2021). While the above characteristics are correct, MSMEs are recognized as the major drivers of growth in the private sector (Dutz & O'Connell, 2013; Mudalige et al., 2016) and breeding ground for entrepreneurship and innovation (Sanu & Anjum, 2021).

MSMEs are usually privately held and start-up as sole proprietorships or partnerships (Hamel, 2019). Based on ownership and control, Saridakis et al (2018) posited that MSMEs can be categorized into three namely: non-family owned firms managed by external professional managing directors, family

firms managed by directors who are owning family members and family firms managed by professional managing directors alongside co-directors who are family members. Characteristics and entrepreneurial behaviour of owner-managers are perceived to be important factors driving innovative activities in MSMEs (Bird 1988; Caird 1994; Kickul & Gundry, 2002; Oke et al., 2007).

The organisation structure in MSMEs is flat and management is usually “in a relatively personalized way with no formal management structure” (Boocock & Anderson, 2003, p.98). Baporikar (2014) suggested that strategic management in MSMEs combines intuition and creativity and does not always follow a rigid strategic management procedure. Kok (2003) supports this argument as he asserted that strategy formulation in MSMEs is often more of a emergent process than a deliberate process because owner-managers are usually preoccupied with day-to-day activities. Informal working relationships are prevalent in MSMEs and small firms are perceived to be more flexible than large firms (Baporikar, 2014; Levy & Powel, 1998). The flat organisational structure and absence of hierarchy enable a strong personal relationship between top management and employees (Baporikar, 2014; Ghobadian & Gallear,1996). The flat organisational structure also limits staff development and career progression opportunities (Baporikar, 2014).

Successful MSMEs combine a “high degree of self-direction, autonomy, openness to innovation and purposeful engagement” (Baporikar, 2014, p.6). Previous studies have argued that because of the nature of MSMEs, MSMEs

are able to undertake innovative activities more easily than large firms (Oke et al., 2007; Simon et al., 2002). Moreover, a group of authors asserted that the growth of a small business is relatively determined by entrepreneur or manager's efforts and motivations (Davidsson, 1991; Davidsson, et al., 2002; Delmar & Wiklund, 2008; Saridakis et al., 2018). However, Gray (1998) argued that few small firms are interested in growth but their primary motives are focused on retaining autonomy, independence and survival. The characteristics of MSMEs are compared with large enterprises below in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison between MSMEs and Large Enterprises

Business Characteristic	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)	Large Enterprises
Size and annual turnover	Fewer than 250 employees and turnover of no more than £25.9m	More than 250 employees and turnover of more than £36m
Legal structure	Sole proprietorships or partnerships	Corporations
Ownership and Control	Usually privately owned (sometimes family-owned)	Usually public limited with defined shareholding patterns
Organisation structure	Small, flat and flexible	Large, hierarchical, and bureaucratic
Management and Leadership	Informal, usually managed by owner-managers	Formal, managed by a board of directors voted by shareholders
Financing	Owner's savings, loans from banks, gifts or loans from family members and friends	Selling of stocks and corporate bonds

	Sometimes, funding from investors and venture capital firms	
Market Niche	Focus on a niche market	Offer products and services to a wide range of consumers
Business Units	Limited or no separate business units	Multiple business units
Organisational career management	Usually absence of defined career path Limited opportunity for career progression	Clearly defined career path with opportunities for career progression

Sources: (Hamel, 2019; The Open Group, 2021; Zhang, 2021)

In relation to the central focus of this study which is exploring organisational career management in MSMEs, Table 2 points out that there is usually absence of defined career paths and limited promotional opportunities in MSMEs. Chapters 4 and 5 would reveal whether the study findings agree with this argument or not. The following section discusses the growth of MSMEs in the UK and North East England.

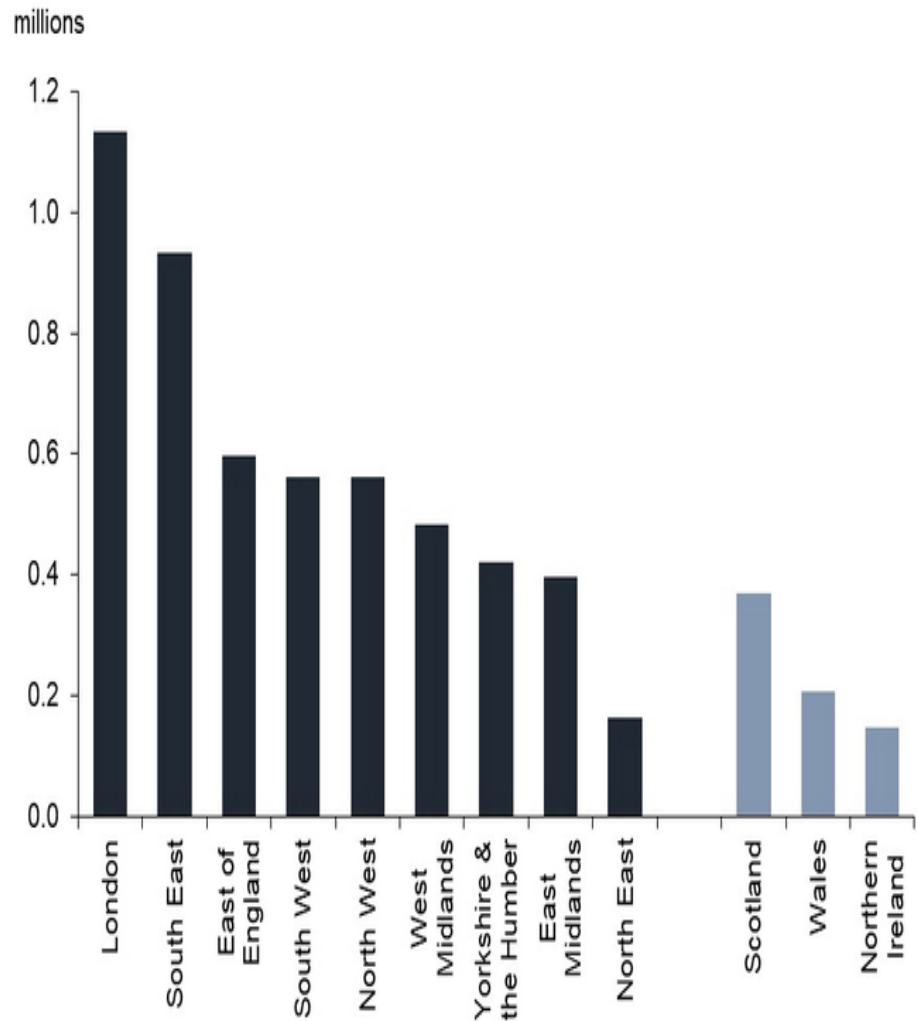
2.2.2 Growth of MSMEs

MSMEs in the UK have witnessed considerable growth over the years following the 2008 financial crisis and recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic (FSB, 2021). According to recent research undertaken by Merchant Savvy, there were 5.59 million private businesses in the UK at the start of 2020 with MSMEs accounting for 99.8% and 60% of all private sector jobs (Merchant Savvy, 2021). The growth of micro and small businesses was static at the start of 2020, not different from 2019. The micro businesses constitute

a large share of the private businesses (Merchant Savvy, 2021). There were 1.16 million micro (1-9 employees), 211, 845 small (10-49 employees) and 36, 140 medium (50-249 employees) businesses in 2020 (Merchant Savvy, 2021). According to industry sector, the construction sector had the highest number of MSMEs (991, 930) followed by the Professional, Scientific and Technical activities sector (872, 445) in 2020 (Statista, 2021). Due to the lockdown, the Covid-19 pandemic had the biggest impact on the turnover of businesses in the hospitality and food industries while the real estate industry witnessed the smallest impact (Statista, 2021).

The UK federation of small businesses (FSB) reported that compared to 2019, there was a 1.9% increase in the private business population by 113,000 businesses in 2020 (FSB, 2021). However, the North East England had the least private sector businesses (154,000) compared to other regions as shown in Figure 2. A report on the growth of businesses in North East England in 2020 confirmed that 72% of business acknowledged that their growth was hindered due to the pandemic and two-thirds of the businesses were optimistic about their expansion in 2021 (Whitfield, 2020). Figure 4 shows the distribution of private sector businesses in UK according to regions. From the figure below, London had the highest number of businesses followed by South East England, and region with the least number of businesses was North East England.

Figure 4: Number of Private Sector Businesses in the UK region at the start of 2020



Source: Merchant Savvy: UK SME Data, Statistics & Charts (2022)

This first major section reviewed the MSME literature. The section began with a brief discourse on the entrepreneurship and small business literature. Thereafter, a review of the MSME literature was conducted. The definition of MSME was clearly stated and the importance of MSMEs was highlighted. Moreover, the characteristics of MSMEs were discussed and firm characteristics of MSMEs were compared with large organisations. The

section concludes by reviewing the growth of MSMEs in the UK and North East England. The second major section of this literature review chapter explores human resource management in MSMEs. The last two major sections of this chapter focus on productivity and career literature.

2.3 Human Resource Management in MSMEs

The recognition of the importance of human capital in theory and practice has led to the increase of research in human resource management (Kok, 2003).

Human resources refers to the human capital available in a firm through employment (Barney & Wright, 1998; Sardi et al., 2020). HRM refers to how people are employed and managed in organisations (O'riordan, 2017).

It has been acknowledged in literature that effective HRM is critical to firm's competitive success, increased productivity and growth (Kok, 2003; Harney & Nolan, 2014; Umer, 2013). Because of the unique organisational characteristics of MSMEs (ownership structure, flat organisational structure which means close relationship between management and employees and large degree of informal practices) (Dundon et al., 2001; Harney & Nolan, 2014), HRM in MSMEs is usually informal, ad hoc and intuitive (Umer, 2013). Research reveals that there has been an increase in the formalization of HRM in MSMEs (De Kok & Uhlener, 2001; Kotey & Slade, 2005; Nguyen & Bryant, 2004; Umer, 2013). The reason is as small businesses grow bigger in size, they begin to see the dire need for HRM because it helps in effective coordination of activities and workforce as well as contributes towards organisational productivity (Umer, 2013). As it has been established that MSMEs are the backbone of any economy (Gupta et al., 2013; McGovern et al., 2017; Umer, 2012) and HRM is vital for sustaining a firm's competitive advantage (Brand & Bax, 2003), there has been a rise in studies examining human resource management in MSMEs (Brand & Bax, 2002; De Kok, 2003; Heneman et al., 2000; Mollah et al., 2015; Umer, 2012). HRM practices include: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance

management and appraisals, talent and career management, involvement and communication, employee retention, compensation and benefits amongst others (O’riordan, 2017).

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) an important part of human resource management which helps to ensure the strategic alignment of employees’ behaviours and role to organisation goals and objectives (Stanton and Nankervis, 2011; Stanton and Pham, 2014). SHRM provides a platform for organisations to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic and continuous development of highly skilled and committed workforce (Crawshaw et al., 2017). MSMEs are faced with the pressure to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage as they are in a highly competitive industry where customer needs and expectations are changing continuously (Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Wirtz and Jerger, 2016).

SHRM is the interface between HRM, and strategic management and it involves linking strategic management practices to HRM activities (Boxall, 1996; O’riordan, 2017). It is defined as the pattern of planned HRM policies practices intended to enable an organisation to achieve its goals and objectives (McMahan, 1992; Storey, 2017). SHRM refers to the strategic approach to talent and organisational management (Storey, 2017). SHRM is usually used as an approach to achieve competitive advantage and improved organisational performance through the recruitment, training and development of high skilled workforce (Kok, 2003; O’riordan, 2017; Umer, 2012). Davis (2017) outlined that employees’ can be sources of competitive advantage if

employees are capable and committed, the firm is committed to the strategic relevance of human resources, human resource activities are managed by experts and human resource management is incorporated into the business strategy. SHRM is an approach that can be used by both large and small businesses to improve employee motivation, commitment, career satisfaction, productivity and eventually organisational performance. This study therefore focuses on one of the HRM practices (organisational career management) and explores how it can be used as a strategic approach to improving productivity in MSMEs. SHRM has been established to improve organisational performance and productivity in literature (De Kok, 2003; O'riordan, 2017; Umer, 2012). The next section discusses the organisational performance and productivity literature.

2.4 Organisational Performance and Productivity

Chapter 1 established that the productivity levels in North East England are low compared to the national average and other regions in the UK (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2018). Furthermore, it was established that productivity is a subjective measure of organisational performance. Thus, this section provides an in-depth review of the organisational performance stream of literature. As productivity is low in North East England, studies which explore drivers of productivity in MSMEs are reviewed.

The firm performance or organisational performance stream of research has gained attention by scholars, policy makers as well as practitioners over the years (Chinomona, 2013; Gunday et al., 2011; Hansen & Wernerfelt, 1989; Hashim et al., 2018; Leonidou et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2011). MSME firms need to engage in strategic management so as to remain competitive and sustainable in the dynamic business world. Venkataramanaiah and Suneetha (2019) highlighted that the business environment is considered to be a complex competitive environment and so entrepreneurs are required to be equipped with competencies in different dimensions such as intellectual, attitudinal, behavioural, technical, and managerial aspects in order to succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavours. In their study, Hashim et al (2018) asserted that entrepreneurial competencies (skills, knowledge, experience) and dynamic capabilities are contributing factors to firm performance. Harnessing existing firm resources, competencies and capabilities constitute

a base for firm performance and help to gain competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Teece et al., 1997; Hashim et al., 2018).

Organisational performance and productivity take their roots in the Economics literature (Green, 2017). Performance has been described as a contextual concept which is dependent on the phenomenon being studied (Hofer, 1983). Performance in business is seen as the ability to achieve the goals and objectives of the firm and its major stakeholders at an operational level (Smith & Reece, 1999; Zulkiffli & Perrra, 2011). Performance in firms must be assessed to ascertain the level of accomplishment and growth (Zulkiffli & Perrra, 2011). Carton (2004) explored measurement of organisational performance and stated that the parameters used to represent performance are chosen based on the circumstances of the organisation being studied. Performance has been a recurrent theme in management, and it is of interest to both academic scholars and business managers (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986). Performance can also be defined as how efficient an organisation is managed and the value derived from this management by customers and stakeholders of the organisation (Moullin, 2003; Wu, 2009). Performance has been linked to effectiveness as performance is one of the types of effectiveness indicators in organisations (Richard et al., 2009).

2.4.1 Organisational Performance

Several studies have been carried out on organisational performance; and there has been the inability of researchers and managers to come to a common ground due to the complexity and multidimensionality of performance (Richard et al., 2009). The inability to understand and characterize performance in a consistent way in management research has led to diversity in approach and results (Richard et al., 2009). This divergence has thus led to the limitation of the clarity of findings and confidence of researchers and managers. Organisational performance has been described as a set of financial and non-financial indicators capable of assessing the extent to which a firm's goals and objectives have been achieved (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Singh, et al., 2016). Organisational performance has also been likened to value creation (Carton, 2004). The creation of value is seen as situational as different types of organisations have varied ideas as to what outcomes are valuable. Thus, in the study of organisational performance there is no generalizable model of performance measures but dependent on the existing circumstances of the organisation in view (Carton, 2004).

Organisational performance is multidimensional and this dimensionality stems from the interaction of stakeholders within a company, the diversity of organisational resources, environments and strategic choices, and the variance of performance over time (Carton, 2004; Richard et al., 2009). Organisational performance therefore consists of three specific areas: financial performance (return on assets, profit, return on liquidity, etc.); product market performance (sales, market share, etc.); and shareholder return (total

shareholder return, economic value added, etc.) (Richard et al., 2009). The concept of the connection between organisational effectiveness and performance has been a topic of academic attention for years (Richard et al., 2009; Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986).

Singh et al. (2016) identified the financial measures of organisational performance as return on assets (ROA), return on equity (ROE), personal income of entrepreneurs, return on assets (ROA), net profit, earnings per share and many others; while the non-financial measures include quality, staff performance, customer satisfaction, sales volume, employees' turnover and innovation (Gerba and Viswanadham, 2016). In addition, both subjective and objective measures of performance have been widely used by researchers in studies (Hult et al., 2008). Since a number of MSMEs are always reluctant to reveal their actual financial status (objective measure) publicly, then researchers saw the need to use subjective measures (perceived perception of performance) to measure organisational performance (Zulkiffli and Perrra, 2011).

The subjective or non-financial measures of firm performance include but are not limited to customer measures (customer satisfaction), employee measures (job satisfaction, commitment and others) quality measures (service quality), organisational outcomes (productivity, employees' turnover, delivery time, market share, sales volume, new product development and others), innovation and development of human capital measures (Otley, 2002; Verbeeten & Boons 2009; Gerba & Viswanadham, 2016; Singh et al., 2016). Though many studies focus on objective measures of firm performance, there has been a

shift in literature with recent studies centring on subjective measures of performance in small businesses (Tregaskis et al., 2004; Croucher, 2009; Zulkiffli & Perrra, 2011; Gerba & Viswanadham, 2016; Singh et al., 2016). As identified in Chapter 1, this study subjectively explores performance in MSMEs.

Productivity is defined “as the rate of output per unit of labour, capital or equipment” (Prowle et al., 2017, p.17). It also means “a ratio to measure how an organisation converts input resources (labour, materials, machines, money) into goods and services” (Green, 2017, p. 340). Productivity in workplace consist of the productivity of the labour force and productivity of fixed assets (plant, equipment and physical space) of an organisation (Prowle et al., 2017). As established in Chapter, this study focuses on employee or labour productivity. Employee or labour productivity refers to the measure of output per employee (Green, 2017; Nda & Fard, 2013). It means “the result of combined employee ability, motivation and workplace environment” (Green, 2017, p. 341). And the assessment of the efficiency of an employee or group of employees’ (Hanaysha, 2016).

Over the years, productivity has become one of the widely used criteria to measure the economic performance of a country, region or area (ONS, 2018; Round et al., 2019). As previously established that MSMEs accounts for over 99% of businesses in the UK (Merchant Savvy, 2021) and make substantial contribution to private sector employment, export promotion, gross domestic product (GDP) and innovation (Gupta et al., 2013; McGovern et al., 2017).

Productivity in MSMEs is therefore important because it drives the economic growth of the nation. Several factors have been identified to influence productivity in MSMEs. According to Prowle et al. (2017), drivers of productivity found to exist in MSMEs include primary drivers (technology, operational processes and secondary drivers (firm size, leadership or management style, ownership of business). In addition, Round et al (2019) highlighted that skills and education, investment and innovation, employee health and wellbeing are major drivers of productivity. Thus, presence of these drivers of productivity would be explored in North East England MSMEs.

This section reviewed the organisational performance literature and highlighted the measures of organisational performance that exist. Furthermore, it identifies that productivity is a subjective measure of organisational performance. Finally, drivers of productivity found to exist in MSMEs are explored. As the MSME, human resource management and productivity streams of research have been reviewed, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the career literature.

2.5 Organisational Career Management: An Human Resource Management Strategy to Improve Productivity

The core literature which underpins this doctoral study is reviewed in this section. The career research takes its roots in the HRM literature (Baruch, 1996; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Gutteridge & Otte, 1983). The HRM literature alongside the MSMEs and productivity literatures were reviewed in the previous sections. This final section provides a comprehensive discourse on extant career literature, connects the previous sections together and concludes the literature review chapter. In this section, the career concept is clearly defined, the career development theories, traditional and contemporary models of career systems existing in literature are discussed extensively. The conceptual framework of this study is established in section 2.5.9. Moreover, the core models of organisational career system upon which this doctoral study is underpinned are discussed in section 2.5.11. Drawbacks of these models are also identified and discussed. Furthermore, literature on challenges preventing the easy adoption of organisational career management practices in MSMEs is reviewed. Thereafter, organisational career management in MSMEs is linked to organisational performance and productivity. Finally, the last sub-section provides a comprehensive summary of the literature review chapter.

2.5.1 What is a Career?

The career concept has undergone significant change over the last three decades and these changes have led to a radical shift in how careers are managed (Lewis & Arnold, 2012). The study of career began to receive attention by scholars in the 1970s (Boerlijst, 1984; Hall, 1976; Dalton et al., 1977; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977; Schein, 1978; Driver, 1979; Walker & Gutteridge 1979; Arthur et al., 1989; Gutteridge et al., 1993; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). The term 'career' was originally derived from the Latin word '*carraria*' which means by road or carriage way (Arthur & Lawrence 1984). Based on this premise, Arthur and Lawrence (1984) defined career as a person's course or progress through life. The career construct has been linked to several academic disciplines majorly the social science disciplines such as sociology, labour economics, work, vocational and career psychology (IResearchNet, 2022). Arthur et al (1989) explained the career concept from eight different social science perspectives (psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political, history and geography) and concluded that the career concept provides a nexus for trans-disciplinary debate. Their point of departure was that that the concept of career is not the property of any disciplinary view.

The term career has been used to refer to a lifelong endeavour that consist of the development and progression of a person's work experiences and moderated by the organisations they work in (Greenhaus, et al., 2000; Baruch, 2000; Creed & Hood, 2009). Greenhaus et al (2010) asserted that a career can be viewed in two different perspectives. It could be seen as a structural

property of an occupation or organisation which means the sequence of positions held by an individual within an occupation or an organisation; or seen as a mobility part within a single organisation or multiple employers (Greenhaus et al., 2000; Greenhaus et al., 2010). Greenhaus et al (2010) then posited that the career definition should focus on the individual rather than an occupation or organisation; and therefore, defined career as the pattern of work-related experiences accumulated during the course of person's life. According to Greenhaus et al (2010), 'work-related experiences' include (a) objective events such as job positions, duties or activities and (b) subjective interpretations of work-related experiences such as work aspirations, expectations, needs and feelings about work experiences. Various definitions of career have emerged in the career literature. Table 3 below shows a summary of different career definitions by prominent career scholars over the past three decades.

Table 3: Definition of the Career Concept by Prominent Career Authors

Author (s)	Definition of the Career Concept
Hughes (1937)	The moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order, and of the typical sequences and concatenation of office
Super (1957)	A sequence of positions held during the course of a lifetime
Hall (1976)	A series of lifelong work-related experience and personal learnings
Arthur and Lawrence (1984)	A person's course or progress through life
Arthur et al (1989)	The evolving sequence of an individual's work experiences over time
Baruch and Rosenstein (1992)	A process of development of an employee along a path of experience

	and jobs in one or more organisations
Collin and Young (2000)	The patterns and sequences of occupations and positions occupied by people across their working lives
Hall (2002)	The individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life
Sullivan and Baruch (2009)	Individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organisations that form unique pattern over an individual's lifespan
Greenhaus et al (2010)	The pattern of work-related experiences that span the course of a person's life

Source: Adapted from Mulhall (2014)

A point worth noting from the above career definitions is that though the career concept was defined differently, they all had similar meaning. The consensus that emerged from the definitions is that the word career is underpinned by two important terms 'series of work-related/job experiences' and 'a person's life span'. Taking the various definitions of career into account, the researcher defines career as a '*series of work experiences or positions accumulated during a person's lifetime*'. This definition encompasses the objective and subjective interpretations of work experiences. Career is a significant part of life as it evolves around work and work provides a sense of purpose, self-fulfilment, identity, access to income and social networking (Baruch, 2004a). A more recent definition of a career is a continuous process of learning and development which consists of various functions and roles an individual engages in throughout life (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018).

Baruch (2004a) affirmed that careers are first the “property” of individuals before planned and managed by the organisation. The above definitions define career traditionally from the individual perspective. However, organisational career theorists have defined career from an organisation view as an employee development along a path of experience and jobs, which may be in one or more organizations (Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992; Baruch, 1996; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). This definition is more comprehensive than the usual definition in literature because it considers career from both the individual and organisational perspectives (Baruch, 1996). Therefore, a career is both the entity of an individual and the organisation. The following section discusses the misconception between a career and a job.

2.5.2 Difference between a Career and a Job?

According to a layman, the terms career and job are same, and these words are commonly used interchangeably. There is therefore a need to clarify this misconception. As established in the previous section, a career means series of work experiences or positions accumulated during a person’s lifetime. In the work world, a career means a long-term professional journey determined by one’s passion and interest (Indeed, 2021). A career is not confined to a job only, but a work-related journey in which an individual make use of education, knowledge, skills, experiences and competencies to achieve a professional goal (Surbhi, 2018). It is a series of connected employment opportunities (Roth, 2008). In contrast, a job is an activity engaged in primarily for its monetary benefits. Table 4 shows comparison between a career and a job.

Table 4: Difference between a Career and a Job

Basis for Comparison	Career	Job
Meaning	A long-term series of work experiences or positions accumulated during a person's lifetime	An activity engaged in primarily to earn a livelihood
What is it?	Journey	Trip
Duration	Long term	Short term
Exchange of	Time for pursuing a professional goal or ambition	Time for money
Requires	Education, training, experience and skills in a particular field	Education and relevant skills
Professional goal	An end in itself	A means to achieve a career or professional goal
Benefits	Set salaries, retirement plans, financial security, pensions and bonuses	Regular payments, financial security

Source: Adapted from Surbhi (2018)

The above table displays the differences between a career and a job and the basis for comparison. The paramount difference between both terms is that a career is a long-term professional journey consisting of work experiences or positions accumulated during a person's lifetime while a job most times is an activity engaged in primarily to earn a living. Various job positions or work experiences in a person's life invariably make a career and one can apply a skill acquired from a previous job to future jobs in the desired career position. The point of departure is that although it is argued that a career does not require one's job roles to be related, professional in nature, stable within a single organisation or characterized by progression (Greenhaus et al., 2010);

a career is however a professional journey intentionally chosen and pursued by an individual based on passion. The next section reviews the career theories in literature.

2.5.3 Review of Core Career Development Theories

Following the definitions of the career term, this section discusses the career development theories existing in literature. Career development can be individual or organisational driven. Career development from the individual perspective refers to a lifelong continuous process of developing (Super, 1957). Individual career development consists of lifetime process which encompasses growth and learning in childhood, formal education and the maturation stage that continues into working in adulthood and finally transition into the retirement (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018; Baer et al., 2008). It involves one's whole life and not just an occupation (Wolfe & Kolb, 1980). As already stated in section 2.4.1 that a career is the evolving sequence (Arthur et al., 1989) of work-related experiences that span the course of a person's life (Greenhaus et al., 2010); and established that career is first the property of an individual before managed by an organisation (Baruch, 2004). Career development theories have been perceived to focus on individuals (Egan et al., 2006; Upton, 2006). Thus, based on the premise that careers are first the property of the individual (Baruch, 2006), literature on individual perspective of career development is reviewed before discussing the organisational perspective in section 2.5.8.

Matthews (2017) asserted that understanding career development theories is useful for career guidance and making quality career-related decisions. Also, Matthews (2017) stated that career counsellors might be confused about the choice of career theories effective for career counselling due to the myriad of diverse career theories existing in literature. However, 19 core career development theories had been identified in an earlier study conducted by Egan et al (2006). Egan et al (2006) reviewed extant career development theories in the context of human resource development and identified 19 core career development theories which are useful to profession and practice. These career theories explain reasons behind individuals' vocation or career choice and the processes of development during the course of building of a career. The career theories are viewed as structural (occupational tasks and individual attributes) and developmental (lifelong learning and human development) theories (Egan et al., 2006; Osipow, 1983). For easy explanation, Egan et al. (2006) divided the 19 core career developmental theories into two core categories (generic and specific). There are 10 generic career development theories and nine specific career developments. Table 4 shows the list of career developmental theories identified in the study.

Table 4: Core Development Theories

Generic Career Development Theories

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)	The theory compliments the pre-existing theories of career development (Lent et al., 1994) and identifies three determinants of career development: self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals.
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Cognitive Information Processing Theory	This theory focuses on how individuals can use information to make career development decisions.
Constructivist Theory	It is a framework associated with career development implementation, coaching and support.
Career Decision-Making Theories	These theories are based on the belief that individuals can make career decisions from a variety of career options.
Personality-Oriented Theories	The underlying assumption for this theory is that individuals select jobs because they see potential for the satisfaction of their needs
Self-Concept Theories	Self-concept career development theories are based on the assumptions that (a) individuals refine self-concepts as they grow older (b) individuals make career decisions by comparing images of work-life with their self-images and (c) the adequacy of career decisions is based on the similarity between self-concept and career roles individuals choose to focus on
Socioeconomic Perspectives	The socioeconomic perspective of career development refers to how individuals' values and identities are associated with economic, social conditions and other factors which eventually affects career -related decisions
Social Network Theory	This theory is based on the notion that individuals with large and active social network such as family and inter personal relationships have widened career development related options

Social Systems Theory	This theory assumes that relationship between social systems and individuals can contribute to career development
Trait-Factor Theories	These theories are the oldest career development theories identified. And they assume that job traits and individual characteristics can be matched. And also, that career success and satisfaction, to a great degree is a result of the alignment between individual characteristics and career roles

Specific Career Development Theories

Brown's Values-based Theory	Brown's (1995) approach to career development is that values orientations of individuals play major role in career decision making.
Ginzberg and Associates' Developmental Theory of Occupational Choice	Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrad, and Herma (1951) suggested that fantasy, tentative and realistic phases are the phases that occur during choice of occupation. And that selection of a preferred vocation happens after an individual has gone through developmental process.
Holland's Personality Type Career Theory	Holland's (1959) theory emphasizes on the importance of accurate self-awareness combined with relevant career information which are required for career identification and planning. He then identified personality types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional). The

Kram's Career Development Functions	<p>acronym for the personality types is RIASEC. He identified the work environments where these personality types would prefer to work.</p> <p>Kram's (1985) theory posits that career development in the form of mentoring between a mentor and protégé can advance the career of the protégé.</p>
Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career choice	<p>Krumboltz's (1994) theory is grounded on the assumption that people make career choices based on social learning, responses to environmental conditions and learning experiences.</p>
Roe's Needs Theory Approach	<p>Roe (1956) needs theory approach theory emphasizes that a person's early experiences especially family life can influence career choice later in adulthood.</p>
Schein's Career Anchors	<p>Schein (1996) expanded the <i>career</i> term to include individual identity. Schein added that the eight main career anchors are technical competence, general management competence, autonomy, stability, entrepreneurial creativity, service, pure challenge and a person's lifestyle (Schein, 1990)</p>
Super's Life- Span Theory	<p>Super's (1957) theory suggests that career maturity is associated with age and development across a person's life span.</p>
Tiedeman's Decision- Making Model	<p>Tideman's theory of career development s holistic and it focuses on self-awareness as an important factor in career decision making process.</p>

Source: Adapted from Egan et al. (2006)

The career theories above show the different perspectives in which career choice and development are perceived. However, the organisational career theorists have identified that the organisational aspect in career theory still lacks a comprehensive framework (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000) and the theoretical underpinning of the organisational career management literature is still weak (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Arthur et al., 1989; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000, Baruch, 2003; Creed and Hood, 2009). Most of the career theories and career theoretical frameworks in empirical studies are based on individual rather than organisational or joint perspectives (Baruch 2002; Holland, 1959; Krumboltz, 1994; Roe, 1956; Schein, 1996, Super 1957). There are no theories regarding organisational career development, however there are models of organisational development. Some of the traditional models of organisational career development existing in literature include: The Lofquist and Dawis model, Schein's model and Hall's model. The following section discusses career path.

2.5.4 Career Path

A career path is a flexible line of progression through which an individual moves (Kao et al, 1997). It is seen as a mobility path within a single or multiple organisations (Greenhaus et al., 2010). It refers to the sequence of positions or job roles occupied by an individual within an organisation or outside the boundary of an organisation. From the previous section, the various definitions of career portray that the responsibility of pursuing a career lies heavily on individuals as the definitions centred on an individual's work-related experiences in a lifetime. Baruch (2004) buttressed this notion and affirmed

that careers are first the “property” of individuals before planned and managed by an organisation if employed within an organisation. This means that individuals have the initial responsibility to plan and manage their careers before the contribution of an organisational support. A pre-corporate career manifests as an individual pursuing a career in a particular field by acquiring the relevant education, skills, training and experiences in order to achieve a professional goal.

Career pathing within the boundary of an organisation is seen as the movement of an employee through various departments and units within an organisation (Baruch, 1999). Depending on a firm’s organisational structure, a career path could either be hierarchical/vertical or flat/horizontal. The traditional view of careers was known to be hierarchal, static, rigid and operated within a stable environment (Baruch, 2004). The traditional organisation structure projects a direct chain of command from top management to bottom with the senior management making critical decisions which is passed down from intermediate management to general employees (Indeed, 2021). Employees could progress vertically on the career ladder moving from a junior position all the way to a top management position. Baruch (1999) affirmed that a clearly defined career path is widely used in large organisations, unlike the small organisations where there are informal or no clear career paths. This should be because of the organisation size. Larger organisations have more departments and so have more positions to be occupied and a clear career path to show how employees can navigate their careers within the organisation. Whereas, because of the small size of small

organisations and the flat organisational structure, there are few positions available and informal or no career path.

However, emerging contemporary literature on careers reveal that there has been a change and career systems in organisations are now multi-directional, dynamic and fluid (Baruch, 2004; Baruch, 2006). Due to the unstable and highly competitive global marketplace, there has been a change in organisational structure and more modern organisations are becoming “flatter” and having a decentralised organisational design (Greenhaus et al., 2010). The next section explores the traditional and contemporary career systems in literature.

2.5.5 Traditional and Contemporary Models of Career System

An organisational career system is defined as the aggregation of policies, priorities and actions used by an organisation to manage the flow of its members into, through, and out of the organisation over time (Sonnenfield & Peiper, 1988). It can also be referred to as a set of interrelated human resource policies and practices used to manage the flow of employees in an organisation (Gunz & Jalland, 1996). Sonnenfield and Peiperl (1988) identified recruitment, development and exit of employees are major components of a career system while Gunz and Jalland (1996) conceptualized career system as a human resource flow (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). Taking the previous definitions of career and a career system into account, the researcher’s adopted definition of a career system is ‘a framework comprising of set of interrelated human resource practices which helps to navigate an

employee's career path in, through and out of an organisation". Organisational cultures, structures, processes, business needs and objectives are important inputs for a career system (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2004). Extant career literature reveals the existence of theoretical frameworks of organisational career system (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2002, 2006; Creed & Hood, 2009) while most studies focus on individual career concepts (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Biscoe et al., 2006; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Hall, 1996; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

The different definitions of career in section 2.4.1 and the career theories centring on individual perspective imply that career was formerly seen as the major responsibility of the individual (Arthur et al. 1989; Arthur & Lawrence 1984; Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992), before the focus shifted to organisations (Baruch, 2004; Gutteridge, et al., 1993) and then finally moving back to individuals by the end of 2000s (Baruch, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Due to the dynamic nature of the corporate world, high level of job insecurity, layoffs, personal goals and work-life balance of individuals, individuals have been left to sort out their career by themselves, hence the shift back to individuals (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Greenhaus et al., 2010). The career literature put forward that there has been a major shift from the traditional career (long term employment with a single employer) to multiple careers (short term employment in each career) (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2006; Cascio, 2000, Hall, 1996, 2002).

Several centuries ago, before the emergence of organisational careers, pre-organisational careers consisted primarily of: laborers (they were under the direction of foremen, worked when work was available and had no employment contract), independents (farmers and merchants) and craftsmen (they had a clear career path from apprentice to journeyman and eventually to master. However, it was not within an organisation boundary) (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). This was how men worked until the advent of organisational careers in the 19th century.

Traditionally, from the organisational perspective, career planning and management was seen as the main responsibility of the organisation because the organisation had established policies and practices to foster career development (Creed & Hood, 2009). Careers were described to take place within the context of a stable organisational structure (Baruch 2006; Levinson, 1978; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Super, 1957) and individuals progressing up the organisation's hierarchy to the highest position (Rosenbaum 1979). The traditional career systems were known to be hierarchy based (Baruch, 2006; Whyte, 1956, Wilensky 1961, 1964) with people competing for limited promotional opportunities (Baruch 2006; Peiperl & Baruch 1997; Rosenbaum, 1979). This model of organisational career system was popularised in the 1950s and 1960s (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Careers were seen traditionally as a relationship between an individual and an employing organisation (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) and this relationship was characterised by an exchange of worker loyalty for the firm's assurance of job security (Rousseau, 1989). The exchange of employee loyalty for job security was manifested in

the form of psychological contract. According to Patrick (2008), psychological contract refers to the mutual unwritten expectations between an employee and an employer regarding policies and practices existing in the organisation. The traditional psychological contract provides a clear contract that guarantees job security and career progression (Patrick, 2008; Rousseau, 1995).

Since the end of the 20th century, there has been a change in the nature and notion of careers and the contemporary career system has undergone a significant change (Baruch, 2004). Changes in demand for labour, increase in flexibility of workforce (use of consultants, temporary and part-time workers), rapid technological advancements, unstable and highly competitive global marketplace (Greenhaus et al., 2010; Patrick, 2008; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) have caused a change in organisational structure and more modern organisations are becoming “flatter” and having a decentralised organisational design (Greenhaus et al., 2010; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). There has been an exit from the traditional bureaucratic career in which employees progress in an upward or vertical hierarchal manner (Arthur et al., 1999; Hall, 2002, Mulhall, 2014, Peiperl & Baruch 1997; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) to horizontal career paths where employees advance by moving sideways rather than moving up (Peiperl & Baruch 1997). Due to economic slowdown, horizontal career paths started becoming prominent as early as the mid-1970s when organisations became aware that they were fewer promotional opportunities (Peiperl & Baruch 1997). Contemporary organisations are starting to realise that though they might not have sufficient promotional opportunities, horizontal career paths avail employees the opportunity to grow. With horizontal career

paths, employees are able to grow by working or getting transferred to different departments with similar status but with different responsibilities (Doyle, 2020). This strategy helps employees to explore their skills and creativity in different fields (Daisy, 2018).

Moreover, the emerging career literature has highlighted the nature of career paths to be multidirectional, dynamic and fluid as opposed to the traditional view of careers which is hierarchical, static and rigid (Baruch, 2004). Sullivan's (1999) review of careers further confirmed that careers are already transitioning from tradition, linear career paths to non-linear, discontinuous career paths (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). This argument agrees with literature as a bulk of research in the career literature has moved beyond organisations to focus on more flexible contemporary individual career models such as the "Protean Career" (Hall 1976, 1996, 2002), "Boundaryless Career" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) and "Post-Corporate Career" (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997).

Further to the changes in the models of the career systems, there has been a main shift in the employer-employee relationship, and this is characterized by change of psychological contract (Baruch, 2004, 2006; Patrick 2008; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). From the organisation point of view, the new psychological contract means moving from 'providing job security' to 'offering opportunities for development to individuals needed and fit for the jobs' (Baruch, 2004, 2006; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995; Rousseau, 1995, 1996). While from the individual perspective, it means a 'departure from traditional commitment to one

employer' and moving to 'multiple commitments to several organisations' (Baruch, 2004). Psychological contracts between an employer and employee have become more transactional thereby making individuals to rely less on their organisation for lifelong employment or career progression opportunities (Biemann et al., 2020; Sturges et al., 2005; Hall, 1996). These changes in psychological contract, individual career attitudes and behaviours, organisational structures, social, economic and business environments have shaped the contemporary career systems (Baruch 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009 and made organisations become boundaryless. Following the existence of the boundaryless organisation (Ashkenas et al., 1995; Baruch 2004), the boundary careers (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) emerged. Careers became flexible and individuals could pursue careers beyond the boundary of a single employer (Baruch, 2004; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Volmer & Spurk, 2010). Contemporary career models are now considering career both from the individual and organisation perspectives (Baruch 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Creed & Hood 2009; Herriot & Pemberton, 1996; Schein 1971). The next section gives a detailed discussion of the different individual and organisational career models identified in literature. Table 6 shows a comparison between the traditional and contemporary organisational career systems adapted from Baruch (2004) study. The last row was added by the researcher based on the review of literature.

Table 6: Comparison between the traditional and contemporary career systems

Basis for Comparison	Traditional System	Contemporary System
Career direction, career path and structure	Linear, vertical, hierarchical	Multidirectional, flexible, combination of both vertical and horizontal career paths
Environment characteristic	Stable and rigid	Dynamic and fluid
Main career responsibility	Organisation	Individual
Career horizon (workplace)	One organisation	Several organisations
Career horizon (time)	Long	Short
Organisation expect/employee give	Loyalty and commitment	Long working hours, high performance
Organisation give/employee expect	Job security	Development opportunities and investing in employees
Training	Formal training programmes, general training	On-the-job training, training specific to individual organisation
Contribution	Relies only on organisation contribution	Hybrid (contribution of both the organisation and individual)

Source: Adapted from Baruch (2004)

2.5.6 Contemporary Individual Career Models

Several studies have reviewed the different individual career models existing in literature (Baruch, 2004, 2006, Egan et al., 2006; Hirschi et al., 2020; Peiperl & Baruch 1997; Schein, 1996; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Volmer & Spurk, 2010). Sullivan and Baruch's (2009) review of advances in career theory highlighted the nature of contemporary careers and the different individual career concepts that have emerged over the past decade. The study reviewed the protean and boundaryless career concepts that emerged in the 1990s, as well as the next generation career concepts such as integrative frameworks, hybrid careers and the kaleidoscope career model (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The protean and boundaryless careers have been identified as the most influential and widely studied contemporary career models in the career literature (Biemann et al., 2020; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). Thus, the new generation individual career models have elements of either protean/boundaryless or both career concepts.

The integrative career frameworks consist of frameworks that integrate the protean and boundaryless career concepts into a more comprehensive model of careers (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The three integrative frameworks highlighted in the study were post-corporate career concept (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997), career profiles (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) and boundaryless perspective on careers (Greenhaus et al., 2008). The hybrid careers combine aspects of both the traditional and protean or boundaryless carers while the kaleidoscope career model uses the metaphor of a kaleidoscope to describe how individuals can use three career parameters (authenticity balance and challenge) to make

career decisions (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). An individual carer model referred to as 'whole-life career self-management' recently emerged in the career literature (Hirschi et al., 2020). This model addresses the drawbacks of the individual career models existing in literature and provides a theoretical model that captures career self-management across work and non-work life domains (Hirschi et al., 2020). As established previously that the focus of this research is on organisational career management and that the study is underpinned by theoretical constructs of organisational career system existing in literature (CAST and Two-dimensional). This study would therefore focus mainly on models of organisational career systems existing in literature. However, major individual career concepts in the career literature such as protean, boundaryless and post-corporate career models would be reviewed.

2.5.6.1 Protean Career Attitude

The protean career concept, attitude or orientation (Hall, 1976, 1996, 2002) was firstly introduced by Hall in 1976 but it was not until the publication of Hall's book (*The Career Is Dead, Long Live the Career*) in 1996 that the concept gained widespread attention (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The term *protean* stems from the metaphor of a Greek god *Proteus* who could change his shape at will (Greenhaus et al., 2008; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Volmer & Spurk, 2010). The term protean is synonymous to being flexible, versatile, adaptable and changeable (Greenhaus et al., 2008; Volmer & Spurk, 2010). According to Hall (1976), the protean career is defined as (Baruch, 2006):

"The protean career is a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all the person's varied experience in education, training, work in several organizations, changes in occupational field, etc. The

protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life" (Hall, 1976; p. 201)

The above definition characterizes protean career as being driven by an individual, not the organisation (Briscoe and Hall, 2006; Hall, 2002). And based on an individual's varied experience, a person is able to make personal career choices and search for self-fulfilment (Hall, 1976). Thus, a protean career is a contract with oneself rather than a contract between an individual and an employer (Baruch, 2006; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). A protean career is characterized by continuous learning towards the achievement of an individual's personal career goals (Hall, 2004). Hall (2004) identified that the two main competencies of a protean career are adaptability and identity (self-awareness) (Cortellazzo et al., 2020). Adaptability in terms of individuals being able to adapt and thrive in situations where stability is no longer ensured (Enache et al., 2012; Gubler et al., 2014). With the self-awareness attribute, individuals are able to form accurate perceptions of themselves, interests and values (Cortellazzo et al., 2020).

In agreement with Hall (2004), Briscoe and Hall (2006) expatiated that a person with a protean career orientation is "1) *values driven* in the sense that the person's internal values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual's career; and (2) *self-directed* in personal career management, having the ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands" (Briscoe & Hall, 2006, p.8). Therefore, the two important dimensions of a protean career are values driven decision making and self-directed career management (Bernado & Salanga, 2019). Based on their

definition, Briscoe and Hall (2006) highlighted four primary categories of career seen through the protean lens: dependant (low values driven, low self-direction), rigid (high values driven, low self-direction), reactive (low values driven, high self-direction), and protean or transformational (high values driven, high self-direction) (Briscoe and Hall, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Briscoe and Hall (2006) further stated that a protean career is best viewed as an orientation, attitude or approach to a career rather than a career framework (Greenhaus et al., 2008). It can be argued that people with protean career orientation have better self-fulfilment because they have internal personal values that guide their career decisions and are self-directed in charting the course of their career. Adopting a protean self-directed approach make individuals scan the business environment regularly and identify job opportunities that best fulfil their expectations (Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 2015; Cortellazzo et al., 2020). Because of the values driven and self-directed attributes of a protean career, an individual who has a protean career attitude is able to plan and manage his/her career though gainfully employed in an organisation. Moreover, protean career attitudes have been linked to correlate with career satisfaction (De Vos & Soens, 2008; O'Shea et al., 2014) and career success (Grimland et al., 2012; O'Shea et al., 2014).

Research has empirically examined the role of protean career attitude in career success, career satisfaction, employability and other behavioural attitudes (Briscoe et al., 2006; Cortellazzo et al., 2020; Enache et al., 2011; O'Shea et al., 2014). Briscoe et al. (2006) used a 14-item assessment scale to measure the two dimensions of the protean career attitude. The result

showed that protean career attitude was positively correlated with proactive personality, openness to experience and other personal career attitudes (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Enache et al. (2011) analysed relationship between gender differences and subjective career success. The analysis indicated that women's career success is positively related with self-direction and negatively related with personal values. This finding agrees with the study Sullivan et al. (1998) which suggested that women are more likely than men to prefer self-directed careers (Greenhaus et al., 2008). Also, Cortellazzo et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between protean career orientation and employability outcomes. Data was collected from a sample of new graduate students and the study revealed that contrary to prior research which focused on the two primary competencies of protean career "self-awareness" and "adaptability", other behavioural competencies such as positive outlook and organisational awareness were associated with the protean career orientation.

The study further revealed that adopting a protean career orientation could improve employability. These studies show the various ways the protean career attitude can be examined. The protean career concept does not signify a specific set of behaviours, rather it implies an attitude toward career that reflects an individual's values, identity and autonomy (Bernado & Salanga, 2019). However, there are limited qualitative research exploring the protean carer attitude, rather more studies focus on quantitative methodology (Agarwala, 2008; Briscoe at al., 2006; Cortellazzo et al., 2020; Enache et al., 2011; O'Shea et al., 2014). The next section discusses the boundaryless career attitude.

2.5.6.2 Boundaryless Career Attitude

The boundaryless career emerged in response to the “boundaryless organisation” (Ashkenas et al., 1995; Baruch 2004; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The term ‘*boundaryless career concept*’ was first developed by DeFillippi and Arthur (1994). as a response to the changes in the direction of organisation boundaries (Baruch, 2004; Volmer & Spurk, 2010). However, the concept was popularized by Arthur and Rousseau’s (1996) book (*The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*) (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). A boundaryless career exists when a career transcends the boundaries of a single employer and an individual has a career with many employers through changes in jobs or even occupation (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2006; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). Individuals are able to move across the boundaries of different employers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

According to Arthur and Rousseau (1996), a boundaryless career is different from a traditional organisational career as it represents independence from a single employer for resources, career advancement (upward hierarchical mobility) and work success (Bird, 1994; Greenhaus et al., 2008; Miner & Robinson, 1996; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). The boundaryless career consists of two important types of mobility: physical mobility and psychological mobility (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Bernado & Salanga, 2019; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996; Greenhaus et al., 2008; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). The physical mobility

which means transition across boundaries and psychological mobility referring to the perception or orientation to make the transitions (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Physical mobility also known as organisational mobility preference means the desire to engage in actual moves between different jobs, occupations and organisations (Volmer & Spurk, 2010; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). While the psychological mobility also referred to as a boundaryless mindset signifies a person's mindset or orientation to be mobile (Volmer & Spurk, 2010). Thus, a person with a boundaryless career attitude or orientation has the desire and ability to work with people across different organisations outside the context of his/her current organisation without formally changing employers (Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). Example of people who engage in boundaryless career are freelancers. Freelancers are self-employed people who are not committed to a single employer but enjoy working with different people across different organisations.

Scholars have identified potential obstacles of adopting a boundaryless career attitude. The limitations include individuals learning how to work in new teams and with new co-workers each time they make a career transition (Van Emmerik & Euwema, 2007; Sullivan & Baruch 2009) and individuals facing the stigma of being classified as temporary workers because they are not stable within an organisational structure (Sullivan & Baruch 2009) amongst others. Nevertheless, there are benefits associated with adopting the protean and boundaryless career orientations (PBCO). Individuals who adopt the protean and boundaryless career orientations are adaptable and have a healthy response to uncertain career environments (Arthur & Rosseau, 1996; De Vos

& Soens, 2008; Waters et al., 2014; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). Moreover, individuals with protean and boundaryless career orientations are able to plan their career themselves and are more likely to be self-fulfilled and have a successful career.

The protean and boundaryless career orientations are similar in their focus on individuals playing an active role in achieving career success (Bernado & Salanga, 2019). The protean and boundaryless career attitudes are different from the organisation career models as the protean career attitude majors on self-direction and personal values while the boundaryless career attitude focuses on mobility beyond organisation boundaries (Bernado & Salanga, 2019). Based on the benefits of protean and boundaryless career orientations, researchers have promoted the adoption of protean and boundaryless career orientations and suggested that these orientations should be included as part of career counselling (Taber & Briddick, 2011; Waters et al., 2014; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019).

2.5.6.3 Post-Corporate Career Model

Peiperl and Baruch's (1997) "Post-Corporate Career" model was introduced after the protean and boundaryless careers emerged. This model is similar to the boundaryless career as it focuses on careers beyond organisation boundaries. Peiperl and Baruch's (1997) model focuses on careers available for individuals after their exit from the corporate world. Peiperl and Baruch (1997) developed the "Post-Corporate Career" model in response to the changes in organisational structure (Nishanthi, 2016) and careers. The model

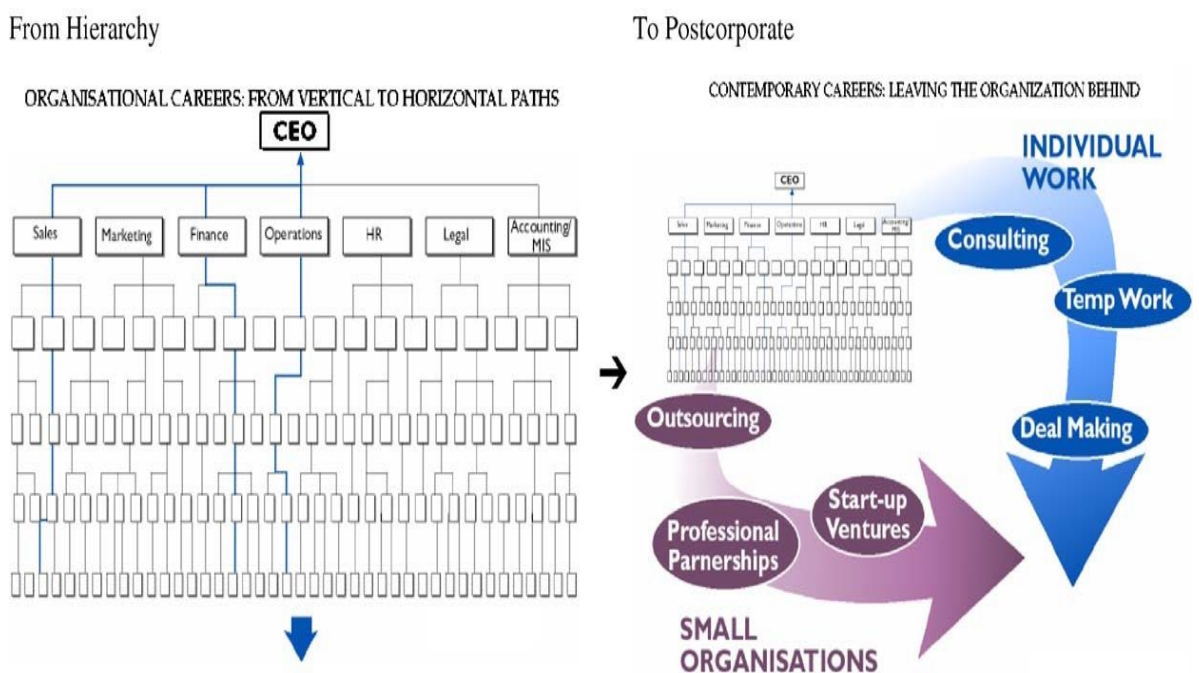
offers a detailed discuss on the career moves options and directions available for individuals outside the boundary of a single employer (Baruch, 2004).

According to Peiperl and Baruch (1997), organisational career systems have been thrown into disarray due to cutbacks, occasional layoffs and changing business environments. Thus, the psychological contract of employment is changing as employees are no longer guaranteed long term career progression (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997). Due to the limited promotion opportunities, the horizontal career path came into existence. Therefore, the contemporary career system moved from vertical to horizontal career path as shown in Figure 3.4. The horizontal career path enabled cross-functional and geographic progression of jobs; thus, employees could grow and develop their skill base (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997). With the horizontal career path, the contemporary organisational career system became more flexible and there were multiple paths to promotion and growth (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997).

Peiperl and Baruch (1997) describes the 'post corporate career' using the analogy of a successful entrepreneur who left a digital equipment corporation to run a safety testing lab off-site. Peiperl and Baruch (1997) further explained that the entrepreneur still has a relationship with the parent company as he is not wanting to lose his expertise and service levels. The entrepreneur feels satisfied with this decision as he is more independent, spends more time with family and not subject to company policies. This analogy depicts the post corporate career. This type of career constitutes of: 1) individuals exiting an organisation either voluntarily or involuntarily, 2) these individuals still keep in

contact with the organisations they have left and become trusted vendors such as consultants, 3) individuals have independence and flexibility to make their own choices and 4) individuals can identify with a chosen profession or industry rather than a single employer (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). Thus, people leaving the corporate work environment and adopting this type of career can engage in start-up ventures, consulting, temporary working and others as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The Post Corporate Career Model: Moving from Traditional to Post-Corporate



Source: (Baruch, 2006, p.130)

The post-corporate career model emphasizes that people are able to leave stable organisational career systems and navigate their own careers (Baruch, 2004). Individuals who adopt this career preference are at the advantage of having multiple careers to choose from, thus their career can be multi-

directional (Baruch, 2004). They are also in control of their work schedules, have a better work-life balance and can work remotely (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). Peiperl and Baruch (1997) also highlighted the limitations of the model. They affirmed that the post-corporate career might isolate people as there is less contact with co-workers compared to when people work physically in an office setting. Another potential limitation of the post-corporate career is that some individuals might not enjoy working and planning their careers on their own for long and might want to go back to work in an organisation.

This section discussed the different contemporary individual career models existing in literature. The contemporary individual career models came into prominence after the major shift from traditional organisational careers to more flexible multi-directional careers. The protean and boundaryless careers are best viewed as attitudes or orientations rather than an actual career system itself (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Greenhaus et al., 2008). While the post-corporate career model describes how individuals can manage their careers after exit from an organisation. Despite the agreed importance of organisational career management (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Baruch, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch 2002; Baruch, 2004; Creed & Hood, 2009), the theoretical underpinning of the organisational career management literature is still weak (Arnold & Cohen, 2007; Arthur et al., 1989; Creed & Hood, 2009). And most of the career theories and career theoretical frameworks in empirical studies are based on individual rather than organisational or joint perspectives (Baruch 2002; Holland, 1959; Krumboltz, 1994; Roe, 1956; Schein, 1996, Super 1957).

The review of the models of organisational career systems would be conducted in the organisational career management section.

2.5.7 Individual Career Management

The definition of a career was established in Section 2.7.1. Following the definition of the career and career path terms, this section discusses career management. Career management can be organisation oriented or individual oriented. However, the “career management” term overlaps with “organisational career management” and these two words are often used interchangeably in literature. Therefore, in this study, career management refers to “individual career management” while career management from the organisation perspective would be referred to as “organisational career management”. Career management can also be referred to as career self-management (Hirschi et al., 2020; Weng & McElroy, 2010). Career planning, career management and career development are overlapping terms used interchangeably in the career literature, by practioners and employers (Creed & Hood, 2009).

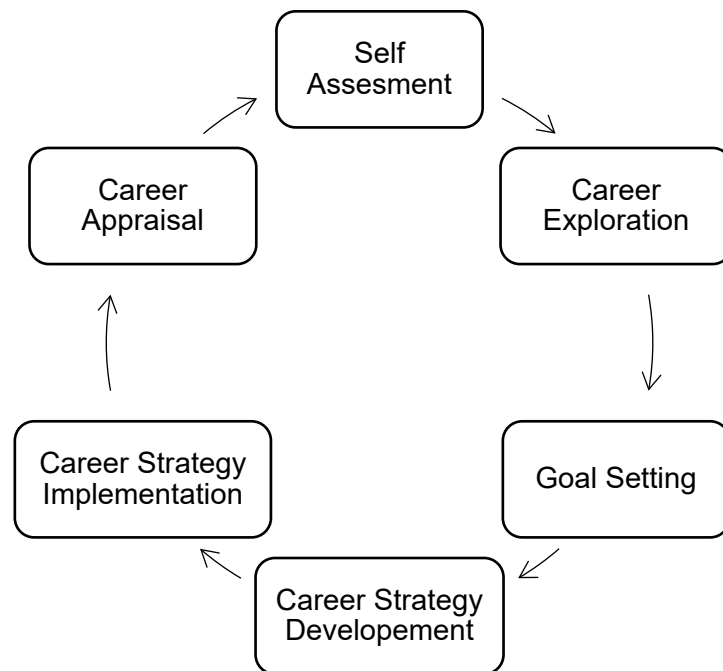
There has been a rise in the school of thought supporting the notion that career management is the responsibility of oneself and not the organization’s (Clarke, 2008; Enache et al., 2013; Wesarat et al., 2014). This argument reflects in the various definitions of career existing in literature as a career is first seen as the property of an individual before the organisation’s responsibility (Arthur et al., 1989; Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992; Baruch, 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2010). However, recent studies have started affirming that career planning and

management is a shared responsibility between individuals and organisations (Budhwar & Baruch 2003; Canaj et al., 2021; Herriot & Pemberton, 1996; Schein, 1978; Baruch, 2006). In this line, individual career management would be reviewed first before discussing career planning and management from both the individual and organisational perspectives.

Therefore, career management simply means the active management of one's professional career. Individual career management (ICM) or career self-management involves individuals planning their own careers and engaging in personal career development to achieve their career goals (Canaj et al., 2021; Orpen, 1994). Career management is the process by which individuals gather information about their values, skills, strengths and weakness; identify career goals and engage in career strategies that aims to achieve the desired career goals (Greenhaus, 1987; Noe, 1996). From the definition, Noe (1996) proposed that career management consists of three dimensions namely: career exploration (gathering of information about one's talents, interests, values, strengths and weaknesses), identification and development of career goals and career strategy implementation. Career exploration can also be referred to as career planning (Creed & Hood, 2009; Patrick & Kumar, 2011). In agreement, Patrick and Kumar (2011) suggested that the career planning and management comprises of four stages namely: (1) **Self**: gathering information about oneself in order to make an informed career decision, (2) **Options**: exploring and gathering information on interested occupation/career opportunities, (3) **Match**: this phase involves choosing both a short term and a long term option among the preferred occupation types, and lastly (4)

Action: development of the steps needed to take in order to achieve the expected goal, for example: additional training and education. Based on Noe (1996) and Patrick and Kumar (2011) definitions of career planning and management, the CPM process is shown below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Career Planning and Management Process



Source: Adapted from Noe (1996) and Patrick and Kumar (2011)

This type of career management is best suitable when people are looking for jobs or changing careers. However, while employed in an organisation, a career self-management or ICM can either focus on enhancing one's career within the organisation (internal ICM) or at furthering one's career outside the organisation (external ICM) (Canaj et al., 2021; Sturges et al., 2002). Internal individual career management refers to activities (personal development, networking, striving to hit performance targets) an employee engages in with the aim of getting recognized and promoted (Canaj et al., 2021). While external individual career management refers to individuals furthering their career

outside of their present organisation by keeping their CVs up to date, looking out for better job opportunities and participating in external networking events (Canaj et al., 2021; Chiaburu et al., 2006; Sturges et al., 2002, 2008, 2010).

People who engage in career self-management are self-directed and actively involved with lifelong learning (Muja & Appelbaum, 2012). Therefore, individuals with protean and boundaryless career orientations are likely to be involved in individual career management. Individual career management is important to people who have temporary or short-term contract jobs (Skilton & Bravo, 2008). While they are work on temporary projects, they are developing useful skills and actively seeking opportunities to work in other organisations. In addition, individual career management fosters career satisfaction as people are in control of their career development (King, 2004; Raabe et al., 2007) and not dependent on a structured program or activity within an organisation. Nevertheless, employers are able to put processes in place that allow the organisation to help employees develop and manage their own careers (De Vos et al., 2009; Hall, 2002; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). In this line, organisational career management is discussed in the next section.

2.5.8 Organisational Career Management

Organisational career management (OCM) has been established as one of the core human resource management elements (Lazarova et al., 2012) and has appeared to be one of the fastest developing areas in the human resource management literature (Baruch, 1999; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Hall, 1996). A major drawback in the career research as highlighted in the previous section is that scholars have used the terms career management, organisational career management, career system, career planning and management, career management practices and career development practices interchangeably to indicate support provided by organisations to employees (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). Thereby making the organisational career management term ambiguous to people who are not familiar with the career literature. As a result of this ambiguity in literature, the definition of OCM would reflect any of the following terms (career management, career development, organisational career management, career system, career planning and management, career management practices and career development practices) However, for the purpose of clarity, this study sticks to organisational career management to indicate support provided by organisations to employees.

Career planning and management (CPM) refers to a comprehensive approach to all the activities and techniques facilitated by an organisation that promotes the career development of employees (Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). The activities and techniques facilitated by the organisation include training, performance appraisal for career planning, career counselling, job postings, mentoring program amongst others (Baruch, 1996; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000;

Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; De Vos & Cambre, 2017; Hernaus et al., 2019; Yahya et al., 2004). These OCM practices would be discussed in detail in 2.4.10. In line with career development, OCM is seen as management practices that aim to facilitate and promote employees' career development in organisations (Baruch, 1999; Baruch, 2006; De Vos et al., 2009; Guan et al., 2015; Gutteridge et al., 1993). Through OCM, organisations are able to play an important role in the development of their human assets (Baruch, 2006; Dehghani, 2014). Mayo (1991) defined career management as the design and implementation of organisational processes that enable careers to be coordinated in a way that satisfy the needs of the organisation and the preferences and capabilities of the employees. This definition highlights two important aspects of OCM. The first is the organisation's role in employee career planning and management while the second emphasizes career planning in such a way that meets both the needs of the organisation and the preferences and capabilities of the employees (Yahya et al., 2004). This career planning and management elements of the definition agrees with Budhwar and Baruch's (2003) definition as they suggested that OCM involves two main aspects: career planning (preparing for employees' future) and management (operating and activating career plans). OCM has been linked to employee career success. OCM also refers to the programmes or activities provided by organisations to support their employees' career success (Kong et al., 2010; Wesarat et al., 2014). The various definitions of OCM over the years are highlighted in Table 7.

Table 7: Organisational Career Management Definitions

Author (s)	Organisational Career Management Definition
Pazy (1988)	Organisational career management is “usually referred to the policies and practices deliberately designed by the organizations in order to enhance the career effectiveness of their employees” (p. 313)
Orpen (1994)	Organisational career management is “usually employed to cover the various policies and practices, deliberately established by organizations to improve the career effectiveness of their employees” (p. 28)
Mayo (1991)	Career management is “the design and implementation of organizational processes that enable careers to be planned and managed in a way that optimizes both the needs of the organization and the preferences and capabilities of individuals “
Baruch (1996)	Organisational career planning and management refers to “a comprehensive approach to all the activities and techniques facilitated by the organization which are concerned with the career development of its employees” (p.40)
Baruch and Peiperl (2000)	Organisational career management is “concerned with the organization carrying out activities relevant to the career development of its employees” (p. 349)
Crawshaw (2006)	Organisational career management refers to “those policies and practices developed and implemented by an organisation to support the career development of their employees” (p. 99)
Yahya et al., (2004)	Organisational career management “cover various activities, programs, and policies employed by the management team or employer to support individual career planning and strategies” (p.76)
Hernaus et al., (2019)	Career management is “highly relevant set of policies, programs or activities that regulate the movement and

life cycle of employees over time by offering a long-term developmental perspective” (p.87).

Source: Adapted from Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011)

The above definitions of OCM indicates that OCM consist of set of activities, programmes or policies used for career planning, management and employee development. These dimensions of OCM would be discussed in detail in the next section.

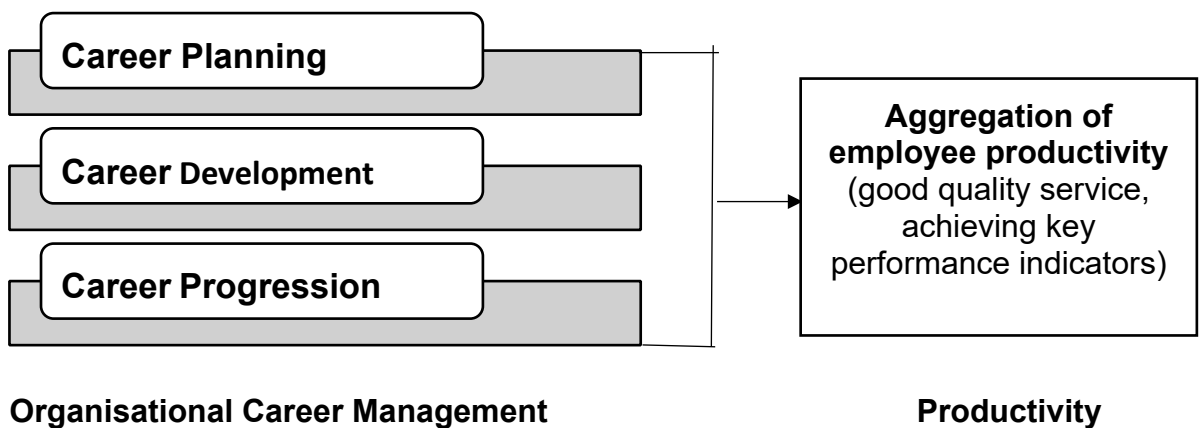
2.5.9 Dimensions of Organisational Career Management

The previous section established the various definitions of OCM. Baruch (1996) defined organisational career planning and management as the comprehensive approach to all activities facilitated by the organisation that promotes career development of employees. From this definition, the career planning, management and development dimensions of OCM are deduced. In addition to the career planning and career development dimensions identified from the above OCM definitions, several studies have explored different dimensions of OCM. Yahya et al (2004) examined OCM in terms of career management policy, career development and career information; and linked these dimensions to individual employee performance. Mwashila (2017) explored OCM in terms of career planning, career advancement and mentoring and examined their impact on academic staff performance. Moreover, Hartzenberg (2002) posited that OCM consists of career planning, career pathing and career development elements. Taking the different dimensions of OCM identified in literature into consideration this study adopts

to view organisational career management in terms of career planning, career development and career progression. It is important to explore career progression because it is an integral part of organisational career. Kakui and Gachunga (2016) further affirmed that career revolves around three important themes: advancement in career position, stability within an occupational field and evolving sequence of an individual's work experience.

The three dimensions of organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) are linked to productivity (already discussed in section 2.5). which serves as the conceptual framework of the study as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 7: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Thus, study aims to explore how organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) is carried out in MSMEs and its relationship and impact on productivity in workplace. The three dimensions are discussed below.

2.5.9.1 Organisational Career Planning

Career planning is the first and an important stage in the career management process (Noe, 1996). Career planning process involves helping employees identify needs, aspirations, abilities, opportunities and desires so as to establish human development programs to implement their career goals (Antoniou, 2010). Career planning is seen as the responsibility of both the organisation and individual (Antoniou, 2010; Atkinson, 2002; Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Chetana & Mohapatra, 2017; Lyria et al., 2012; Wesarat et al., 2014; Yahya, 2004) and it requires special efforts (Baruch, 1996). Thus, individuals are able to identify their career aspirations and abilities through assessment and counselling; while the organisation identifies its needs, opportunities and make provisions for required training and career development (Antoniou, 2010). Career planning therefore leads to the matching of individual and organisational career needs and goals (Mwashila, 2017). Byars and Rue (2000) asserted that a successful career planning and management consist of inputs from the employee, employee's immediate manager and the organisation. Antonio (2010) highlighted the roles the employee, manager and organisation play in career planning. The description of roles is highlighted below:

Table 8: Employee, Manager and Organisation's roles in Career Planning

Employee's Role	Doing a self-assessment, taking the initiative to seek feedback from peers and managers regarding their strengths and weaknesses, identify career goals and prepare action plans
Manager's Role	Managers are expected to act as a coach, evaluator, counsellor and referral agent. The manager is expected to provide employees with

information regarding job vacancies, training courses and development opportunities. The manager identifies employees with talent, provides employees with career development coaching by evaluating employees' current and future career goals, setting action plans to achieve the career goals identified and pastoral support to employees who feel stressed or unhappy at work

Organisation's roles The organisation is responsible for providing the necessary resources to facilitate successful career planning. The resources include: career workshops, career counselling, printed or electronic career guides and information centre where employees can get information about training, development and career progression opportunities

Source: Adapted from Antonio (2010)

Talent management precedes career planning and managers have the responsibility of identifying employees that add value to the organisation and have high potential. Career planning hence provides guidance to employees and help employees maximize their potentials to the fullest (Lyria et al., 2012). Once training and development needs are identified in the career planning stage, employee career development commences.

2.5.9.2 Organisational Career Development

Career development is a vital component of human resource development (HRD) (Conlon, 2004; Egan et al., 2006; McLagan, 1989; Marsick & Watkins, 1994). Robbins (1993) defined career development as a way by which an organisation can sustain or increase employees' productivity, and at the same time preparing them for a changing world. Through career development, employees' capabilities and skills are improved thus leading to increased

productivity. However, the definition implies that the main responsibility of career development relies only on the organisation (Appelbaum et al., 2002). This is not entirely correct as career development involves the inputs of both the organisation and individual. Majority of career studies have reached a consensus that career development is the responsibility of both the organisation and employee (Bolyard, 1981; Gutteridge, et al., 1993; Gyansah & Guantai, 2018; Kakui & Gachunga, 2016; Leibowitz et al., 1986; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Pavloff & Amitin, 1984). Career development is therefore defined as a joint, on-going effort between organisations and employees with the aim to upgrade employees' knowledge, skills and competencies (Patrick & Kumar, 2011).

Career development can also be viewed as a system. An organisational career development system refers to the organised and planned effort to link individual's career needs with the organization's workforce requirements (Gutteridge, et al., 1993; Leibowitz et al., 1986). It means planning and aligning employees' career and development needs with the organisation's need, strategic goals and objectives. In this line, scholars have emphasized that career development in organisations should be linked to the business plan in order to achieve maximum results (Creed & Hood, 2009; McClelland, 1994; Winterton & Winterton, 1999). Figure 8 shows a model of organisational career development system that balances individual career needs and aspirations with organisation's workforce requirements.

Figure 8 Organisational Career Development System



Source: Adapted from Gutteridge et al. (1993) and Hartzenberg (2002)

A career development system can be effective in creating a supportive organisational culture as both organisational and individual needs can be met simultaneously (Juneja, 2022). Once a career development system is in place and the organisation and individual needs are identified, career development can commence. Employees are developed through career development programs. Career development programs or practices are formal structured set of activities offered to employees by an organisation with the aim of increasing employees' awareness, knowledge, abilities and career progression possibilities (Hartzenberg, 2002; Milkovich et al., 1985). Through career development programs, employees are developed, can grow within the organisation, are able to expand and upgrade their skills to the maximum (Juneja, 2022). Hence, a set of highly trained and developed workforce

ultimately enhances competitive advantage of an organisation (Creed & Hood, 2009) because employee competencies and organisational capabilities are improved. This argument agrees with the previous definition of career development by Robbins (1993) as it links career development to employee productivity. Sometimes, the career development programs, or practices term is interchangeably used with organisational career management practices in literature because they have the same meaning (Kakui & Gachunga, 2016; Lyria, et al., 2014). Examples of career development programs include: training, coaching, mentoring, succession planning, career counselling, performance appraisals, performance development reviews, personal development plans amongst others. All these activities would be discussed in the organisational career management practices section.

Career development should be considered by all organisations regardless of size, sector, market or profile because it can be used as a strategy to bridge the gap between current organisational performance and expected future organisational performance (Kakui & Gachunga, 2016). In addition to competitive advantage and performance improvement, career development is crucial for the attraction and retention of committed and efficient workforce (Kinyili, 2019). The next section discusses the last dimension of organisational career management.

2.5.9.3 Organisational Career Progression

Organisational career progression often referred to as career advancement (Kinyili, 2019) means the movement of employees in an organisation either in a vertical or horizontal manner. The vertical movement represents upward career progression which means employees progressing vertically on the career ladder moving from a junior position all the way to a top management position (Baruch, 1997; Doyle, 2020). While the horizontal movement refers to lateral career progression where employees are able to change positions to assume different responsibilities but still on the same career level (Malec, 2022). Employees advance by moving sideways rather than moving up when on a horizontal career path (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). The vertical career progression is widely used in large organisations (Baruch, 1999) where there is a hierarchical organisational structure, clear career path and there are sufficient departments and available roles to be occupied. However, MSMEs are at a disadvantage of offering their employees vertical career progression because of their size and flat organisational structure. Further to this argument, Baruch and Peiperl (2000) stated that organisational career management might not exist in MSMEs because of their small size. Meanwhile, due to the changing landscape of the work environment, organisation structure delayering and limited promotional opportunities (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997; Baruch, 1999; Greenhaus, et al., 2010), contemporary organisations both large and MSMEs are embracing horizontal or lateral career progression. Nevertheless, the horizontal career progression

strategy is effective because employees are able to explore their skills and creativity in different fields (Daisy, 2018).

The career planning and development elements of organisational career management focuses on employee growth which should ultimately lead to career progression (Lyria et al., 2014). However, because of flatter hierarchies and limited promotion opportunities, organisations are becoming reluctant to discuss about career progression and instead focus on training and development programs (Ball, 1997). Thereby making employees frustrated and demotivated. Career progression is therefore an integral component of organisational career management and should be considered alongside career planning and development when developing an organisational career system. The next section reviews the organisational career management practices existing in the career literature.

2.5.10 Organisational Career Management Practices

Organisational career management practices also known as career planning and management (CPM) practices refer to the various activities and programmes facilitated by an organisation to promote career development of its employees (Baruch, 1996; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). OCM practices takes its root in HRM practices (Baruch, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). Organisational career management practices are human resource management practices that are concerned with career planning and management (Baruch, 1996, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). OCM practices are programs carried out to manage the careers of employees, provide the context in which careers can develop and match organisational and individual needs (Singh, 2018). A number of OCM practices have been identified in literature. (Baruch, 1996; Baruch, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003) assessed the CPM practices available in the literature in the 1980s and 1990s and stated that Walker and Guttridge (1979) identified 10 CPM activities however some were closer to HRM than it was to CPM. Gutteridge and Otte (1983) and Gutteridge et al. (1993) also identified CPM practices in their studies (Baruch, 1996; Baruch, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). However, Gutteridge and Otte (1983) only limited their discussion to 10 CPM practices while Gutteridge et al (1993) which had a broader list of CPM practices based their study on large business organisations which is not a true representation of broader practice (Baruch, 1996; Baruch, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003). Moving on from the drawbacks of the CPM practices identified, Baruch (1999) reviewed CPM practices existing in

organisations and provided a portfolio of OCM techniques and activities aimed to fit the 2000s or contemporary organisations. Table 9 shows the portfolio of OCM practices identified in Baruch (1999) and Baruch and Peiperl (2000) and Baruch (2003) studies.

Table 9: List of Organisational Career Management Practices

-
1. Performance appraisal as a basis for career planning
 2. Assessment centres
 3. Peer appraisal
 4. Upward appraisal
 5. Appraisal committees
 6. Career counselling by direct supervisor
 7. Career counselling by HR Department
 8. Lateral moves
 9. Formal mentoring
 10. Succession planning
 11. Career workshops
 12. Common career paths
 13. Dual ladder
 14. Written personal career plans for employees
 15. Career booklets/pamphlets
 16. Job postings about internal job openings
 17. Formal education as part of career development/tuition reimbursement
 18. Pre-retirement programs
 19. Secondments
-

20. Orientation/induction program

21. Special programs for dual career couples and ethnic minorities

The identified OCM practices were grouped into five clusters based on two dimensions (sophistication and involvement) and then integrated into a comprehensive framework (Baruch, 1999) which was later developed into a model of an organisational career system by Baruch and Peiperl (2000). The models of organisational career systems existing in literature are discussed in the following section.

2.5.11 Contemporary Models of Organisational Career System

Based on the OCM practices highlighted in the previous section, organisational career theorists Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Mahehwari (2011) developed models of organisational career system. These models of career system are the bedrock and main theories underpinning this study. This section reviews the existing models of organisational career system in literature and highlights their strengths and limitations. The insight drawn from the review of these models would be useful in developing the proposed conceptual organisational career management framework mentioned in the research objectives.

Prior to the development of the contemporary models of organisational career system by Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003) and Baruch (2004b), some models of career development systems were in existence (Herriot & Pemberton, 1996; Schein, 1978; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988). Though

significant theoretical models offered by Schein (1978), Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988) and Herriot and Pemberton (1996) were in existence; the theoretical base of organisational career management was still considered quite thin and organisational aspect in career theory still lacked a comprehensive framework (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003). Therefore, in an attempt to address these shortcomings, Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003) and Baruch (2004b) developed models of organisational career system. These models are two-dimensional model of career management practices and the career active system triad (CAST).

2.5.11.1 Two-Dimensional Model of Career Management Practices

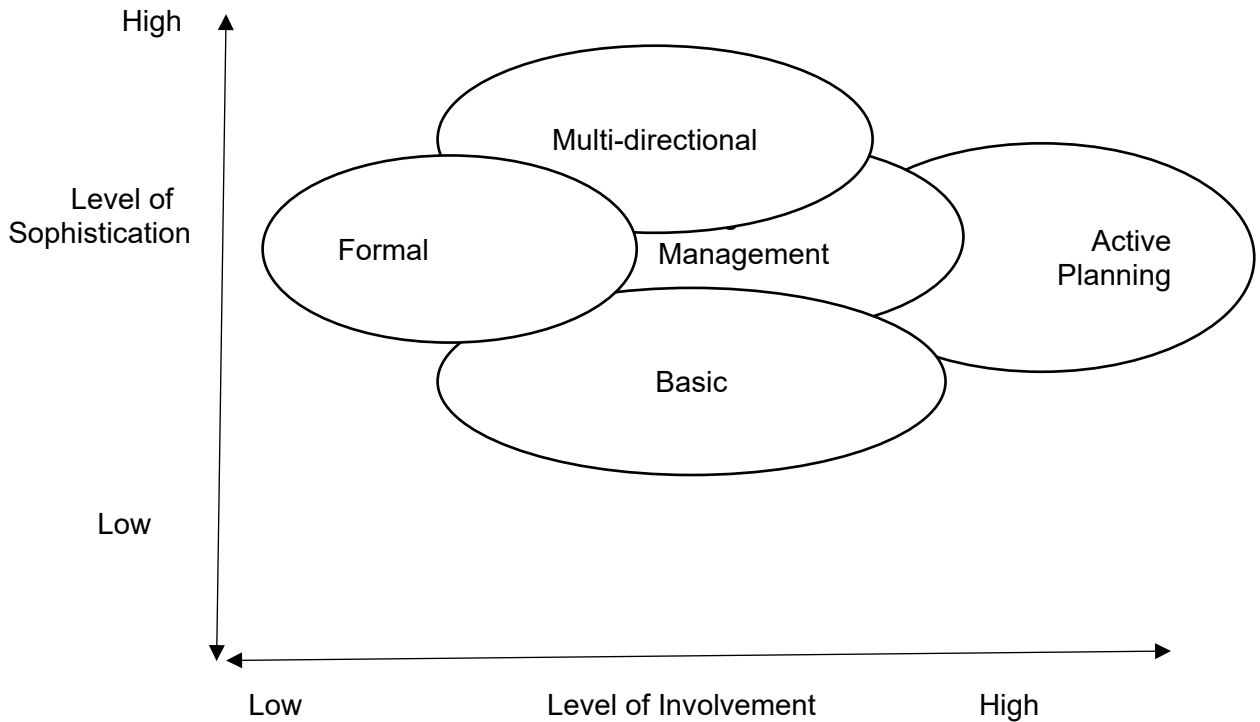
The building of Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) model began with reviewing broader HRM practices and sources which had lists of OCM practices in literature (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). After, sources with lists of HRM activities that had a close relationship with CPM (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Dalton & Thompson, 1986; Flippo, 1984; Gutteridge & Otte, 1983; Hall, 1986; Torrington, et al., 1985; Tyson & Fell, 1986) and OCM practices (Baruch 1996; Bowen & Hall 1977; London & Stumpf, 1982; Louchheim & Lord, 1988) were reviewed, 17 OCM practices were chosen and used to develop the model though 21 OCM practices were identified in Baruch's (1999) study. . The framework of the career system was built taking into considerations organisational characteristics such as age, size, industry sector, unionization, organisational climate and reliance on internal labour markets (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). A factor analysis was conducted and the 17 OCM practices were grouped into five clusters based on the specific set of organisational characteristics they reflected. The five clusters are:

- A) Basic:** This category has four OCM practices namely: job posting, formal education as part of career development, lateral moves and pre-retirement programs. This cluster was referred to as basic because (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000) affirmed that most organisations with HRM system would frequently engage in these practices. Baruch and Peiperl (2000) also highlighted that these basic OCM practices would fit older bureaucratic organisations rather than new contemporary organisations.
- B) Active Planning:** Four OCM practices are in this cluster, and they are: performance appraisal as a basis for career planning, career counselling by direct supervisor, career counselling by HR department and succession planning. These practices reflect career planning with the organisation actively involved in the careers of employees and considers future plans of an organisation regarding vacant positions (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).
- C) Active Management:** The three practices in this group are assessment centres, career workshops and formal mentoring. These practices have informational elements and through these activities employees can gather information useful for their career development (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).
- D) Formal:** Career booklets and/or pamphlets, dual career ladder and written personal career plans for employees are the three practices in this category. They represent forms of career management and provide structured mediums through which employees are provided with career information and presentation of opportunities (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).
- E) Multi-Directional:** The last three practices in this group are common career paths, peer appraisal and upward appraisal. Peer and upward appraisals focus on receiving feedbacks which could aid employee

development while the common career paths are linked to formal career structures (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).

The five clusters of OCM practices were composed into a model based on two dimensions: the level of sophistication of the OCM practices and the level of involvement on the part of the organisation (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). The model is shown in Figure 9. The horizontal axis represents level of sophistication while the vertical axis represents level of involvement. The *Multi-directional* cluster which appears at the top the most sophisticated cluster but moderate on level of involvement. The three middle clusters (Formal, Active Management and Active Planning) were all moderate on level of sophistication. Out of the three middle clusters, *Formal* cluster had the least level of involvement, *Active Management* was moderate and Active Planning cluster had the highest level of involvement from the organisation. The *Basic* cluster was low on level of sophistication and moderate on level of organisation involvement

Figure 9: Two-dimensional Model of Career Management Practices



	Multi-directional Peer appraisal Upward appraisal	
Formal Written personal career planning Dual career ladder Career books Common career paths	Active Management Assessment centers Formal mentoring Career workshops	Active Planning Performance appraisal as a basis for career planning Career counselling by HR and direct supervisor Succession planning
	Basic Job postings Formal education Pre-retirement program Lateral moves	

Source: (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000, p.359)

Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) descriptive model of organisational career system is relevant because it provides list of OCM practices confirmed to exist in organisations (Baruch, 1999; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003) and their respective levels of sophistication and organisation involvement.

However, there are major limitations to this model. This model only provides levels of sophistication and involvement of OCM practices but does not provide a framework that shows how they can be integrated into an organisation's HRM processes. Another limitation of this model is that the model might not be entirely suitable for MSMEs. This is because the study focused on large organisations and so the OCM practices identified in literature and used for the research were OCM practices generated from large organisations. MSMEs might not be able to use this model of career system because some of the OCM practices might not be employed due to their size.

To address the first limitation of the lack of framework that that shows how the OCM practices can be integrated into organisational processes, Baruch (2003) developed a normative comprehensive six-dimensional model. Baruch (2003) improved on the Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) two-dimensional mode and added four more dimensions. The four additional dimensions are: strategic orientation, developmental focus, degree to which practice is relevant to organisational decision-making issues and innovative approach. The four dimensions were added to change the model from descriptive to normative with the aim of providing more comprehensive tools to evaluate the OCM practices (Baruch, 2003).

Notwithstanding, the limitation of Baruch's (2003) normative six-dimensional model of career systems have been identified in literature. The limitation is that the model might not be suitable for all organisations because the list of OCM practices used to build the model are broad ranging and OCM practices vary across organisations (Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011). OCM practices vary in their applicability and importance (Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011) depending on the individual business strategy (Gunz & Jalland, 1996; Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988), organisation size (Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Nguyen & Bryant, 2004; Singh & Vohra, 2009), technological infrastructure (Hempel, 2004; Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Mishra & Akman, 2010) and the organisational culture (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011). Following the improvement on the normative six-dimensional model of a career system, Baruch (2004b) developed another model called the CAST model which is discussed in the following section.

2.5.11.2 Career Active System Triad Model

Baruch's (2004b) *Career Active System Triad* (CAST) model considers careers from both the organisation and individual perspectives. The model reflects the contemporary consensus in literature that careers are the responsibility of both the organisation and individual (Antoniou, 2010; Atkinson, 2002; Barnett and Bradley, 2007; Chetana and Mohapatra, 2017; Lyria et al., 2014; Wesarat et al., 2014; Yahya, 2004). The CAST model is set at three levels of analysis: Values, Approaches and Behaviours (Baruch, 2006) as shown in Figure 8. This model shows how values lead to approaches and then finally result to certain behaviours on the part of the individual and

organisation. The values reflect the aspiration (for individuals) and strategy (for organisations) which then leads to approaches which is attitudes (for individuals) and policies (for organisations) (Baruch, 2006). Finally, the outcomes of both the values and approaches result to behaviours, which is actions (for individual) and managerial practices (for organisations) (Baruch, 2006).

Figure 10: The Career Active System Triad (CAST) Model

Level	Individual	Organisation
Values	Aspirations	Philosophies (Strategy)
Approaches	Attitudes	Policies
Behaviours	Actions	Practices

Source: (Baruch, 2006, p.130)

The CAST model provides a balanced viewpoint of how individuals and organisations view values, approaches and behaviours (Baruch, 2006). This model reflects contemporary careers as it engages the individual and organisation perspectives. Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) model only focused on the organisation perspective. However, there are major limitations to the CAST model. The model does not provide a framework to explain how values, approaches behaviours are relevant in organisational career management. Though, the model provides a balanced viewpoint of careers from both the individual and organisation, it does not show how individual, and organisation's needs are matched and met. Moreover, there are more levels to organisational careers apart from values, approaches and behaviours.

Based on the critiques of both models, the review of literature shows that Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) two-dimensional model of OCM practices might be more relevant to organisations than the CAST model.

2.5.11.3 Three-Dimensional Factor Structure of Organisational Career System

Krishnan and Mahehwari's (2011) three-dimensional factor structure of OCS is the fourth theoretical construct underpinning this study. This model of career system builds on and addresses the weaknesses of the existing career systems in the career literature. Krishnan and Mahehwari (2011) developed their model based on three organisational constructs deemed to be vital to a career system. The three constructs are labour market orientation, employee advancement orientation and employee lateral movement dimensions.

Labour market orientation is the "openness of a career system to the managerial labour market at other than entry levels" (Krishnan & Mahehwari, 2011, p.713). It is the act of looking for managerial potential either inside or outside of an organisation (Krishnan & Mahehwari, 2011; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1998). Internal labour market orientation refers to the progression of employees to managerial positions other than entry level recruitment while external labour market orientation involves recruiting external candidates to occupy managerial positions in an organisation (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Krishnan & Mahehwari, 2011; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1998). Therefore, Krishnan and Mahehwari (2011) asserted that an organisational career system should have a good balance of both internal and external labour market orientations. In addition, internal and external labour orientations should align

with an organisation's needs, strategies and objectives (Krishnan & Mahehwari, 2011).

Employee advancement orientation is similar to internal market orientation, and it refers to the extent of support employees receive regarding career advancement in an organisation (Krishnan & Mahehwari, 2011). Apart from job security, employees expect to be developed and advance on the career ladder of an organisation (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). Hence, the employee advancement orientation is relevant to the development of a career system. Employee advancement orientation involves the organisation engaging employees in organisational career management practices and providing the required support needed for career progression. Based on the OCM practices identified by Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Krishnan and Mahehwari (2011) suggested that employee advancement orientation should consist of career counselling, socialisation, succession planning, career information sharing and training and development support.

Employee lateral movement refers to the horizontal movement of employees along a career ladder rather than moving up (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). It involves employees getting transferred to different departments with similar status but with different responsibilities (Doyle, 2020). Hence, employee lateral movement can be through job rotation or job transfers (Krishnan & Mahehwari, 2011). This career advancement strategy helps employees to explore their skills and creativity in different fields (Daisy, 2018).

Insight the above discussion reveals that the three constructs of labour market orientation, employee advancement orientation and employee lateral movement are directed at career advancement or progression. Because horizontal career path or lateral movement is predominant in MSMEs (Baruch & Peiperl, 1997), this model is suitable for MSMEs as it has an employee lateral movement component. A major limitation of this model is that it only considers five OCM practices out of the 21 OCM practices identified by Baruch (1999).

As it has been established that the organisational career systems models of Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Mahehwari (2011) are the main theoretical constructs underpinning this research. This research therefore aims to address the weaknesses of these models, build on and extend the works of Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003) and Baruch (2004b) by developing a comprehensive framework of an organisational career system tailored for MSMEs which is the study's main contribution to theory and practice. The literature review moves on to discuss the challenges hindering MSMEs from adopting OCM practices, then links OCM with productivity. The chapter concludes by highlighting the gaps in literature and the chapter summary.

2.5.12 Challenges Preventing MSMEs from Adopting Organisational Career Management Practices

Organisational career management in MSMEs can be challenging because of the flat organisational structure and insufficient promotional opportunities. Often in MSMEs, employees are encouraged to work as one team rather than within different teams (Randstand, 2019). Several challenges facing contemporary organisations such as changes in psychological contract and business environment, decentralisation, frequent use of temporary workers amongst others have been identified during the literature review (Baruch, 1997; Greenhaus et al., 2010; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). These challenges might be the fundamental causes of hindrances preventing MSMEs from adopting OCM practices. Katsuro et al (2015) supports this argument and affirmed that increase in short term employment and transactional contracts pose a constraint on OCM in organisations. Organisations are in difficult positions and have to choose between training and developing permanent or temporary staff and/or developing both at an increased cost. Other obstacles to the adoption OCM activities identified by Katsuro et al (2015) are uncertainty about if OCM would pay off and decentralisation.

Furthermore, Goyer (2010) identified several factors discouraging SMEs from participating in career development and they were: lack of financial resources, fear of seeing their employees leave after the training is over, lack of time, lack of knowledge of training opportunities, lack of succession planning, lack of relevant courses, poor technique development/implementation and lack of motivation (employees and management). These findings agree with Lewis and Arnold (2012) who highlighted similar hindrances. Lewis and Arnold

(2012) examined organisational career management in the UK Retail Community and the study revealed that lack of time, budget restrictions, unsupportive management, poor employee attitude, poor OCM techniques development and implementation were the main perceived barriers to using OCM practices. Additionally, Baruch (2006) mentioned that strategic management of human capital, managing people's careers across borders (global careers) and diversity in organisation's workforce constitute major issues faced by organisations in organisational career management. The study findings and discussion chapters of this study would confirm if these challenges exist in the North East England MSMEs.

2.6 Linking Organisational Career Management in MSMEs to Productivity and Organisational Performance

This section synthesises the four streams of literature (MSME, human resource management, productivity and career) reviewed in this chapter by reviewing studies that explored the impact of OCM on productivity and organisational performance.

There is a consensus in the career literature that organisational career management improves employee and organisational performance (Dialoke, et al., 2016; Langeland et al., 1998; Lyria, et al., 2014, 2017; Orpen, 1994; Pazy, 1987; Roman et al., 2002; Yahya & Meruda, 2004). Patrick and Kumar (2011) investigated the relationship between career management, employee development and performance in information technology (IT) organisations in India. His results revealed that that career management improved employee development. OCM does not only improve productivity, but it has also been linked with improved motivation, career satisfaction, career commitment, employee satisfaction, competitive advantage, retention of skilled workforce, employee engagement and job involvement (Zhou & Li, 2008; Dehghani 2014; Salman & Khan, 2014; Wesarat et al., 2014; Moon & Choi, 2017; Bagdadli & Gianecchini 2018). Figure 11 shows how organisational career management can lead to improved productivity and organisational performance. From the figure below, when OCM practices are engaged in, it enhances service quality, employee productivity, motivation and employee engagement which leads to retention of skilled workforce or human capital, thus bringing about increased competitive advantage. With better service quality, customers are satisfied and then loyal to the organisation. With increased loyalty from customers,

financial performance of the organisation will improve in the long run. The review of literature therefore suggests that OCM which is a major element of HRM can be used as a strategy to improve productivity in MSMEs in the long run.

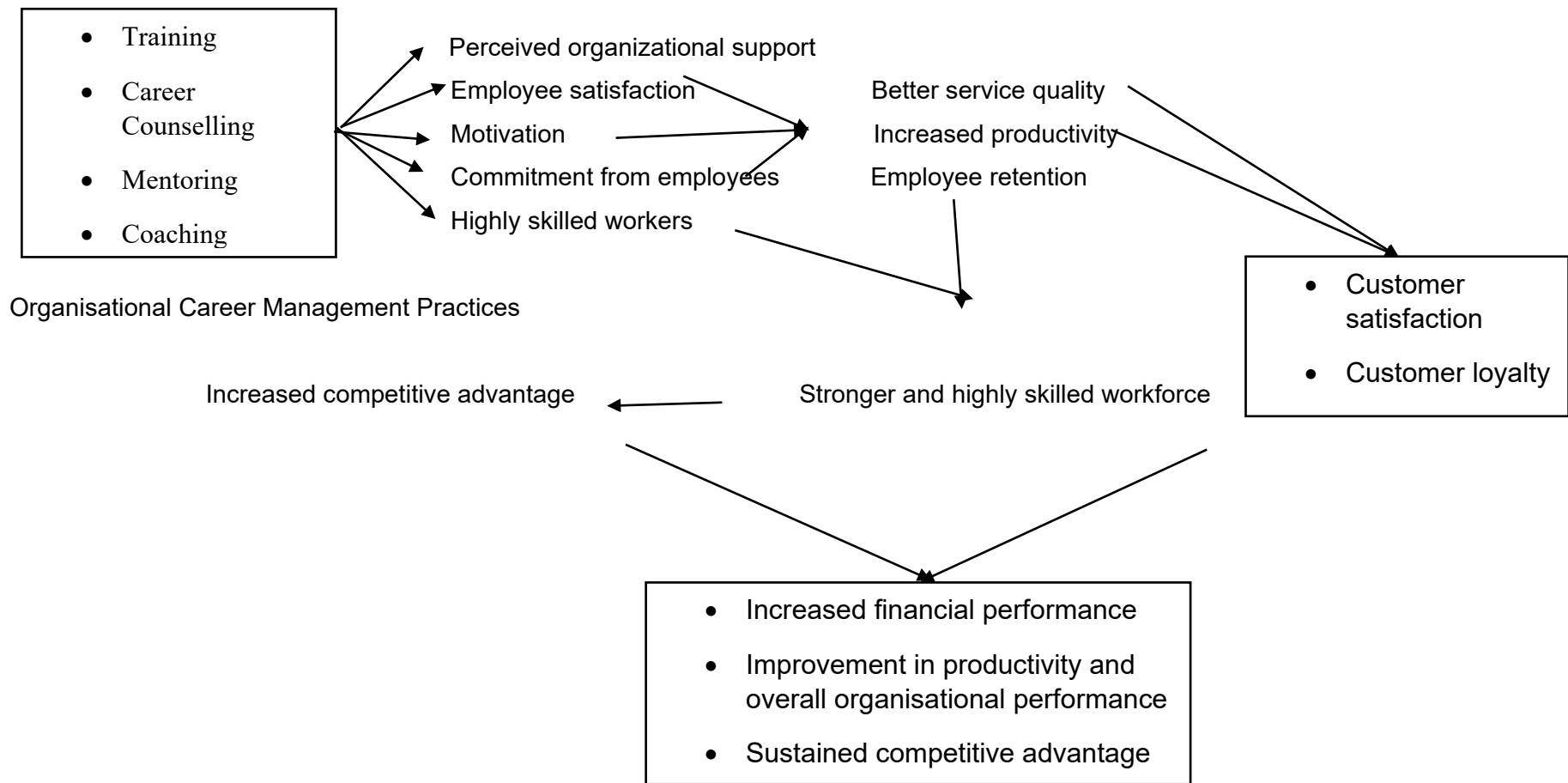


Figure 11: Linking Organisational Career Management to Productivity and Organisational Performance

Before this chapter concludes, gaps in literature identified from the literature review are discussed below.

The first gap in literature is that a large number of prominent career studies focus on large organisations (Baruch, 1996, 1999; 2003; 2006; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000), hence, neglecting small businesses. Due to this neglect, there is insufficient research on organisational careers in small businesses. Furthermore, it was established during the literature review that this study is underpinned on the theoretical constructs of Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) contemporary models of organisational career systems. While Krishnan and Maheshwari's (2011) three-dimensional factor structure of organisational career structure is suitable for MSMEs, the others might not be entirely suitable for MSMEs as they do not provide adequate framework to show how the system can be incorporated into organisational processes.

In order to address these gaps in literature, this research fills a gap in literature by exploring organisational careers in MSMEs. In addition, this research builds on the works of Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) and aims to develop an organisational career system based on the empirics of the study. This career system would consider the distinctiveness of MSMEs and incorporate careers from both the individual and organisational perspectives.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter began with the review of the MSME literature and then moved on to the human resource, productivity and career literatures. The growth of MSMEs in the UK and North East England was reviewed. This chapter then linked the HRM literature to the productivity literature stream. Thereafter, moved on to the most important literature in this research which is the career literature. The review of the career literature explored the existing career development theories, the traditional and contemporary models of career systems, individual career concepts. The literature review revealed that there are inadequate comprehensive theoretical frameworks of organisational career systems, and the career literature is focusing majorly on individual career management. The protean and boundaryless career attitudes emerged as the most widely researched individual models in the career literature. Furthermore, the review of literature revealed that the root cause of this limitation which is the fact that contemporary organisations have undergone significant changes which have affected careers in organisations. These significant changes have therefore led to individuals taking full charge of their careers and less reliant on organisations for career development and progression.

The review of the career literature then moves on to distinguish between individual career management and organisational career management. Based on the review of literature, it was established that organisational career management would be explored in the dimensions of organisational career planning, organisational career development and organisational career

progression. These three dimensions of organisational career management were linked to productivity to develop a conceptual framework. Models of organisational career systems existing in the career literature were reviewed and from this review of literature, the main theoretical constructs underpinning this study were highlighted. An in-depth review on the theoretical constructs of Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) was conducted, and the shortcomings of the models were highlighted. Following the review of the core streams of research which underpins this study, the next chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the methodological approach employed to conduct this research.

Chapter 3: Research Design, Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an in-depth and critical review of the human resource management, career and productivity streams of literature. It also explored the growth of MSMEs in the UK and North East England. The main theoretical constructs underpinning this research were identified and discussed in detail. Gaps in literature were highlighted and a link between engaging in organisational career management and improvement in organisational performance was established.

This chapter therefore presents and justifies the methodological approach employed to address the research aim and objectives of this doctoral study. The chapter begins with discussing the researcher's philosophical positions on ontology, epistemology and axiology, followed by a comprehensive discussion on the methodology, research strategy and methods of data collection. The methodological approaches of existing career studies are reviewed to support the researcher's methodological choice. The remainder of the chapter focuses on data analysis, ethical considerations, validity and reliability of the research approach. The chapter concludes by addressing the challenges faced during data collection and analysis.

3.1.1 Research Question and Objectives

Prior to a detailed discussion about the methodological approach of this doctoral study, the research question, aim and objectives mentioned in Chapter 1 are reiterated. The research question underpinning this exploratory study is:

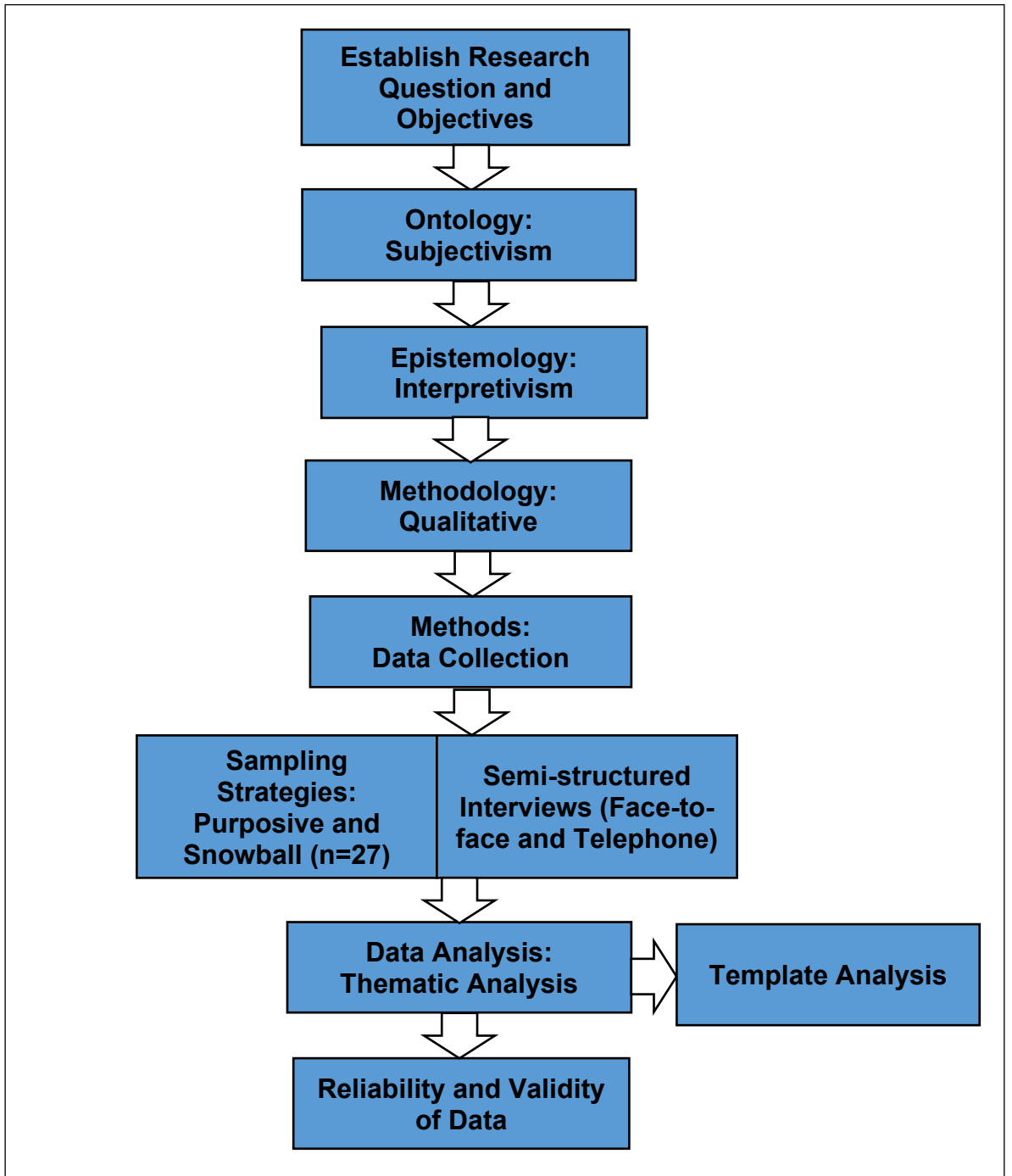
RQ: How impactful is organisational career management to the productivity of North East England micro, small and medium-sized enterprises?

And the overall research aim is to explore organisational career management in MSMEs from the perception of managers. To address the research question and aim, the following objectives are established:

1. To explore the presence and efficiency of organisational career systems in MSMEs.
2. To explore the organisation's perception of employee productivity
3. To explore the impact of career planning, career development and career progression on productivity.
4. To explore the perceived barriers hindering MSMEs from engaging in organisational career management practices.
5. To develop a conceptual organisational career framework based on the empirics of the study.

To answer the above research question and achieve the research objectives of this study, the research design below in Figure 12 was employed.

Figure 12: Research Design Framework of Study



3.2 Research Philosophy

Researchers bring certain beliefs and theories to research which are regarded as philosophical assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Philosophical assumptions are stances taken by a researcher that helps to provide direction regarding the researcher's view of reality (ontology), the researcher's knowledge about reality (epistemology), the value-stance taken by a researcher (axiology) and the methods used in the study (methodology) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to scholars, ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions are the three core constituents of research philosophy (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Palagolla, 2016; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Jackson (2013) asserted that ontological and epistemological assumptions should be considered carefully in order to make informed decisions regarding choice of methodology. The following sections discuss ontology, epistemology and axiology research philosophies. Methodology is discussed in section 3.4.

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology "is the philosophical study of the nature of reality" (Jackson, 2013, p.52). It is the branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions a researcher makes in order to believe that something is real (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Scotland, 2012). Ontology asks the question of what is the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addition, ontology asks the "question of what is the truth and what is the nature of being?" (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015, p.54). Hence, ontology helps

researchers to know how certain they can be about the nature and existence of the phenomenon being studied (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the philosophical study of nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated (Gall et al., 2003; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It is concerned about a researcher's aims to uncover knowledge to attain reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019). Epistemology asks the question of "what the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower is and what can be known?" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Since epistemology is concerned about nature of knowledge, a researcher's epistemological position is central to the choice of methodology approach (Jackson, 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

3.2.3 Axiology

Axiology is a branch of philosophy that studies values and judgments about the values (Ajay, 2021; Saunders, et al., 2012). The term 'Axiology' is derived from a Greek word 'Axios' which means 'worth' or 'value' (Li, 2016). Axiology is subdivided into ethics (theory of morality) and aesthetics (theory of taste, beauty, and judgment) (Deane, 2018; Farrow et al., 2020). Axiology often asks questions such as: To what extent can a research be objective? How does personal values affect the way research is conducted and reported? (Ajay, 2021). It involves "defining, evaluating and understanding concepts of right and wrong behaviour relating to the research" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thus, axiology refers to the ethical issues considered before conducting a research

and the values researchers are guided by when conducting research (Finnis, 1980; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The researcher values integrity, hence this research adhered to the Northumbria University Research Ethics and Governance guidelines before, during and after conducting this research. Ethical issues which the researcher considered are discussed extensively in section 3.6.

3.3 Research Paradigms

Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that philosophical assumptions are often applied within interpretative frameworks or research paradigms. A research paradigm is a set of basic beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and theoretical framework based on ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). A research paradigm is the conceptual lens through which a researcher views the world, interprets and acts within that world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, research paradigms refers to beliefs, patterns or framework of academic or scientific ideas and assumptions (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Olsen et al., 1992). Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified four major types of research paradigms and perspectives: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism. However, Saunders et al (2012) argued that pragmatism, positivism, realism and interpretivism are the main research philosophies within the scope of business studies. Other types of research paradigms identified in literature are: pragmatism, transformative and postmodern frameworks, feminist theories, queer theory and disability theories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Mills et al. (2006) asserted that researchers must choose

research paradigms that align with their beliefs (Levers, 2013). Positivism and interpretivism research philosophies are two widely discussed research paradigms in business and management research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, these two paradigms are discussed below.

3.3.1 Positivism

Positivism is grounded in scientific methods of investigation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) aimed to produce generalisations (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019). Positivists explore the social world with an assumption that “reality exists independently of humans” (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 53). Positivism or objectivism entails the assumptions that the social reality we research is external to us and others (Saunders et al., 2019). Positivism embraces the idea of a single reality (Nakpodia, 2015; Ragab & Arisha, 2018) and views reality as a concrete structure external to humans which would exist regardless of people’s actions (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Ragab & Arisha, 2018). The ontological position of positivists is realism while the epistemological position is objectivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This research paradigm views reality as a cause and effect relationship (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Thus, objectivists use scientific methods to observe, understand and interpret a reality (Diesing, 1996). Scholars have critiqued this philosophical stance and argued that while objective method is a good approach to study natural objects, it is not a suitable method when studying a social phenomenon (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Richards, 2003).

3.3.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism (also known as subjectivism) is concerned with the subjective understanding of individuals and their interpretation of the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interpretivism is based on the premise that people learn through experiencing things and reflecting on these experiences (Adom et al., 2016; Honebein, 1996). Interpretivism asserts that “individual perceptions create reality and social world constitutes only names, concepts, and labels to understand how individuals construct reality” (Palagolla, 2016, p. 11). Interpretivists view the world in multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and argue that understanding of a reality is relative to the physical and cultural context in which people live in (Huizing, 2007; Putnam, 1983). Hence, interpretivists are concerned with characteristics of human subject matter and tend towards social and human sciences (Diesing, 1996; Soiferman, 2010).

As this study aims to explore organisational career management in MSMEs from managers’ perception, it is important that a philosophical stance which allows understanding individuals in relation to their physical and cultural context is chosen. Hence, the researcher’s philosophical stance is interpretivism. The interpretivist position is most suitable because it is concerned with human behaviour, and it creates multiple realities based on the perceptions of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Huizing, 2007; Palagolla, 2016). By taking the interpretivist stance, an in-depth understanding of the organisational career management phenomenon would be achieved as the researcher would collect data based on the managers’ experience and understanding of organisational career management within their businesses.

3.4 Research Methodology

Methodology refers to the research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into approaches that guides how research is conducted (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Sarantakos, 2005). Research methodology also refers to the research design, methods, approaches and procedures used in research (Keeves, 1997; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Quantitative research methodology is underpinned by a positivist paradigm while interpretivism underpins the qualitative research (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Prior to discussing this study's chosen methodology approach, existing career studies and their methodological approaches are reviewed. Table 10 shows a list of career studies and their respective methodological approach.

Table 10: Existing Career Studies and their Research Methods

Author (s)	Research Topic	Research Method
Guo et al. (2019)	Research on the impact of career management fit on career success	Mixed Methods
Mark and Nzulwa (2018)	Effect of career development programs on employee performance in Kenya. A case of National Hospital Insurance Fund	Quantitative
Ikechukwu et al. (2016)	Effects of employee career management on organisational performance: A Study of Selected Banks in Umuahia, Abia State	Quantitative
Kakui and Gachunga (2016)	Effects of career development on employee performance in the public sector: A case of National Cereals and Produce Board	Quantitative

Katsuro et al. (2015)	The impact of career management on job performance: A Case Study of Grain Marketing Board	Mixed Methods
Lyria et al. (2014)	Effect of career management to the organizational performance in companies listed in Nairobi Security Exchange in Kenya	Mixed Methods
Lewis and Arnold (2012)	Organisational career management in the UK retail buying and merchandising community	Quantitative
Patrick and Kumar (2011)	Career management, employee development and performance in Indian information technology organizations	Mixed Methods
Yahya and Meruda (2004)	Relationship between organizational career management and individual performance	Quantitative

Table 10 above shows that a large number of career studies make use of quantitative research methods which is followed by the use of mixed methods. Table 10 also reflects that career studies with solely qualitative research method are lacking. It is therefore prudent to compare the most and least employed research method in the career literature.

Qualitative methodology is underpinned by subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Qualitative research is “the systematic collection, organisation and interpretation” (Grossoehme, 2014, p.109) of unstructured text-based data (Wong, 2008). It involves the use of

observations, field notes, audio and video recordings, focus groups and in-depth interviews to collect data from participants in their natural settings (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Daniel, 2016; Malterud, 2001; Robinson & Tolley, 2004; Soiferman, 2010). Qualitative researchers embrace the idea of multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which makes data richer and in-depth (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Qualitative research allows the in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018) without attempting to demonstrate relationships among variables (Daniel 2016; Schonfeld & Dreyer, 2008). Hence, qualitative methods are mostly inductive in their approach as they draw conclusions and build theories from themes identified in the data (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Gabriel, 2013; Soiferman, 2010).

On the contrary, quantitative research is deductive as it is aimed at testing theories and hypothesis (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Gabriel, 2013; Schonfeld & Dreyer, 2008; Soiferman, 2010). Quantitative researchers are positivists who employ descriptive statistics to draw inferences about a population (Soiferman, 2010; Trochim, 2006) and make generalisations based on the interpretation of the data (Daniel, 2016). Quantitative research is logical in its approach and believes that research can be conducted without relationship with the participants (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Ragab & Arisha, 2018; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Soiferman, 2010). Table 11 shows the differences between qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

Table 11: Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Methods

Comparison Themes	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Ontology	Subjectivism	Objectivism
Epistemology	Interpretivism/Constructivism	Positivism
Research Purpose	In-depth understanding, exploration	Prediction, causal relationship
Research Methods	Case studies, ethnographies, grounded theory, interviews, observations, focus groups, field notes, audio and video recordings	Surveys, hypothesis testing, measurement
Approach	Inductive approach (building theories)	Deductive approach (testing theories)
Type of Data Instruments	Words, interview transcripts, images, field notes	Variables
Data analysis	Thematic analysis, grounded theory, content analysis, narrative analysis	Identification of statistical relationships among variables
Results	In-depth insight of the phenomenon being studied	Generalise study findings
Writing of Report	Narrative report	Comparisons of data variables, presenting statistical significance of findings

Source: (Antwi & Hamza, 2015, p.222)

Soiferman (2010) asserted that the intent of the research determines the type of research method employed. Since the aim of this study is to explore organisational career management from the perception of managers, a quantitative research method is not suitable because it makes use of statistical analysis to draw conclusions and does not allow in-depth exploration of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Robinson & Tolley, 2004; Soiferman, 2010). Hence, a qualitative research method is most appropriate because it provides a researcher the opportunity to explore a phenomenon from the perception of participants in their natural settings (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Daniel, 2016; Malterud, 2001; Robinson & Tolley, 2004; Soiferman, 2010). In addition, qualitative research methodology aligns with the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions.

As Table 10 shows that qualitative studies are lacking in the career literature, this study therefore bridges the gap by adopting a solely qualitative methodology approach. Hence, this study makes a huge contribution to the career literature and lays a solid foundation for future career research aiming to adopt solely qualitative research method. The major methods of data collection in qualitative research are interviews, observations and focus groups (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). This study collected data with the use of semi-structured interviews and supported with field notes. In addition, audio recordings were taken during interviews. As this study focuses on exploring organisational career management from individual perspectives of managers, a focus group was not suitable because it involves research participants participating in group discussions (Milena et al., 2008). In addition,

observations were not required because the focus of this research does not require observing participants in their natural setting (Kawulich, 2012). The following section discusses the interview modes employed in this study.

3.4.1 Interviews: Face-to-face and Telephone Interviews

Interviews are the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). Qualitative research interviews are usually semi-structured or in-depth as no research interview lacks structure (Jamshed, 2014). Semi structured interviews make use of semi-structured interview guides to ask questions relevant to the research aims and objectives while in-depth interviews focus on more detailed and richer understanding of the research topic (Crinson et al., 2016). Both semi-structured and in-depth interviews involves asking research participants open-ended questions.

In-person face-to face interviewing is often perceived as the 'standard' for data collection in qualitative research (Krouwel, et al., 2019; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006), however rapid technological development has offered alternative interview modes such as video calling (online interviews), e-mail, instant messaging, survey links and sites, and also increased the usage of previous technologies such as the telephone (Krouwel, et al., 2019; Opdenakker, 2006). The participant invitation email (see Appendix 1) suggested three different modes of interview (telephone call, Skype or the business location). According to the response from the research participants, majority of the participants chose telephone call mode of interview while few participants chose business location mode of interview. Response for Skype (online interviews) was not recorded. The reason might be because data collection

was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic and online interviewing was not widespread. You (2021) asserted that the covid-19 pandemic posed a great challenge for in-person face-to face interviews and so online interviewing was widely used by qualitative researchers. Thus, based on the response received from the research participants, data was collected in this study using both in-person face-to-face and telephone interviews.

Face-to-face interviews were the main mode of research interviews from the 1940s to 1970s, however the increase in telephone coverage, low cost of telephone interviews and good quality data obtained with telephone surveys have contributed to the wide usage of telephone interviews. (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). A major advantage of face-to-face interviews is that research participants are more likely to provide a detailed and rich discussion of their feelings, experiences and perceptions because of the physical interaction and this makes interview length longer (Marshall, 2016; Milena et al., 2008). In addition, face-to-face interviews allow for a more in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon and makes it possible for researchers to observe facial expressions and body language of participants when answering questions and probe for further explanation if unclear about a particular statement (Marshall, 2016). The disadvantages of face-to-face include researcher's bias, geographical limitations, high cost and it is time consuming (Alreck & Settle, 2004; Marshall, 2016; Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). Though telephone interviews are often critiqued for less rigour, short interview length and inability to observe participant behaviour and body language (Barrett, 2019); they have the advantages of high response rate,

lower cost in terms of time, money and effort, less interviewer effect and high speed of data collection (Carr & Worth, 2001). Engaging in both face-to-face and telephone interviews provided more depth to the data and helped to overcome the weaknesses of each method. The remainder of this chapter provides in-depth discussion on the research design, sampling techniques, methods of data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability strategies, ethical considerations and challenges faced during data collection.

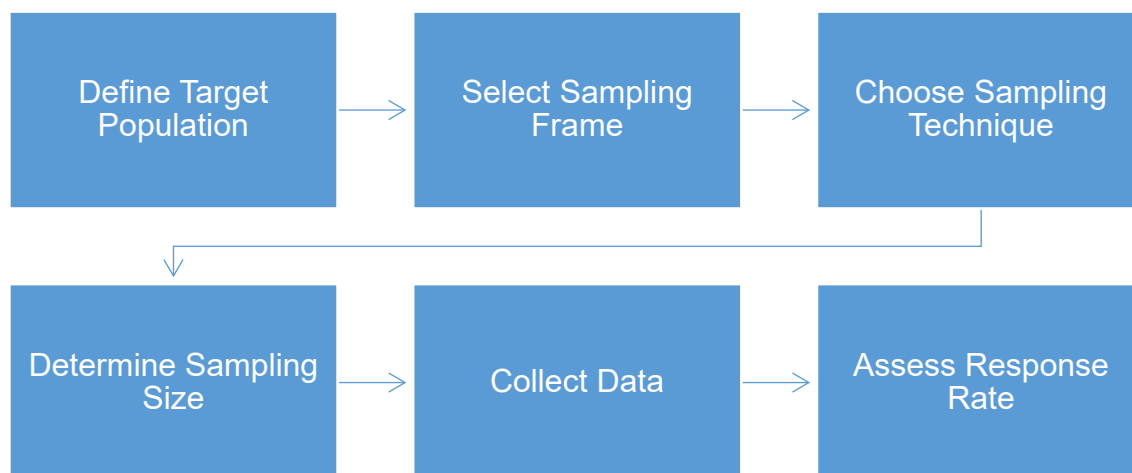
3.5 Research Design

This section discusses the sampling techniques employed and the process of data collection in this doctoral study.

3.5.1 Sampling Strategies and Recruitment of Participants

The goal of qualitative sampling is to recruit enough participants from a target population that will provide rich and in-depth data to understand the phenomenon being studied (Gill, 2020). Thus, this doctoral study adopted Taherdoost's (2016) sampling process approach. Figure 13 shows the sampling process steps.

Figure 13: Sampling Process Steps



Source: Adapted from Taherdoost (2016)

3.5.1.1 Define Target Population

The first step the researcher took in the sampling process was to identify and define the study's target population. Based on the research question (how impactful is organisational career management to the productivity of MSMEs in North East England?), the target population of this doctoral study was MSMEs in the North East England.

3.5.1.2 Select Sampling Frame

Based on this study's aim to explore organisational career management from the perspectives of managers, the population was narrowed down to senior managers in the MSMEs. As established in Chapter 2, that organisational career management is a function of human resource management. Hence, the target pool of senior managers was further narrowed down to only include HR

managers, talent managers, chief executive officers (CEOs), managing directors (MDs) and business owners. Thus, the sampling frame of the study was HR managers, talent managers, CEOs, managing directors and business owners of MSMEs in the North East England.

3.5.1.3 Choosing a Sampling Technique

Once the study's target population and sampling frame were clarified, the researcher chose sampling techniques that were best suited to answer the research question and achieve the research objectives. The purpose of qualitative studies is to provide rich and in-depth explanations about a phenomenon with the aim of not generalising the study findings (Carminati, 2018). Hence, qualitative researchers use non-probability sampling techniques as a basis for their research studies (Thompson, 1999). Purposive, convenience, snowball and quota sampling methods are four common types of non-probability sampling techniques identified in literature (Blackstone, 2012; Gill, 2020; Mack et al., 2005; Moriarty, 2011; Taherdoost, 2016; Thompson, 1999). Creswell (1988) asserted that purposive or criterion sampling is essential for a phenomenological study because it studies people who have experienced a phenomenon. Drawing on the understanding that a qualitative sampling should recruit participants that will provide rich and in-depth data to understand the phenomenon being studied (Gill, 2020), the researcher chose purposive and snowball sampling techniques to recruit participants for this doctoral study.

Purposive sampling also known as judgment sampling (Taherdoost, 2016) is one of the most common sampling strategies used in qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mack et al., 2005). Purposive sampling is a sampling strategy in which persons or events are selected deliberately to provide information about a phenomenon that cannot be obtained from other sources (Maxwell, 1996; Taherdoost, 2016). Purposive sampling also refers to selecting participants according to a preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (Mack et al., 2005). It is the intentional selection of participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied (Gill, 2020). Also, Malhotra and Birks (2006) affirmed that purposive sampling is ideal for exploratory research (Taherdoost 2016). Based on this understanding, the researcher made use of purposive sampling to select participants according to a preselected criteria as discussed in section 3.5.1.2 (senior managers which includes HR managers, talent managers, CEOs, MDs and business owners in NE England MSMEs). Other criteria used for participant selection are discussed in section 3.4.5. Based on the research objectives this study aims to achieve; managers were selected because they have the capacity to provide rich and in-depth explanation to the phenomena being studied. Other reasons include: (i) senior managers hold top management positions and therefore can make important decisions in the organisation. Hence, they represent the organisation's view on career management which is the central focus of this study (ii) managers are able to confirm if a career system exists in an organisation and assess its efficiency (iii) managers are well-informed and aware of the career development programs in operation for employee support, growth and development; (iv)

managers are not biased in their views and can provide genuine and in-depth information about current career management practices existing in the organisation; and lastly (v) managers are in the position to make changes concerning organisational career management in their organisation due to the positive impact of the interview. In addition, this study extends the contribution of existing similar career studies that have examined organisational career management only from managers perspectives (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Lewis & Arnold, 2012).

In addition to purposive sampling technique, snowball sampling technique was used for participant recruitment. Snowball sampling technique also known as chain referral sampling (Blackstone, 2012; Mack et al., 2005) is a strategy in which a research participant refers another, and that person refers another, and that chain goes on (Blackstone, 2012). It is a method in which research participants use their social network to refer the researcher to potential participants who could contribute to the study (Mack et al., 2005). Due to the low response rate and inability to hit the sample size target, snowball sampling technique was therefore employed to augment the number of participants that were already recruited through purposive sampling. As suggested in literature, snowball sampling technique is usually used when participants are not easily accessible to the researcher through other sampling methods (Blackstone, 2012; Mack et al., 2005; Taherdoost, 2016). 24 research participants were recruited through purposive sampling and 3 participants through snowball

sampling. Thus, the total number of participants that contributed to this doctoral were 27 businesses.

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were chosen and favoured above the other two non-probability sampling techniques because these methods allowed the recruitment of participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mack et al., 2005; Taherdoost, 2016). Recruiting participants through convenience sampling would not have provided a sample that was representative of the target population (Taherdoost, 2016). And quota sampling was not chosen because it was not a sampling strategy that best answers the research question and achieve the research objectives of the study.

3.5.1.4 Determining the Sample Size

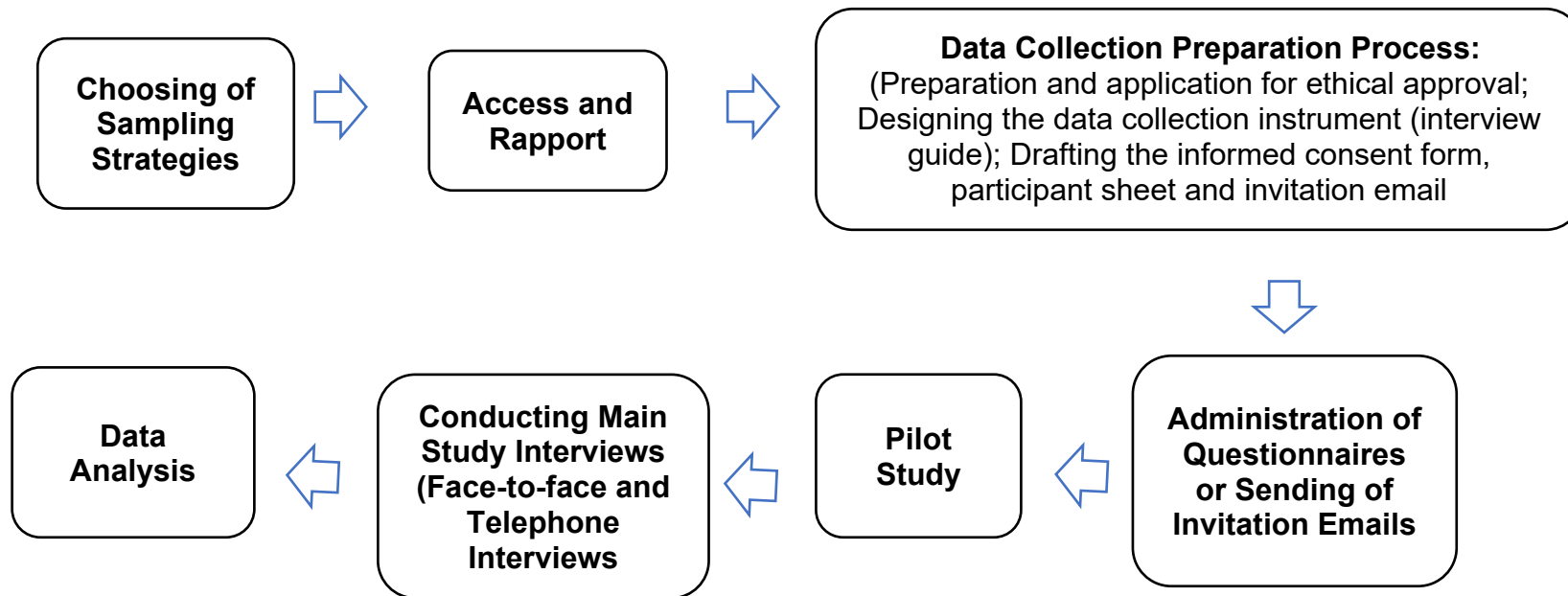
Qualitative research has been criticized for its lack of rigour in terms of providing adequate justifications for the sample sizes used in qualitative studies (Boddy, 2016; Marshall, et al., 2013). However, this weakness has been improved upon as recent qualitative studies are more rigorous and provide profound justifications for the determination of sample size used in their studies (Blackstone, 2012; Taherdoost, 2016). Although, qualitative research usually involves use of small sample size, it is important to consider choice of sample size because it determines the extent to which a qualitative researcher can make analytical generalisations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Determining a

sample size in qualitative research has been linked to data saturation (Boddy, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Data saturation has been defined as the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data after completion of additional interviews or cases (Boddy, 2016). Thus, data saturation serves as a guide for determining sample size; because once data saturation is reached, results are capable of being generalisable (Boddy, 2016). Scholars have asserted that a qualitative research sample size should not be too large that it is difficult to obtain thick, deep and rich data (Boddy, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Sandelowski, 1995) nor too small that it is difficult to achieve data and theoretical saturation (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1995; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Review of literature show that guidance for determining sample size prior to data collection in qualitative research have been explored (Boddy, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guest et al., 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) asserted that a sample size should be determined primarily by the research objective, research question and also the research design. Studies have recommended the range of sample size sufficient for each qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). However, the sample size range recommendation varies across studies. For a narrative research, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that examples of studies with one or two individuals are common unless a larger pool of participants is used to develop a collective story (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Huber & Whelan, 1999). In case study, Creswell (2002) recommended a sample size range of 3-5 participants (Onwuegbuzie

& Collins, 2007). Boddy (2016) recommended a range of 20-30 interviews for grounded theory research. In phenomenological research, which is the research design of this present study, Dukes (1984) recommends 3-10 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell (1988) posited that since phenomenological research involves studying individuals who have experienced a phenomenon, in-depth interviews with 10 participants lasting as long as 2 hours represents a reasonable size (Polkinghorne, 1989). Although literature suggests that the contribution of 10 participants is sufficient for phenomenological research; the researcher set a sample size target of between 17-25 participants because this study is cross-sectional, and the researcher was aware that managers in MSMEs would not be able to partake in in-depth interviews as long as 2 hours at once. Therefore, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews and a larger sample size to capture a more detailed and rich understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The outcome exceeded the sample size target as 27 participants were recruited. Data saturation was achieved at participant 25. Whilst the research is not attempting to generalise the study findings, an interview set of 27 MSMEs is sufficiently large to permit levels of transferability to the wider MSME sector.

Figure 14: Data Collection Process of this Research Study



3.5.2 Data Collection

Figure 14 shows the flow chart of the data collection phase in this doctoral study. After the sampling strategies and sample size were defined, the researcher attempted to rapport and gain access to the research field. After access to the sample population was achieved, preparation for data collection commenced. The preparation included application for ethical approval, designing the research instrument (interview guide), drafting the informed consent form, participant information sheet and invitation message that would be sent to potential participants. The response rate was obtained after the invitation emails were sent. Thereafter, the researcher embarked on a pilot study and subsequently data collection for the main study. Once data collection was completed, data analysis began.

3.5.3 Access and Rapport

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that it is important to build rapport with potential participants in order to enable easy access and collection of data on the field. The first step the researcher took prior to data collection was to build rapport with “gatekeepers” in order to ensure easy access to the potential participants. Gatekeepers are individuals or bodies (Gallo et al., 2012) that stand between a data collector and a potential respondent (Lavrakas, 2008). They are mediators essential for the easy access to study settings and participants within research (Andoh-Arthur, 2019). Thus, gatekeepers in this study represent individuals or bodies with access to directories of MSMEs in the North East England. The first gatekeeper the researcher contacted was

North East England Chamber of Commerce (NEECC). Through this contact, the researcher was able to register for business events advertised on the NEEC website. The aim of attending the business events was to network with potential participants. Table 12 shows a breakdown of the North East England business events attended by the researcher.

Table 12: List of Business Events attended by the Researcher

Date of business event	Name of business event attended	Facilitator
26-10-2018	Breakfast Networking at the Vermont	The Mussel Club
21-11-2018	#FSB Connect Newcastle	FSB (Federation of Small Businesses)
29-01-2019	Business Building Seminar	Advice4Business

Networking with SMEs was of priority to the researcher. However, the activities were not highly productive as the researcher only connected with micro businesses. Thus, the researcher had to reach out to another gatekeeper. The second gatekeeper the researcher contacted was Northumbria University Business Clinic. However, the business clinic could not help at that moment because of an on-going external research project. After failed attempts to get access to MSMEs through the gatekeepers, the researcher finally had access to a directory of all registered businesses in the UK and Ireland via a database (Financial Analysis Made Easy (FAME)) on the Northumbria University Library Portal. Through this database, the researcher was able to obtain a directory of MSMEs in the North East England. Participant selection with the use of the FAME database is further discussed in section 3.5.5. While the researcher was trying to gain access to the research field;

simultaneously, the researcher was preparing to apply for ethical approval, designing an interview guide, drafting a participant invitation letter, informed consent form and research project information sheet. Once the researcher had access to the FAME database, the instrument for data collection (questionnaire) was fine-tuned.

3.5.4 Instrument for Data Collection: Interview Guide Design

Data was collected in this study by means of both face-to-face and telephone interviews as discussed in section 3.4.1. A semi-structured interview guide was used as an instrument to gather information from the respondents. Lavrakas (2008) asserted that in designing a questionnaire, determination of goals, research questions and objectives should be considered. Thus, the research interview guide was designed with the aim to answer the research question and achieve the research objectives. The interview guide consisted mainly of open-ended questions which allowed for in-depth and rich understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Questions were developed based on rigorous review of extant organisational career management and productivity literatures. In addition to the review of literature while designing the interview guide, the researcher reviewed existing questionnaires used for data collection in similar career studies. These existing questionnaires served as guide for the researcher. Rivano et al (2017) affirmed that by reviewing existing questionnaires, a researcher gets an overview of the field, and this can serve as a basis for designing a new questionnaire. The interview guide provided a brief synopsis of the research study and informed the respondents of the time duration of the interview. Anonymity and confidentiality of

respondents and data generated from the study were assured. Table 13 presents the interview questions and provides a detailed theoretical rationale behind the questions. In addition, Table 14 aligns the interview questions to the research aim and objectives.

Table 13: DATA REQUIREMENT TABLE

Investigative Questions	Type of answers required	Detail in which data is perceived	Question Rationale	Relation to Research Aim and Objectives
<p>Section A: Participant identification and demographics of participating SMEs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company name • Department • Participant management position • Age of company • Number of employees • Turnover (£) (nominal data) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trading name of SME • Participant management position within SME • Number of years • <10, 10-50, 51-100, 101-250, >250 • <0.5m, 0.5-6.5m, 6.5m-25m, >25m 	<p>The demographic questions of company size and annual turnover are asked to confirm if the businesses fall under the category of SMEs according to EU definition of SMEs. Information about participant management position is collected to ensure that participants are members of senior management team (CEOs, MDs, business owners), or managers (HR manager, talent manger). Question regarding service industry is included for easy categorisation of businesses under the UK standard industrial classification of economic activities (SIC) codes. Representation of</p>	<p>The aim of this research is to explore organisational career management from the perceptions of managers in North East England MSMEs. Hence, these questions are asked to verify that research participants (i) fall under the category of MSMEs in terms of size and turnover (ii) occupy managerial positions (iii) are located in the North East England and (iv) confirm the industry sector of the MSMEs.</p>

			participating SMEs across all demographic clusters allows for validation and robustness of the study findings.	
<p>Question 1-2: Career framework/system/policy</p> <p>(1) How does the career management framework/policy in this organisation operate and how effective is the career framework? (2) Who do you think is responsible for career planning? Is it a joint effort between the employer and employee?</p>	<p>Career policy/framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of organisational career management system or framework • Perception of who is responsible for career planning in the organisation 	Continuous data	<p>A career framework is a platform that links vital HR processes such as workforce analytics, selection and retention, performance management, career management, development, rewards and succession management (Mercer, 2017). The first question builds on the definition of a career system and sought to know if a career framework or system exists in the organisations. Academic literature suggests that OCM is a joint effort between the individual employee and the organisation aimed at accomplishing both personal goals and organizational goals (Atkinson, 2002; Barnett &</p>	<p>These questions align with the third research objective which seeks to explore the presence of career systems in MSMEs.</p>

			Bradley, 2007; Lyria et al., 2012; Wesarat, et al., 2014). Perception of managers concerning who is responsible for career planning was asked to confirm if this argument in literature is correct.	
<p>Questions 3-6: Impact of organisational management practices on employee productivity</p> <p>(3) What career management practices are in place in your company? (4) Which career management practices are employed the most? (5) How are the employees engaged in career management practices? (6) How do career management policies/practices improve motivation, employee</p>	<p>Organisational career development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of usage of organisational career management practices • Influence of organisational career management policies/practices on employee productivity and retention 	Continuous data	Career development or OCM practices have been identified in literature (Arnold, 1997; Baruch, 1996, 2004; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; De Vos et al., 2008; De Vos & Cambre, 2017; Greenhaus et al., 2008; Hernaus et al., 2019). These questions expand on Question 1, seeking for more details on career development or organisational career management programs existing in the organisations. The questions seek to explore how OCM practices are implemented and to establish the influence of career development on employee productivity and retention.	These questions align with the research aim which seeks to explore organisational career management in MSMEs. The questions also align with the research question and fifth research objective which seek to explore the impact of organisational career management on productivity in MSMEs.

<p>productivity and employee retention in the workplace?)</p>			<p>Questions 3-5 explore the presence and usage of OCM or career development programs in the SMES. Building on studies that have examined the impact of OCM on employee productivity, motivation and retention (Katsuro et al., 2015; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018; Yahya & Meruda, 2004), question 6 investigates the impact of OCM on employee productivity, motivation and retention.</p>	
<p>Questions 7-8 and 10: Impact of organisational career advancement/progression on employee productivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent management • Career growth • Opportunities for career progress • Career paths 	<p>Continuous data</p>	<p>Baruch (1999) asserted that clear and defined career paths might not exist in small businesses including limited promotional opportunities. Questions 7 and 8 therefore investigate the presence of a clear career path and career</p>	<p>Similarly, these questions align with the research question and fifth research objective.</p>

<p>(7) How are employees given the opportunity to progress within the organisation? (8) What is the career pathway in this organisation? (10) Do you think if employees are given more career opportunities, productivity levels will improve?</p>			<p>progression opportunities in the SMEs. Building on studies that have linked career development to employee productivity (Katsuro et al., 2015; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018; Yahya & Meruda, 2004); Question 10 links career progression to employee productivity and explores if there is an impact.</p>	
<p>Questions 9-12: Employee productivity</p> <p>(9) What is the organisation's perception of employee productivity? (10) Do you think if employees are given more career opportunities, productivity levels will improve? (11) How does</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of employee productivity to the company • Relationship between organisational career management and organisational performance • Factors affecting employee productivity and 	<p>Continuous data</p>	<p>Employee productivity refers to the assessment of the efficiency of an employee or group of employees' (Hanaysha, 2016). Based on the premise that OCM practices are influenced by the type of organisation, its strategic goals, and the environment in which they operate (Creed & Hood, 2009; London, 2002). Question 9 extends this insight to employee productivity and aims to explore the perception of</p>	<p>Question 9 aligns with the fourth research objective which seeks to explore organisation's perception of employee productivity. Building on question 9, questions 10-12 further explores drivers of productivity in MSMEs.</p>

<p>productivity lead to increase in overall organizational (financial + non-financial) performance of the company? (12) What other factors influence productivity of employees apart from career management practices?</p>	<p>drivers of employee productivity other than organisational career management practices</p>		<p>employee productivity in each organisation. Literature confirms that OCM improves organisational performance (Ikechukwu, et al., 2016; Lyria, et al., 2014, 2017; Mensah, et al., 2016; Napitupulu, et al., 2017; Yahya & Meruda, 2004). Question 11 explores the impact of OCM on organisational performance in SMEs. Question 12 seeks to know drivers of employee productivity in SMEs apart from engaging in organisational career management practices.</p>	
<p>Questions 13-15 (13) What are the challenges hindering the company from engaging in career management practices? (14) What other human resource management practices does the company engage in apart from career management?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to engaging organisational career management practices in SMEs • Other HRM practices engaged by the SMEs aside career management practices 	<p>Continuous data</p>	<p>Building on studies that have explored challenges preventing the adoption of OCM practices in SMEs (Goyer, 2010; Katsuro, et al., 2015; Lewis&Arnold,2012). Question 13 aims to find out the challenges hindering the respondents from participating in OCM practices. Question 14 explores the presence of other HR practices engaged by the</p>	<p>Question 13 aligns with the sixth research objectives which seeks to explore the perceived barriers preventing MSMEs from engaging in OCM practices. Question 15 aligns with the research question which</p>

<p>(15) In general, do you think career planning, career development and career progression have an impact on employee productivity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of organisational career management on productivity • Efficiency of career system 		<p>respondents apart from OCM. Finally, Question 15 focuses on the aim and research question of this doctoral study. The question investigates the holistic impact of organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) on productivity. And further probes to know if OCM improves employee productivity in SMEs. Efficiency of career systems in SMEs is also investigated.</p>	<p>seeks to explore the impact of OCM on productivity in MSMEs.</p>
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3.5.5 Criteria for Participant Selection

Once the ethical approval was granted and the questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews was ready, the researcher set out to collect data on the research field. Prior to questionnaire administration, participants were selected based on certain criteria. As discussed in section 3.5.1.3, the researcher made use of purposive sampling technique to recruit the research participants. Based on the strategy of purposive sampling, the researcher had a preidentified criterion that served as a base for selecting participant. The first criterion identified from the research aim was that participants must be managers in MSMEs (either holding an executive position or HR and talent manager). Other criteria used for participant selection were identified on the FAME database. The criteria were:

- Size of company (5-250 employees)
- Location (all counties in North East England)
- Industry sector of businesses (participants were selected according to businesses categorized under the service industry UK SIC code)
- Position of individuals (executives, HR and talent managers)
- Contact details of individuals (full name, telephone number, email address and appellation)

Once the directory of companies that fell under the above criteria was generated, the directory was exported and saved as a Microsoft Excel file. Thereafter, invitation emails regarding research participation were sent in batches to the selected companies.

3.5.6 Interview Guide Administration and Response Rate

A total of 1710 invitation emails (see Appendix 1) were sent in seven batches to the selected companies from 24th of September 2019 to 22nd of January 2020. However, some email addresses were redundant and failed to reach the recipients. The invitation email informed the potential participants of the purpose of the email (research study) and respectfully requested for their participation. The research interview guide, informed consent form and research project information sheet were attached to the email. These documents were attached to provide the companies a better understanding of the research study and clarify any ethical concerns. Table 14 provides a breakdown of how the invitation emails were sent.

Table 14: Breakdown of Invitation Emails Sent to Potential Participants

Date	Type of email sent	Purpose	Number of emails sent
24 th and 25 th of September 2019 (1 st Batch)	Invitation email	To inform potential participants of the purpose and value of the research study. And also, to request that they participate in the research	600
2 nd of October 2019 (2 nd Batch)	Invitation email	Same as above	400
2 nd of October 2019	1 st reminder for the first batch of emails	To remind non-respondents of the purpose and value of the study	
9 th of October 2019	2 nd reminder for the first batch of emails	Same as above	

9 th of October 2019	Reminder email for the second batch of emails	Same as above	
15 th of October 2019 (3 rd Batch)	Invitation email	To inform potential participants of the purpose and value of the research study. And also, to request that they participate in the research	120
5 th of November 2019 (4 th Batch)	Invitation email	Same as above	167
5 th of November 2019	Reminder email for the third batch of emails	To remind non-respondents of the purpose and value of the study	
27 th of November 2019	Reminder email for the fourth batch of emails	Same as above	
6 th of November 2019 (5 th Batch)	Invitation email	To inform potential participants of the purpose and value of the research study. And also, to request that they participate in the research	220
27 th of November 2019	Reminder email for the third batch of emails	To remind non-respondents of the purpose and value of the study	
13 th of January 2020 (6 th Batch)	Invitation email	To inform potential participants of the purpose and value of the research study. And also, to request that they participate in the research	200
22 nd of January 2020	Reminder email for the third batch of emails	To remind non-respondents of the purpose and value of the study	
29 th of January 2020 (7 th Batch)	Invitation email	To inform potential participants of the purpose and value of the research study. And also, to request	3

		that they participate in the research	
			Total = 1710

Following the invitation and reminder emails, a total number of 38 positive responses were generated through purposive sampling technique. And 3 positive responses through snowball sampling. Thereby bringing the total number of positive responses to 41; a low response rate of 2.4%. Though the response rate was low, rich and in-depth data was generated from the participating MSMEs. Follow-up emails were sent to respondents that signified interest. Date, time and mode of interview were confirmed with respondents prior to data collection. However, interviews were conducted with only 27 respondents. The reason was because some businesses dropped out due to postponing the interviews indefinitely, cancellation and not responding to further emails. Table 15 shows how the number of respondents were reconciled.

Table 15: Reconciling the Number of Positive Respondents

Total number of positive respondents		41
Interviews cancelled by respondents	5	
Interviews postponed and subsequently cancelled	1	
Respondents that did not reply to further emails about participation	8	
Total number of respondents that did not participate in the study		14
Respondents that participated in the research study (actual number of interviews)		<u>27</u>

Though the researcher targeted MSMEs in the North East England, the directory of MSMEs retrieved from the FAME database included businesses in the North West. Thus, 3 out of the 41 respondents were located in Cumbria; and two respondents participated in the research study. The research participants in this study therefore consists of 25 MSMEs in North East England and 2 medium-sized businesses in Cumbria. It is important to note that the participation of the businesses in Cumbria was voluntarily. Because majority of the 25 MSMEs were micro and small businesses, data from the two medium-sized businesses in Cumbria was not discarded because it was useful and further enriched the study. As mentioned previously in section 3.5.1.4, data saturation was achieved at participant 25 and the interview set was sufficiently large to permit levels of transferability to the wider MSME sector.

3.5.7 Pilot Study

The importance of a pilot study has been emphasised in the research methodology literature (Kim, 2010; Majid, et al., 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A pilot study is important in qualitative research because it helps to assess the acceptability of an interview (Holloway, 1997; Kim, 2010) and enhance the credibility of the study (Kim, 2010; Padgett, 2008). Majid et al (2017) asserted that piloting for interviews is important to test the interview questions and gain some practice before full commencement of data collection on the field. Interviews were piloted with five managers from 16th of October 2019 to 30th of October 2019. Based on the choice of participants, the pilot study consisted of four telephone interviews and one face-to-face interview.

Prior to the pilot study, the researcher did not have any field experience regarding conducting interviews. Hence, piloting the interviews was an excellent opportunity to gain some experience. Furthermore, the researcher gained better understanding of the phenomenon being studied as a result of the information gathered on the field.

Moreover, the pilot study was useful because the researcher was able to test the credibility of the interview questions. The pilot study revealed that micro businesses struggled to provide answers to some questions because they were not operating in the capacity the questions asked. Also, the researcher observed how the participants answered the questions and took note of questions that emerged from information provided by the respondents. Based on the insights gained from the interviews and further review of literature, the researcher adjusted the interview questions. Thus, this modified questionnaire was used for the remainder of the interviews. The experience gained during the pilot study equipped the researcher and made way for improved and efficient data collection. The above stated benefits agree with literature as Castillo-Montoya (2016) affirmed that piloting interviews could strengthen interview protocols (Majid, et al., 2017). Also, Kvale (2007) asserted that pilot study helps to identify flaws or limitations within the interview design which provides opportunity to make necessary modifications to the research study (Majid, et al., 2017).

3.5.8 Research Interviews

Following the pilot study, data collection for the main study commenced at maximum capacity. Data collection was undertaken within five months from 16th of October 2019 to 17th of March 2020. The semi-structured interviews consisted of 8 face-to-face interviews and 19 telephone interviews. The telephone interviews did not affect the richness and depth of the data because all the respondents answered the questions according to their understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In fact, some interviews conducted over the telephone provided richer and more in-depth information than some face-to-face interviews. Evidence from the audio recordings show that some telephone interviews were longer than some face-to-face interviews. On an average, the length of the recorded interviews was between 15-30 minutes. The interviews were recorded with a password protected audio device and stored on a password protected computer. Once all the interviews were conducted, the data analysis process began rigorously.

3.6 Data Analysis and Representation

Qualitative research produces mainly unstructured text-based data, and this data could be interview transcripts, observation notes, diary entries, audio or video recordings (Wong, 2008). Data analysis in qualitative research refers to the process by which a researcher systematically searches and arranges interview transcripts, observation notes, or other forms of data to increase the understanding of the phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Wong, 2008). Analysing text and multiple forms of data is a challenging process for qualitative researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Nevertheless, qualitative researchers are faced with a plethora of distinct methods to analyse their data (Lester et al., 2020). Content analysis, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) the common types of qualitative data analysis methods identified in literature (Lester et al., 2020; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Schreier, 2012; Warren, 2020; Wood & Kroger, 2000). To answer the research question and gain rich and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied; thematic analysis was chosen.

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.6). The goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes (patterns relevant to the research question and aim) (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) and make interpretations in the process of selecting codes and constructing themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Thematic analysis is widely known for its flexibility advantage (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Unlike other types of qualitative data analysis methods, thematic analysis is not bound to any theoretical or epistemological position (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, thematic analysis is often dismissed as a method that is rather too simple and shallow (Brooks et al., 2015). However, thematic analysis is advantageous because it can be applied to a wide range of theoretical and epistemological frameworks, and qualitative research designs (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis is therefore applied to this phenomenological study because of the following: (i) its theoretical flexibility regarding philosophical positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Lester et al., 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017); (ii) it will help “to achieve an understanding of patterns of meanings from data on lived experiences” (Sundler et al., 2019); (iii) its approach to sorting and sifting through data for identification of similar phrases or relationships (Lester et al., 2020; Miles & Huberman, 1994); and (iv) thematic analysis can be used to analyse a wide range of data and data set sizes (Lester et al., 2020). The following are the thematic data analysis phases identified by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) Familiarisation with the data and transcription of verbal data; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes; (4) Reviewing the themes; (5) Defining and naming the themes; and (6) Producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This data analysis procedure is widely used in qualitative studies (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Sundler et al., 2019)

Meanwhile, there exist multiple ways of conducting thematic analysis (Brooks et al., 2015; King & Horrocks, 2010). These alternatives are not common to qualitative psychologists as opposed to other disciplines where they are well developed; examples include matrix analysis and framework analysis (Brooks et al., 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Nadin & Cassell, 2004; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). In contrast, template analysis is a form of thematic analysis that has been established to be widely used in organisation and management research (Brooks et al., 2015). Thus, this doctoral research adopts the use of template analysis as an approach to conducting thematic analysis.

3.6.1.1 Template Analysis: An Approach to Thematic Analysis

Template analysis is a form of thematic analysis that is based on use of hierarchical coding to analyse textual data and can be adapted to the needs of a particular study (Brooks et al., 2015). Hierarchical coding entails a number of coding levels where there are broad overarching themes that encompass successively narrower and more specific themes (Brooks & King, 2014). Template analysis involves developing a coding template that summarises themes identified by a researcher as significant in a dataset; and organises the themes in a useful and meaningful manner (Brooks & King, 2014). The preliminary coding template can start with *a priori* themes (pre-defined codes), and these are themes derived from review of relevant literature (Brooks et al., 2015; Burton & Galvin, 2019; King, 2004; Sainidis, 2013). Subsequently, additional themes can develop during data analysis process as new concepts emerge from the textural data (Sainidis, 2013). To answer the research

question effectively, template analysis is adopted for this study's use because of its flexibility regarding levels of coding, which encourages the identification and in-depth coding of data that are rich in meaning and important to the research question (s) (Tabari et al., 2020). Also, because of its coding flexibility, it provides a researcher the opportunity to better expand the discussion, acquire individual perceptions and gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (King 2004; King & Brooks, 2017; Tabari et al., 2020).

Template analysis is a fairly recent method that has emerged from more structured qualitative data analysis methods such as grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis (Sainidis, 2013; Tabari et al., 2020; Waring & Wainwright, 2008). Similar to thematic analysis, template analysis is flexible and not bound to any epistemological position, rather it can be adapted to the needs of a particular research and its philosophical underpinnings (Brooks et al., 2015). The data for template analysis are usually interview transcripts (Brooks & King, 2014; Brooks et al., 2015; Tabari et al., 2020). Nigel King is a more recent advocate of template analysis (Waring & Wainwright, 2008) and according to Brooks et al (2015), Brooks and King (2014) and King (2004), the following are the main steps involved in a template analysis:

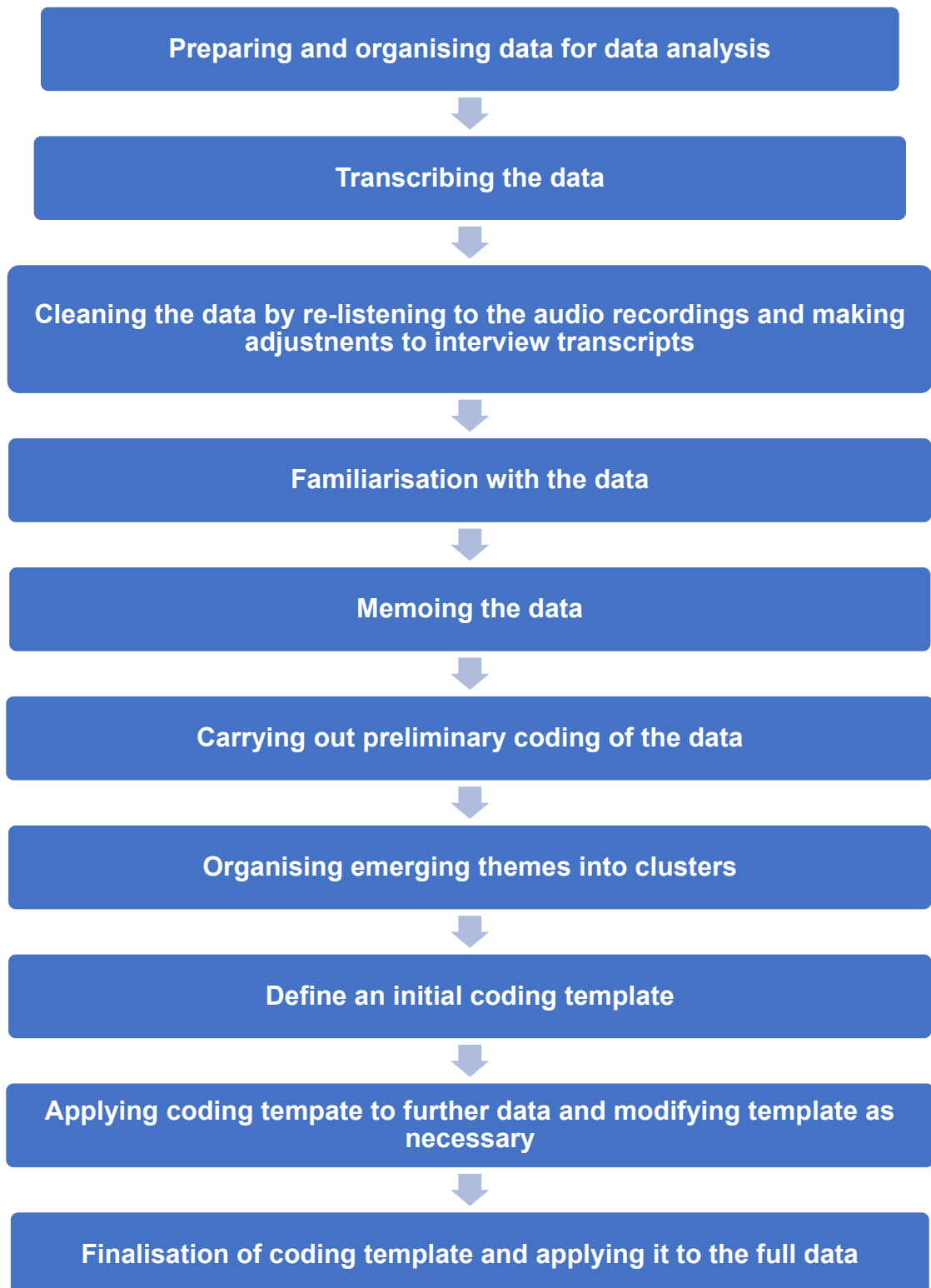
1. Become familiar with the data to be analysed
2. Carry out preliminary coding of the data
3. Organise emerging themes into meaningful clusters
4. Define an initial coding template
5. Apply the initial template to further data and modify as necessary

6. Finalise the template and apply it to the full data set.

The above steps are similar to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process. The difference is that thematic analysis adopts a generic approach to qualitative data analysis while template analysis has more rigour in its organisation of themes into a coding template.

Wong (2008) asserted that the use of qualitative data analysis software is limited because of the complexity of unstructured qualitative data; thus, qualitative data software helps to maximise efficiency by speeding up the coding process. Ultimately, the researcher has to synthesise the data and interpret the meanings derived from the study findings (Wong, 2008). The qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used for the template analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wong, 2008) and it is "designed to integrate coding with qualitative linking, shaping and modelling" (Wong, 2008, p.15). A more recent version of NVivo (NVivo 12) was used to organise, code, sort, manage, and analyse the qualitative data. Drawing on Braun and Clarke (2006), Lester et al. (2020), Brooks et al. (2015) and King (2004) guides to thematic and template analysis, Figure 15 shows the phases of data analysis in this doctoral study.

Figure 15: Phases of Data Analysis in this Doctoral Research



3.6.2 Phases of Data Analysis

This section explains the phases of data analysis after data collection.

3.6.2.1 Preparing and Organising Data for Data Analysis

Preparing and organising data for analysis began during data collection. After each interview was conducted, the researcher transferred the audio recorded interview to a password-protected computer. A folder was opened and designated for the recorded interviews on the computer. Interview transcripts were also included in this folder. Thus, the research data was organised in one location, and this made accessibility to data easy. Also, organising the data in one location made it easy to import interview transcripts into NVivo 12.

3.6.2.2 Transcribing the Data

The next phase in the data analysis was transcribing the data. Lester et al. (2020) asserted that transcribing a data set can feel overwhelming. The researcher resonates with this statement as the transcription process was time-consuming and tedious because the researcher was unable to hire a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the audio files. However, transcribing the interviews provided the researcher the opportunity to familiarise well with the data set.

3.6.2.3 Cleaning the Data

During the initial transcription process, the researcher skipped some sections of the recordings due to difficulty in comprehending what the participants said. Hence, the researcher cleaned the data by re-listening to the audio recordings and making corrections where necessary the interview transcripts. This data cleaning exercise ensured the reliability of the data being analysed.

3.6.2.4 Familiarisation with the Data

Through the transcribing and cleaning phases, the researcher was able to familiarise and engage with the data set. During transcription, the researcher was able to connect the reactions of the participants while answering the interview questions and experience during the interviews to the audio recordings. This connection made it possible for the researcher to relate to the lived experiences of the participants and this led to deeper and richer understanding of the research study.

3.6.2.5 Memoing the Data

During data collection and after familiarisation with the data set, the researcher engaged in reflective thinking and memoing. Memoing is defined as conversation with oneself about the research data (Clarke, 2005; Lester et al., 2020). And it involves taking notes while reading, summarising field notes and sketching reflective thinking (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lester et al. (2020) asserted that generating memos that explains initial reflections about a data could be helpful in data analysis. Memoing passively began during data collection when the researcher engaged in reflective

thinking and identified common emerging themes in the data. Also, the researcher connected the emerging themes with literature and made early interpretations of the data. The reflective thinking and memoing phase provided clarity regarding the initial coding template.

3.6.2.6 Carrying out Preliminary Coding of the Data

Coding in qualitative research means subdividing huge amount of raw data into smaller categories (Wong, 2008). Brooks et al (2015) asserted that it is permissible to start preliminary coding of data with *a priori* themes identified in advance. *A priori* themes can be useful in hastening the initial coding phase of the data analysis (Brooks & King, 2014). Hence, the researcher made use of *a priori* themes that were identified from review of literature as the initial coding template. These *a priori* themes also served as a base for designing the data collection instrument (interview guide). The *a priori* themes derived from review of relevant literature were:

1. The presence of organisational career system and its efficiency
2. Organisational career management practices and its impact on motivation, employee productivity and employee retention
3. Opportunities for career progression and career path
4. Organisation's perception of employee productivity
5. Challenges hindering the adoption of organisational career management practices
6. Presence of human resource management practices

Moreover, the themes already identified during the memoing phase were used in addition to the *a priori* themes for the preliminary coding of the data.

3.6.2.7 Organising Emerging Themes into Clusters

As new themes emerged during coding, they were organised into clusters and hierarchies. Relationship within and between the groupings began to emerge. The overarching themes (highest level coding) were referred to as higher order codes (HOC), while the successively narrower and specific themes were referred to as sub-codes in this study. Based on the level of coding, the sub-codes were termed secondary codes, tertiary codes and auxiliary codes accordingly (see Appendix 6).

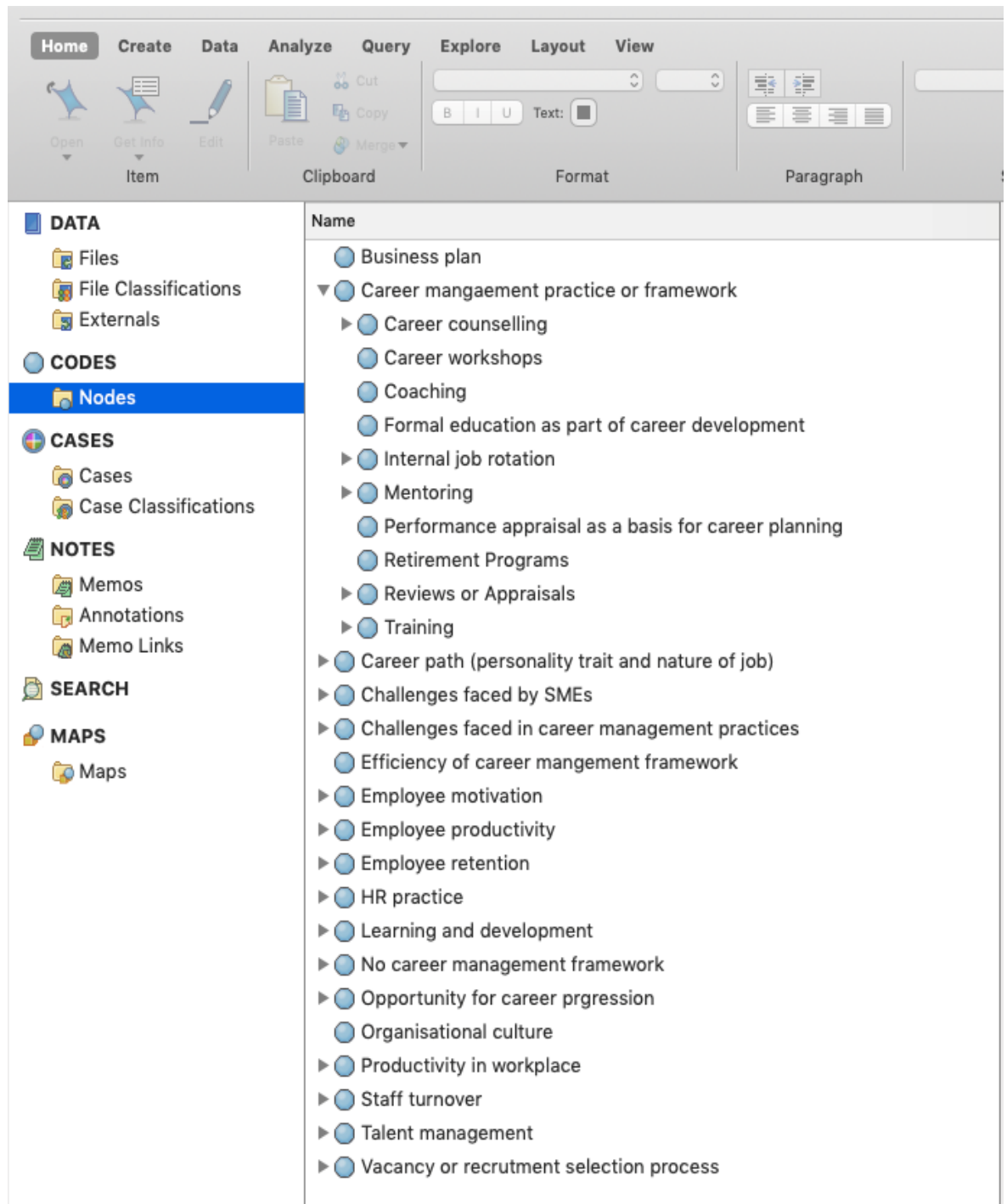
3.6.2.8 Define an Initial Coding Template

Brooks et al (2015) suggested that it is normal to develop an initial version of a coding template based on the subset of a data. Hence, the researcher developed an initial coding template based on the coding of the first five interview transcripts. The initial coding template constituted identified key themes relevant to the research question and objectives, *a priori* themes and themes that emerged during the researcher's memoing. The initial coding template (see Appendix 7) was different from the final coding template (see Appendix 8) because the coding template was modified and updated as coding of the dataset progressed.

3.6.2.9 Finalisation of Coding Template and Application to the full Data

However, the initial coding template was enough but not suitable to be applied to the rest of the data because important themes which were crucial to answering the research question were yet to be identified. As data analysis continued, more themes emerged, and the initial template was modified. A revised template sufficient to be applied to the rest of the dataset and which addressed the research questions was established at transcript 18. Moreover, additional nodes were added as new themes still emerged from the remaining transcripts. Data saturation during data analysis was achieved at transcript 25. The final template was a comprehensive representation of the researcher's data interpretation (Brooks et al., 2015) and it consisted of a total of 18 higher order codes and subsequent secondary, tertiary and auxiliary codes. The breakdown of the final coding template is shown in Appendix 8. Figure 16 shows a screenshot of the final template used for data analysis. The screenshot shows the higher order codes.

Figure 16: Screenshot of the Final Coding Template Extracted from NVivo 12



3.6.3 Reliability and Validity of Data

The traditional criteria for reliability and validity take their roots in a positivist tradition, thus reliability and validity are concepts used mainly in quantitative research for testing and evaluation (Bashir et al., 2008; Brink, 1993; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Golafshani, 2003). Nevertheless, validity and reliability have been advocated in qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) because there has been a general consensus in literature that qualitative researchers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Reliability and validity of data in qualitative research is important because the researcher's subjectivity can easily cloud the interpretation of the data (Brink, 1993); and it gives the assurance that study findings are credible and trustworthy. (Brink, 1993; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Reliability means consistency and stability of a researcher's report and also the ability to a researcher to collect and record information accurately (Brink, 1993; Selltiz et al., 1976). Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that reliability of a data can be improved when a researcher has detailed field notes, good quality recording device and accurate transcripts of digital files. Reliability was achieved in this study by recording interviews on a good quality audio device and re-listening to the audio recordings multiple times during transcription. These activities ensured that the interview transcripts used for data analysis were accurate.

Validity is “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.124). Validity also means the truthfulness and accuracy of research findings (Brink, 1993; Le Comple & Goetz, 1982). To this end, validation procedures are recommended to test the credibility and logic of inferences drawn from the research data. Creswell and Miller (2000) asserted that qualitative inquirers use lens (viewpoints) as strategies to establish validity in a study. These strategies are organised in three groups: (a) researchers’ lens (triangulation, disconfirming evidence and researcher reflexivity); (b) study participants lens (member checking, prolonged engagement in the field and collaboration); and (c) lens of people external to the study for example readers or reviewers’ lens (the audit trail, thick, rich description and peer debriefing) (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018). A strategy was chosen from each category for this study’s validation.

(A)The Researcher’s Lens: The researcher made use of triangulation strategy to validate the data. Triangulation is when a researcher makes use of different sources, methods and theories to provide collaborating evidence to a theme or code (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, through the data requirement table (Table 12) in section 3.4.4, the researcher was able to provide evidence to support each theme by review of multiple sources of studies.

(B)The Study Participants Lens: The researcher made use of member checking in this category to validate the data. Member checking is when a researcher takes data and interpretations back to research participants for

confirmation of credibility of the information (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Following the transcription of the interviews, the researcher emailed the research participants copies of the interview transcripts to confirm credibility and accuracy of the transcripts. The participants confirmed that the transcripts were a true representation of what they said during the interviews.

(C) External Lens: Peer debriefing was used as an external lens of validation in this category. Peer debriefing “is the review of data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research, or the phenomenon being explored” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.129). During the course of the research, the researcher made oral presentations at Doctoral, and Faculty Research Conferences hosted by Northumbria University. In addition, the researcher was present at an external research conference hosted by Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE). The researcher also submitted a paper for peer review ahead of a conference that was hosted by British Academy of Management (BAM). While engaging in all these activities, the research was critiqued by external reviewers. The feedbacks received through constructive criticisms enabled the researcher to work on the weaknesses identified and produce more rigorous research. Finally, engaging in reliability and validity strategies ensured rigour of data analysis and interpretation of study findings.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is norms for conduct (Resnik, 2015) that involves decision making concerning what is right and wrong (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). In resonance with this, research ethics refer to set of ethical practices or standards that govern how scientific and other research are conducted at research institutions such as universities and disseminated (Resnik, 2015; SkillsYouNeed, 2022). Arifin (2018) stated that the protection of human subjects in any research study are guaranteed when appropriate ethical principles are applied. Moreover, ethical considerations are important in qualitative research especially when conducting face-to-face interviews with vulnerable participants (Arifin, 2018). Prior to commencing data collection, it is important that a researcher seeks and obtains permission of institutional review boards (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hatch, 2002; Sieber & Tolich, 2013). Thus, this research adhered to the Northumbria University Research Ethics and Governance guidelines. Prior to data collection, application for ethical approval was made in April 2019 using the Northumbria University's Research Ethics Online System Portal (Ethics reference number: 1580). The application was subsequently approved on the 3rd of May 2019. This doctoral study had medium ethical risks according to the Northumbria University Research Ethics and Governance handbook.

Arifin (2018) and Resnik (2015) identified important ethical issues that should be considered when conducting a research study. They include the following:

1. *Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation:* A research project/participant information sheet (see Appendix 3) and research organisation informed consent form (see Appendix 4) were sent alongside the questionnaire (see Appendix 2) ahead of the interviews to businesses who had confirmed their interview dates. The participant information sheet provided a brief synopsis of the research study and emphasized on the voluntary participation of the respondents. The participants were also informed about what would be done with the results of the study. Based on the participants' choice, the informed consent form was either signed before or after the interview was conducted
2. *Risk of harm, Anonymity and Confidentiality:* The researcher made sure any possible physical and emotional harm to the participants were eliminated. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at locations chosen and deemed safe by the participants. The research participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality; and that data would be used solely for research purposes. By preserving the confidentiality of the research data, collected interview voice recordings were stored on a password-protected computer only accessible to the researcher. And then transferred safely to Northumbria University's cloud-based online storage.
3. *Data Analysis, Honesty and Integrity in Dissemination of Study Findings:* Anonymity and confidentiality were also preserved during data analysis and writing of the doctoral thesis. Transcription of interviews was conducted in a private room with the use of earphones; names of organisations were anonymised; and study findings were reported honestly without fabrication and falsification.

3.8 Challenges faced during Data Collection and Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that researchers face challenges in the field when gathering data. The first challenge the researcher faced on the field was initial recruitment of participants. As discussed in section 3.5.3, the researcher was unable to recruit the desired type of businesses during the access and rapport stage. The researcher attended the business events with the aim of networking with SMEs. However, the researcher could only network with micro businesses. Secondly, the researcher could not conduct interviews with some businesses that showed interest in participating because they did not meet the criteria of company size. Those businesses were either sole-proprietorship or had less than three employees. As mentioned in section 3.5.6, there was a low response rate from the target sample. In addition to the low response rate, the researcher faced the challenge of interested businesses dropping out during data collection. As shown in Table 14 some businesses who had initially signified interest in participating; either cancelled, postponed or did not reply to the follow-up emails. Thus, leading to the participation of only 27 businesses out of 41 positive responses.

Besides, the data analysis phase was more challenging to the researcher. The researcher has a quantitative background and was not well conversant with qualitative research. The researcher therefore had to engage in in-depth research on designing a qualitative study and learn the rudiments of qualitative data analysis during the course of the research. The process of transcribing the interviews was time-consuming and monotonous. Other challenging

issues for the researcher were data cleaning by re-listening to the interviews, grasping the understanding of template analysis and the use of NVivo 12 software. Nevertheless, watching videos on qualitative data analysis and designing qualitative studies hastened the researcher's learning process.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored research paradigms and stated the researcher's philosophical positions in relation to ontology, epistemology and methodology. The research methods which consist of sampling techniques, recruitment of participants, methods of data collection and data analysis were discussed extensively and justified. Ethical considerations were discussed, and strategies used for reliability and validity of data were highlighted. Finally, the challenges faced during data collection and analysis were outlined. The next chapter presents the study findings obtained from the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Study Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings obtained from the analysis of the research data. Data was generated from the responses of the 27 MSMEs managers who participated in the semi-structured interviews. This chapter provides an extensive report on the current state of human resource management and organisational career management practices existing in North East England MSMEs. Emerging themes are discussed sequentially in relation to each question on the interview guide (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 2). Each question represents a higher order code (HOC), and its secondary, tertiary and auxiliary codes (see Appendix 7) are discussed accordingly.

The chapter begins with describing the demographic characteristics of the participating MSMEs. Then moves on to presenting the main study findings relevant to the research question and objectives. Patterns, trends, commonalities and contrasts in the study findings are discussed exhaustively. Study findings are justified with quotes (extracts from interview transcripts) to support each claim. Organisations are identified by their organisation codes. As already discussed in Chapter 3, data obtained from the two SMEs in Cumbria were relevant to the research. Org.1-Org.25 represent the codes for North East England MSMEs while the SMEs in Cumbria are identified by Org.I and Org. II. This chapter closes by providing a summary of the key research findings which lays a foundation for the discussion chapter.

4.2. Demographics of Participating MSMEs

This section presents the demographics of the research participants. Demographic information is necessary because it determines whether the research participants represent a target population for generalisation purposes (Salkind, 2010). As MSMEs are uniquely categorized by their size and turnover (Dambiski Gomes de Carvalho et al., 2021) and this research focuses on perceptions of managers in North East England MSMEs; the demographic characteristics of size (number of employees), turnover, location and managerial positions were requested for. In addition, information on length of establishment (age of organisation) and industry of the MSMEs were collected. Table 16 shows the organisation codes and demographic characteristics of the research participants.

Table 16: Demographics of Participating MSMEs in North East England and Cumbria

Organisation Code	Location	Organisation Size (number of employees)	Turnover (£ million)	Age (years)	Industry	SIC Code	Participant Role	Gender
Org.1	Peterlee, County Durham	17	6-25	27	Education and Skills: Accreditation and awarding body	85600	Managing Director	Female
Org.2	Dipton, County Durham	7	0.5-5	19	Storage Solutions: Design and installation of Flooring and storages	52103	Director	Female
Org.3	Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne	85	0.5-5	7	Visualisation Solutions for the Car Industry: Show room technology and online car configurators	73110 74100	Talent Development Manager	Female
Org.4	Eastbourne Road, Middlesbrough	51	0.5-5	10	Charity: Day care and social support services	87200	Quality Assurance Manager	Female

Org.5	Chillingham Road, Newcastle upon Tyne	8	0.5-5	24	Oil and Gas Engineering Consultancy: Technical advice on construction and operation of oil and gas assets	71122	Principal Consultant	Male
Org.6	Bishop Auckland, County Durham	65	6-25	35	Energy: Animal by-products and food waste recycling	38110	Company Director	Male
Org.7	Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne	4	0.5-5	14	Sales Agency: Provision of sales staff to licensed premises	74909	Managing Director	Female
Org.8	Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne	46	6-25	51	Theatre and Drama: Producing and presenting shows	90010	Executive Director	Female
Org.9	Peterlee County Durham	74	0.5-5	17	Accounting Practice: Tax audit, Bookkeeping	69201 69202	Chief Executive Officer	Male
Org.10	Joicey Road, Gateshead	10	0.5-5	15	Creative Graphic Design:	74100	Founder and	Male

					Branding, creating and designing characters for films		Managing Director	
Org.11	Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne	65	6-25	43	Recruitment Agency: Recruit of candidates for management to senior roles to all different sectors	78109	HR Manager	Female
Org.12	Hebburn, South Tyneside	35	6-25	20	Recruitment and Training Agency: Recruit of permanent and temporary candidates to all different sectors	78109	Managing Director	Female
Org.13	Wallsend, Newcastle upon Tyne	8	0.5-5	7	Event Management Consultancy: Managing professional conferences and events	82302	Director	Female

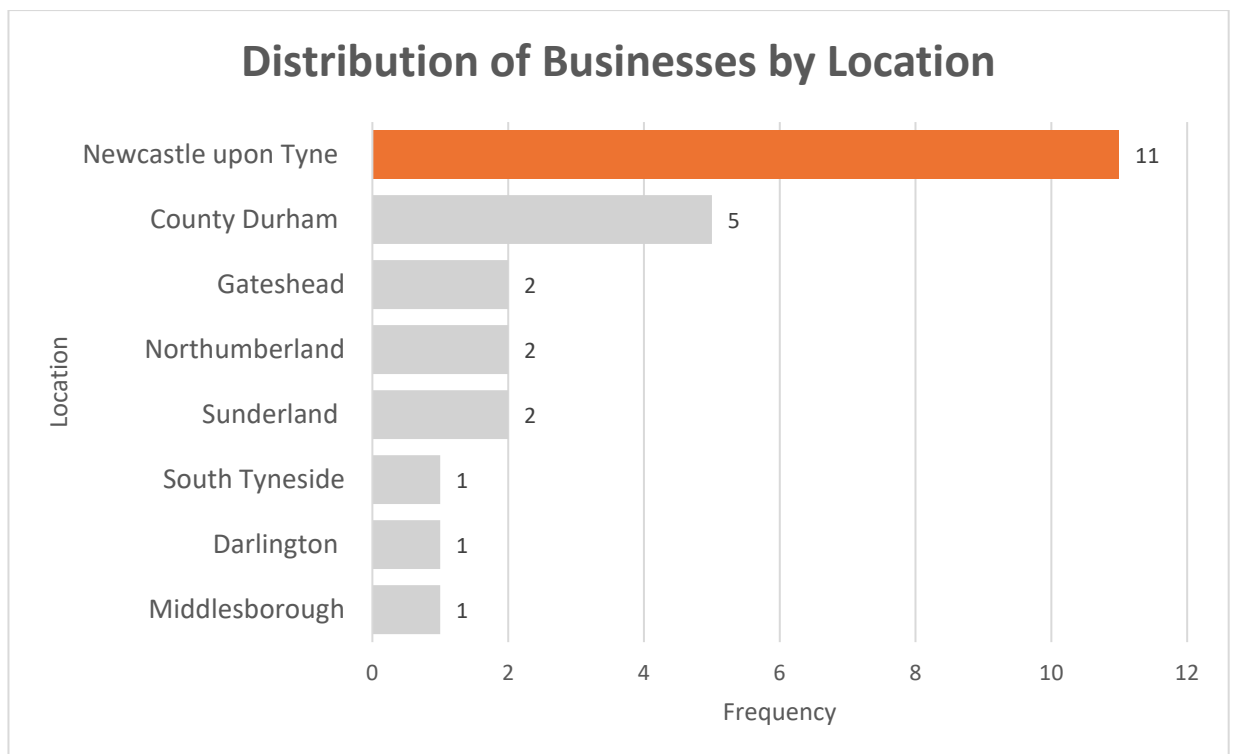
Org.14	Wearfield Enterprise Park East, Sunderland	10	0.5-5	15	Financial Advisory Services: Bespoke financial planning for high and ultra-high net worth individuals	70221	Office Manager	Female
Org.15	High Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne	3	0.5-5	8	Branding and Creative Design Agency	74100	Managing Director	Male
Org.16	Lime Street, Newcastle upon Tyne	21	0.5-5	10	Business Trend Forecast Consultancy: Forecast of business future trends for retailers and brand	70229	Managing Director	Female
Org.17	Borough Road, Darlington	40	0.5-5	42	Charity: Mental health and social care support services	87200	Chief Executive Officer	Male
Org.18	Hexham, Northumberland	6	0.5-5	10	Electrical Wholesaler: Sale of electrical products to electrical wholesalers and general public	46740	Director	Male

Org.19	Bridge Street, Sunderland	10	0.5-5	40	Security Systems Services: Maintenance and installation of security equipment	33200	Managing Director	Male
Org.20	Peterlee, County Durham	31	6-25	9	Hospitality and Catering: Supply of tableware, kitchen equipment and chef clothing to the hospitality industry	56210	Managing Director	Female
Org.21	Killingworth, Newcastle upon Tyne	23	0.5-5	13	Custom Printing and Branded Merchandise: Bespoke printing and customisation of clothing, office supplies and personal products	18129	Director	Male
Org.22	High Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne	5	0.5-5	5	Branding and Creative Design Agency	74100	Co-founder and Strategy Director	Female

Org.23	Market Street, Newcastle upon Tyne	4	0.5-5	4	Corporate Film Production Agency: Make of promotional films for corporate businesses	74203	Founder and Director	Male
Org.24	Abbott's Hill, Gateshead	4	0.5-5	8	Marketing, PR and Consultancy Agency	70229	Founder and Managing Director	Female
Org.25	Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland	7	0.5-5	43	Luxury Home Accessories Retail: Design and manufacture of luxury home accessories	26520 32990	Managing Director	Male
Org.I	Windermere, Cumbria	70	6-25	41	Leadership, Management and Training Consultancy	70229	General Manager	Male
Org.II	Penrith, Cumbria	200	6-25	107	Retail Butchery: Sale of manufactured local butchery goods	10130	Head of Finance, HR and Business Systems	Female

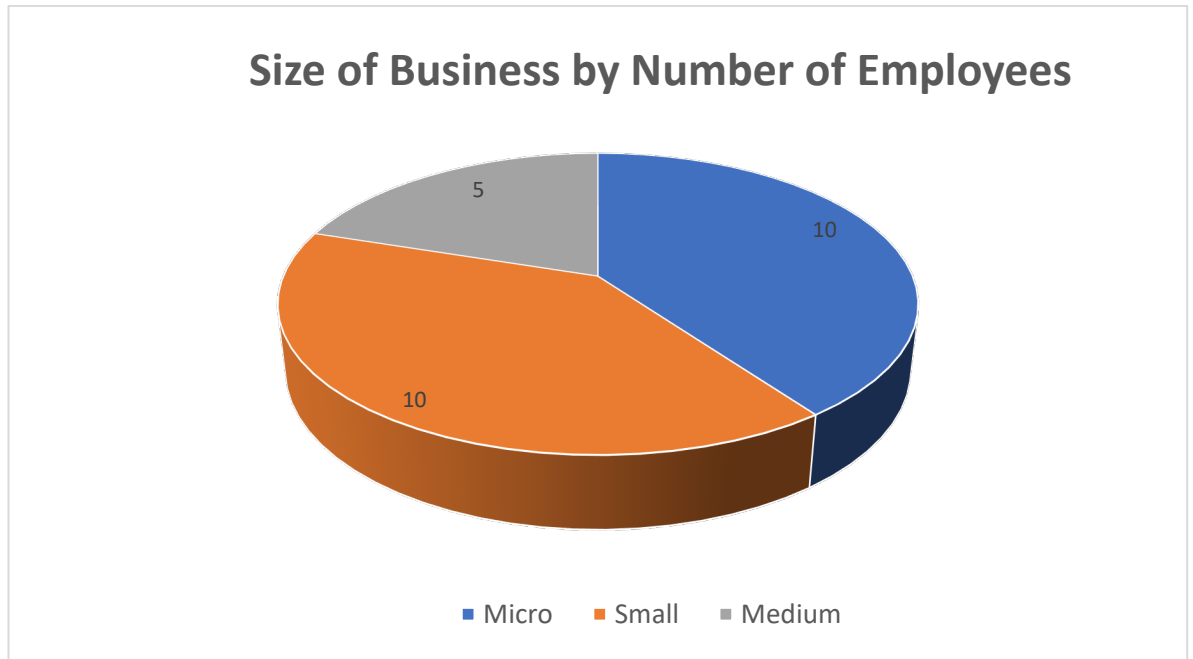
As shown above in Table 16, the interviewed businesses represented major locations in the North East England. A large proportion of the research participants were located in Newcastle upon Tyne, leading with 11 businesses and was followed by County Durham with five businesses. Following behind were Gateshead, Northumberland and Sunderland with two businesses each. While South Tyneside, Darlington and Middlesbrough had the lowest number of research participants with one business each. These findings are partially similar to the North East local enterprise partnership (LEP) report on business population in the North East England region. According to the report, Northumberland had the highest number of private sector enterprises in 2021 and was followed closely by Newcastle, Gateshead and County Durham (North East LEP, 2021). In contrast to this study findings, the report stated that Sunderland had the lowest number of private sector enterprises (North East LEP, 2021). Figure 17 shows a distribution of the participating businesses across locations in North East England.

Figure 17: Distribution of Participating MSMEs across Locations in North East England



In terms of organisation size (number of employees), 10 businesses were micro (0-9 employees), 10 businesses were small (10-49 employees) and the remaining 5 were medium (50-249) sized businesses as shown in Figure 18. This finding agrees with the study of Wynarczyk (2007) who investigated gender management gap in scientific SMEs in North East of England. His study findings revealed that more than half of the research participants (53%) were micro, 28% were small and 13% were medium sized. In accordance, the department of North East Labour reported that majority of the businesses in North East are micro with the percentage standing at 87.6% followed by small businesses (10.1%) and medium-sized businesses (1.8%) (North East Labour Profile, 2020).

Figure 18: Organisation Size by Number of Employees



The participating MSMEs were fairly established and mature. The youngest organisation was 4 years old and the oldest was 51 years. Majority of the businesses (11) were between 10-25 years of age, followed by 7 businesses between 0-9 years of age, 3 businesses were between 26-40 years old, and 4 businesses were between 41-60 years old. Majority of the businesses had annual income less than £5m with 19 out of 25 earning between 0-£5m while the remaining 6 earned between £6.5m-£25m. None of the businesses earned above £25m. There was a relationship between length of establishment and annual income. Businesses who earned between £6.5m-£25m were 20 years old and above, apart from Org.20 that was nine years old.

The data contained a rich mix of MSMEs in different industries. Rather than gaining insight about organisational career management from a single industry, exploring OCM from the perceptions of managers in different

industries provides a richer and varied insight to the OCM phenomenon. The industries of the research participants constituted of consultancy, recruitment, social care/charity, manufacturing, creative graphic design, education, retail, wholesale, sales, theatre, event management, storage, custom printing and branding, food waste recycling, car visualisation and others. Their respective UK standard industrial classification codes (SIC) codes are shown in Table 16. Figure 19 shows the distribution of the participating MSMEs according to their industries. The study findings revealed that majority of the research participants are in the professional, scientific and technical activities industry. This finding relates to the report of the office of national statistics on business population per industry sector in the UK. The report states that the construction sector has the highest number of SMEs (913, 520) followed by the professional, scientific and technical activities sector (848, 055) in 2020 (Statista, 2021).

Figure 19: UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities Codes of the Participating MSMEs

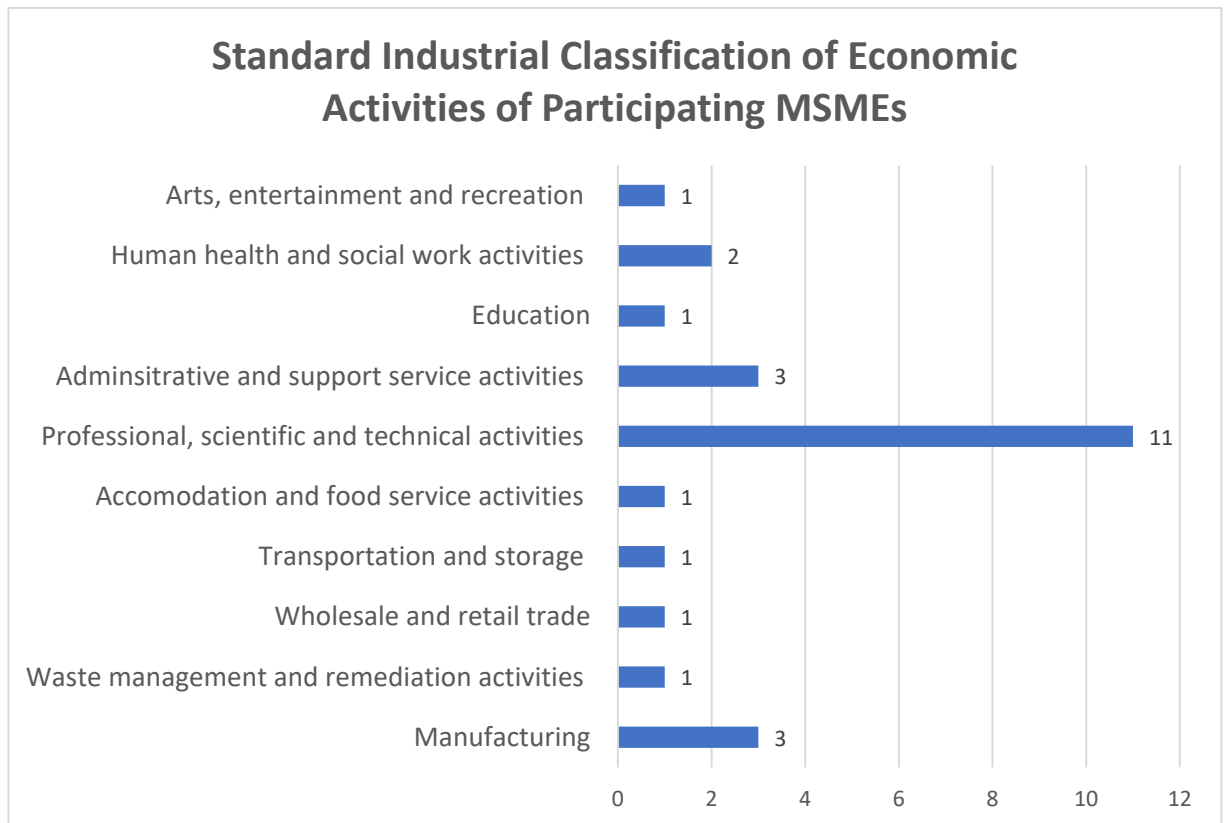
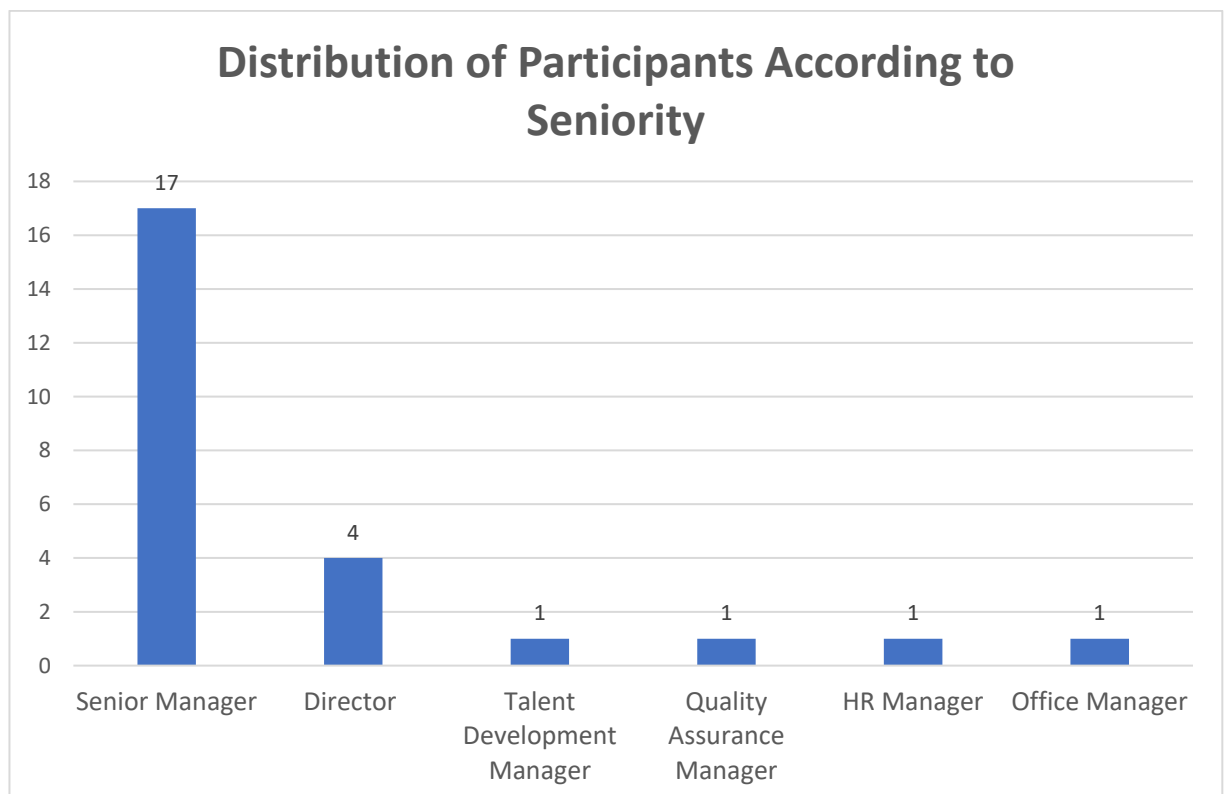


Table 16 shows the research participants constituted of 11 male managers and 14 female managers. Data from Office of National Statistics (2013) and Catalyst (2019) state that 35% and 37.6% of women were managers in the UK in 2013 and 2019 respectively. On the contrary, data from this study revealed that 56% of the research participants were women occupying management roles. Although, several studies have shown that the male gender dominates managerial positions in organisations, recent studies have revealed that there has been an increase in female employment rate, number of female entrepreneurs and number of female managers (Ayman et al., 2009; Koca &

Ozturk, 2015; Stoker et al., 2012). A large number of the participants were senior managers accounting for 17 out of 25 participants while the remaining 8 were line managers or directors. In addition, a large proportion of the senior managers were owner-managers. The most senior position was Managing Director which is equivalent to Founder and Chief Executive Officer. The distribution of the research participants according to managerial positions is shown below in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Distribution of Participants According to Managerial Positions



The remaining sections in this chapter discuss the study findings obtained from template analysis.

4.3 Career Framework

The first question on the interview guide sought to investigate the presence of career frameworks or policies in MSMEs and their mode of operation. Thus, making the 'career framework' theme to be the first higher order code (HOC) identified. As previously established in Chapter 2 that a career framework is a platform on which organisations can pivot and respond to challenges in labour markets by linking vital HR processes such as workforce analytics, selection and retention, performance management, rewards and career management and succession management (Mercer, 2017). This question was asked to ascertain if MSMEs have a formal career structure in operation which captures vital HR functions such as recruitment and retention, training, performance management, talent management, rewards, career development and career progression opportunities. The perception of a career framework varied across the organisations. According to Org.16, a career framework was viewed as a career map or matrix. Org.16 asserted:

Org.16 *“Yes, we do. So, we have structured, we're quite a small business but we've structured the business in a way that allows people to understand what level of development they are at. So, we have to 5 levels in the business from quite junior graduate level through to director level. So, to go with that, we also have what we call a career map or a set of skills matrices some people call it and that tells you at each of those levels what kind of skills you will be expected to develop and that you'll be trained to develop”.*

Here Org.16 emphasized that although their organisation is small, a formal career framework is in place. Org.16 further explained that their career structure consists of a career map or a set of skills matrixes to help employees navigate their career in the organisation and understand what level of development they are at. The skills to have, training and development

employees need to undergo to get to the level above them are indicated in the career structure. Furthermore, the career framework includes how the organisation will go about helping their employees achieve these objectives. Here, the concept of a clear career path emerges which is one of the higher order codes. The career path theme is discussed in detail in section 4.6.

In addition, the presence of a career framework was understood as having a system for job progression and a clear career route:

Org.21 *“Yes, so we’ve got management system in terms of, for job progression from kind of start to finish. Basically, we have a company structure, and the company is split down into a kind of route, if you like. The main ones, there are two main areas, but we classify them as production or sales-based; and sales and composes”.*

The comment from Org.21 shows that a career framework gives an overview of the career route or path existing in the organisation and shows how employees can progress from low rank roles to high rank roles. As discussed previously that a career framework links vital HR processes, the presence of an operational career framework in the organisation was seen as the function of the HR department:

Org.I *“Yes, we have a framework. We have two members of staff who are responsible for the structure of development. Essentially, they are under the title of HR”.*

Conversely, another organisation did not have a written down career policy but had a structured career framework that was embedded in the business process:

Org.12 *“We don't have a written down policy but it's quite structured, it's an embedded process in the business, so, kind of, I suppose, it becomes structured over time as we've grown as an organisation”.*

Majority of the businesses affirmed that there was no career framework existing in their organisation mainly because they were small sized. In comparison, Org.20 a year younger but slightly larger than Org.16 did not have a career framework in place:

Org.20 *“We don't have a formal framework in place because we started off as a very small business. When we started there was only 6 of us, so what we've done, I have worked for big companies before, and I haven't felt that I've seen any framework that actually recognise merit in the way that I would like to”*

In addition to businesses being small sized, things done informally also contributed to the absence of a formal career framework or policy in the organisation:

Org.6 *“Yeah, now that's an interesting one because we haven't particularly got a career management framework in place, but generally, there are, and I know we go on to this further but through training and what have you then there are opportunities for people to obviously advance throughout the organisation, It's made me look to think actually what extra we should be doing but what we have is quite informal, so we don't actually have a management framework or policy in place”.*

The above organisation stated that although there was no existing career framework, they engaged in training which served as an opportunity for career advancement of employees within the organisation. This implies that well trained employees have a better chance of career progression within the organisation.

Furthermore, some businesses did not have a career framework in place because of the nature of their business or type of job they perform. For example, a storage solution company perceived their organisation did not have need for a career framework because of the nature of their job. The research participant stated that their organisation was involved in the design and installation of flooring and storages and so their workers were only needed on site when there was a job to be done. Org.2 added that training and learning were carried out on the job:

Org.2 *“So, about career management framework, we don’t really have any clear sort of set out rules, but they are just clusters, labourers. I was looking at the career management practices, there is nothing really that I can say apart from sort of like just we are really such a small company. We’ve not got anything like that to go through. It’s sort of learning on the job”.*

During the interview, Org.2 explained that the labourers only work when there is a job and so the nature of the business does not permit career development, talk more of career progression. Furthermore, on-job training was carried as at when required in Org.2.

Similarly, Org.25 did not have a career framework due to the nature of the company. Org.25 asserted that a career framework was absent in the company because they are AI (artificial intelligence) oriented, and their operation requires minimal management:

Org.25 *“We are a very modern company. What I mean by that is we are very AI (artificial intelligence) orientated so this is what’s driving the productivity side of things. So, we have very minimal management. So, where we work it*

might be interesting for you, rather than having managers, the computer systems that we have; each person in the company is allocated an air/ their share of responsibility and the computer systems then, the function that they fall on the computer systems really dictate their working day. So, rather than told what to do by a person, the computers are very much controlling the workflow”.

This is an interesting finding as Org.25 expresses that there is little or no management structure because the business is AI driven. It can be argued that although the business is AI driven, there should still be a proper management structure in place to direct the activities of the organisation. This finding is unique and rarely seen in literature. Org.25 further explained that AI drives the productivity side of things in the business. Here, the theme of factors influencing productivity in the workplace emerges and AI is highlighted as one of the factors.

There was a consensus among the creative, branding and design businesses that there was no career framework operating in their organisations because their jobs were skills based and involved creative thinking. They explained that being creatives meant that they were specialists and worked with specialists as well. Therefore, it meant that there was little or no need for career progression as most of the member of staff are specialists and at the pinnacle of their career:

Org.15 *“We don’t do any formal training in terms of career management because it’s skills-based stuff. Possibly nothing as formal as that”.*

Org.10 *“We don’t have anything; we don’t do a certain development program. But what we do is that every Monday we all sit round the table and talk about what is happening in our work.”.*

Another contribution to the absence of a career framework in the creative, branding and design businesses was because they were micro-sized. The reason was due to the nature of their job, the founders or directors only needed two or three specialists to work with them in the company:

Org.23 *“Not really, because there is nowhere else to go, we are all filmmakers. There is nowhere else to go”.*

Micro-sized businesses have flat organisational structure and so there are no ranks or opportunity for career progression and invariably resulting to no need for a career framework. And in the case of extra workload or a job they aren't too familiar with, they bring in specialists to work with them or outsource the job:

Org.15 *“A lot of times the people who we bring in are people who have completely different skill sets to us. So, for example, we don't do any animation in-house, but we have several projects that require animation. So, we often bring up those pre-planned. We don't essentially have to train them, but we just have to kind of, you know, we don't know their job but what we do is to make sure that they are really well briefed on the projects”.*

A micro business further mentioned that although a formal career framework doesn't exist in their organisation, they engaged in on-job training:

Org.18 *“There isn't at the moment. I do encourage the staff that if they require any training, obviously if there is any aspect of their own training they want to improve, to let me know, and at which point I will try and sort the development training for them”.*

Org.19 slightly larger and much older in years than Org.18 agreed with the above and stated:

Org.19 *“We don’t have a framework. Training is done as when required relative to the job they do. But no, we don’t have a career structure where you say, well, you will start here, and you’ll end up there. The employment steps, you know, so I’ve got to say no to that, we are a small company, and we don’t have a development path for people. We get the people to do the job we want them to do, train them or get people train them, already trained”.*

It can be seen from the above statements that some businesses understood that were small-sized and don’t have the capacity to have a formal career structure and framework and so focused more on training to fill the gap.

In addition to on-job training being done in the absence of a career framework, reviews, appraisals, and internal job promotion are carried out as a substitute:

Org.13 *“We are a bit small. We basically don’t have much structure in terms of all of the things you’ve asked. Obviously, we have the full reviews and appraisals, and we promote people internally, but we don’t have many of these things that you are asking me about because we are just too small for that”.*

Org.8 affirmed that there was no career structure in place, however they were opened to having conversations about career aspirations with their employees and how they can be of help as an organisation to support their aspirations. Org.8 established that in situations where there are no opportunities for career progression, they are willing to support their employees who might want to move on to another company or elsewhere for career progression and skills development:

Org.8 *“Interesting one, not specifically. We don’t specifically have a career programme however we do try to acknowledge everybody’s career aspirations and try to have a conversation about where and how **Org.8** can support those aspiration and also when do you need to go elsewhere or to another company or look for progression elsewhere to be able to develop those skills. So, we don’t have a specific thing like that, but we do like to talk to people about what*

their career aspirations are, so that should an opportunity arise, we can contribute to it”.

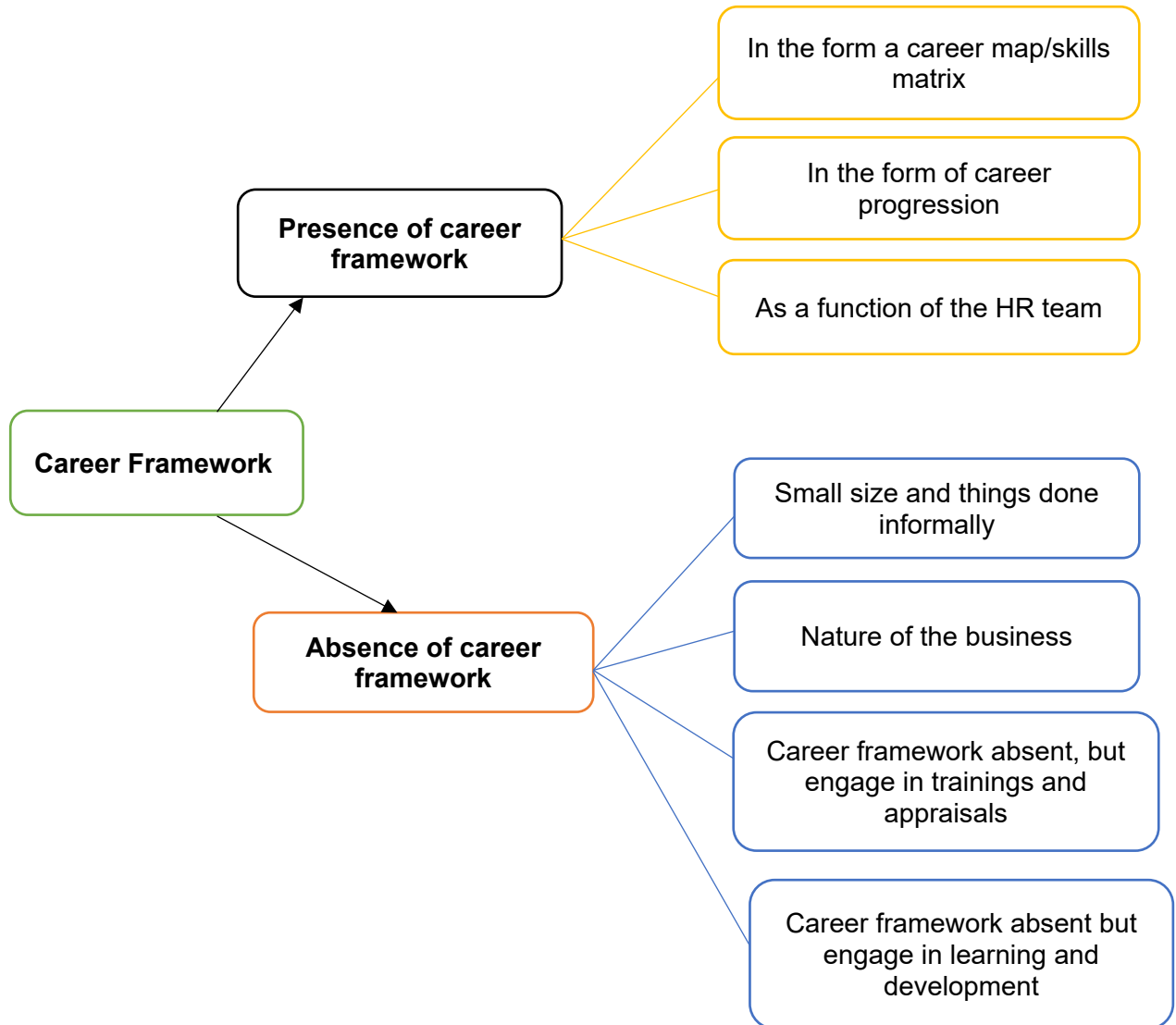
In the above scenarios, Org.13 and Org. 8 believe that there is no formal career structure present in their organisations. However, they are engaged in trainings, reviews, appraisals, and conversations about career aspirations which are among organisational career management practices. It is noticed that according to most of the participants, they believe that there is no functional formal career framework in place. However, it can be said that all the practices (trainings, reviews, appraisals, internal job promotions and conversations about career aspirations) they engage in are all activities embedded in a career framework. Thus, this implies that the MSMEs engage in OCM practices although a formal career framework might be absent in their organisations. This notion was confirmed previously by Org.12 as they asserted that although there is no written down career policy in their organisation, OCM is an embedded process in the business.

Interestingly, although some of the businesses confirmed that there was no formal career framework existing in their organisations, most of them agreed they were involved in learning and development of their staff:

Org.5 *“Well, we don't have an explicit career management framework. But I can explain how it works in practice if you like, but we don't have a policy formally documenting it. In terms of how we work, we identify where learning or training is required for our employees. And we also encourage them to join appropriate professional institutions and the Institute of Engineers to actually develop from a personal development perspective”*

The above contribution shows that Org.5 does not have an explicit formal career framework. However, in practice, learning, training and personal professional development were encouraged. This practical learning and development approach was found out to exist in most of the participating organisations. Here, the learning and development theme emerge and would be discussed in detail in section 4.4. Figure 21 shows a pictorial summary of the responses generated from the participants on the career framework theme.

Figure 21: The Career Framework HOC and its related Sub-codes



4.3.1 Efficiency of Career Framework

In addition to exploring the presence of career frameworks in the MSMEs, the efficiency of the career frameworks was investigated. The “efficiency of career framework” was the second identified HOC identified. Small size of business emerged as a major factor that hindered the efficiency of the career frameworks. Org.24 highlighted that their career framework is a work in progress and would get better as the business expands:

Org.24 *“I think it is always a work in progress. We are a small business, as we grow and bring different people into the business, people have different needs. I think we have got a good base/relationship and I think that we are really different to what our employees want, and we know what the business needs, but I don’t think it’s finished.”*

Here, Org.24 hints about the changing needs of employees when new people are employed as the business grows. Org.24 also mentioned that the organisation is aware of the business needs. Thus, this shows that employee needs, and organisation needs should be considered for improved efficiency of a career framework. Org.13 pointed out that their career framework was not very efficient at that moment in time because it was only developed recently. However, Org.13 was optimistic that the career framework would improve over time. Furthermore, Org.13 added that they were considering the use of external support for improved business processes:

Org.13 *“Not great, actually so far. We’ve only had probably 6 months or a year, I wouldn’t say they’ve been very effective yet. So, we’re looking currently at getting more external support and to do some workshops and work around the companies that use the objectives and so on. So, I think that would take little time.”*

Similarly, Org.16 asserted that their career framework was not very efficient at that point in time because the career framework was newly introduced, and formalisation of HR practices was recent:

Org.16 *“I think it’s something we’ve only really introduced, I would say in the last 12 months, so it’s very early days for us but really, we’ve just formalised a lot of things that we were doing already but it is a much more formal system. I think it could be more efficient for sure, I think we’re probably just, we are*

learning as we go where those efficiencies might be made but I would say it's a really good start"

Conversely, Org.21 asserted that their career framework is effective because they have grown in size over the years. Furthermore, Org.21 affirmed that the career framework is more effective now compared to few years ago:

Org.21 *"At the moment, now, I would say it's very effective, but it's been very difficult to get to that point, when we were a smaller team, I would say it was very ineffective, it's only now that we've got more people who are able to kind of put people under somebody's wings. So, I guess if you went back five years ago it would be completely different because you would have one person who is in charge of production and then five or six people who are doing the production and nothing in between"*

In summary, the MSMEs affirmed that their career frameworks are works in progress with rooms for more improvement. The research participants reached a consensus that their career frameworks would improve and become more efficient as they grow in size.

This section explored the presence of career frameworks in the MSMEs and their efficiency. Insight from the 'career framework' theme reveals that majority of the MSMEs asserted that a formal career framework was absent in their organisations. While few affirmed that a formal career framework exist in their organisations. Though a formal career framework was not present in most of the MSMEs, the study findings revealed that all the MSMEs engaged in OCM practices embedded in a career framework. Thus, it can be stated that there is an iota of a career framework in the organisations where the managers

perceive it is absent. Furthermore, the managers affirmed that their career frameworks still needed improvement. The next section discusses the 'learning and development' theme that emerged from the 'career framework' theme.

4.4 Learning and Development

Learning and development (L&D) was not among the *a priori* themes identified in Chapter 3. The research participants frequently mentioned learning and development when they replied to the question regarding the presence of a career framework in their organisation. Thus, learning and development became a higher order code and an important theme as majority of the organisations engaged in learning and development activities. L&D was the third HOC identified during the data analysis. L&D is one of the core areas of HR and it is a systematic process designed to equip employees with the required skills, knowledge, and competency to function effectively in a work setting (Vulpen, 2021). One of the organisations mentioned:

Org.3 *“So, at the moment we have something called Z L talent or Zero Light talent and this is kind of a bespoke learning and development platform and we bought it off the shelf, but we’ve developed it and adapted it for our needs”*

It is seen that Org.3 has a platform for talent management and from this platform comes a tailored learning and development adapted to the organisation's needs. This implies that talents are recognised, developed, and managed via L&D. Furthermore, Org. 14 emphasized that that they are mainly

focused on L&D as a company when asked if a career framework existed in their organisation:

Org.14 *“The directors’ class is a learning company, so we are quite focused on learning and development throughout the whole company. We have tagged the business we have.”*

As mentioned previously, the HR department is responsible for organising L&D activities:

Org.1 *“We have a human resources team, and it is part of their function. They are responsible for organising learning and development activities. Because we are an education and skills organisation, we do put learning and development as high priority within the organisation, and we like to grow our own. So, we like to be able to help people progress through the group structure.”*

As identified above, the organisation is interested in growing their staff and helping people progress within the organisation. And learning and development is treated with high priority because of the nature of the organisation which is based on education and skills.

Similarly, Org.20 asserted that they are committed to growing talent from within on a personal level. And they are also involved in guiding employees on the right career path according to their skills in the organisation:

Org.20 *“Well, our main aim is to grow talent from within. But we don’t actually limit that to being within each department. So, we can monitor people on a much more personal level, and we develop them within the business and guide them through which path is right for them according to their skills. So, we had*

a number of employees that had started off in one department and they ended up running another department.”

Here, the ‘grow talent’ theme emerges which is discussed in further sections.

The above quote shows that Org.20 has a horizontal career path as the manager mentioned that employees are able to function in a different role other than the role they were employed for. The career path theme is explored in section 4.5.

In addition to the HR department being responsible for development activities, line managers were responsible for the execution of learning and development in the organisation:

Org.1 *“All managers are responsible for the development of the people they manage i.e., line managers and then there is a scheme which we call the academy which has a variety of face-to-face and virtual offerings.”*

Managers who are good with relating with people were seen to get the best out of the employees in terms of development:

Org.10 *“I have got a head of creative strategy and he is very good at getting the best out of people. So, sometimes you have got to put people in comfortable position and take them out of their comfort zone to really sort of get the best of them.”*

Departmental managers were also responsible for the well-being of their staff:

Org.20 *“I believe that the departmental managers should really be handling issues within their own departments and should be responsible for the well-being of their staff.”*

One of the managers explained that they were open to employees speaking to them if they felt they needed more support pertaining to development:

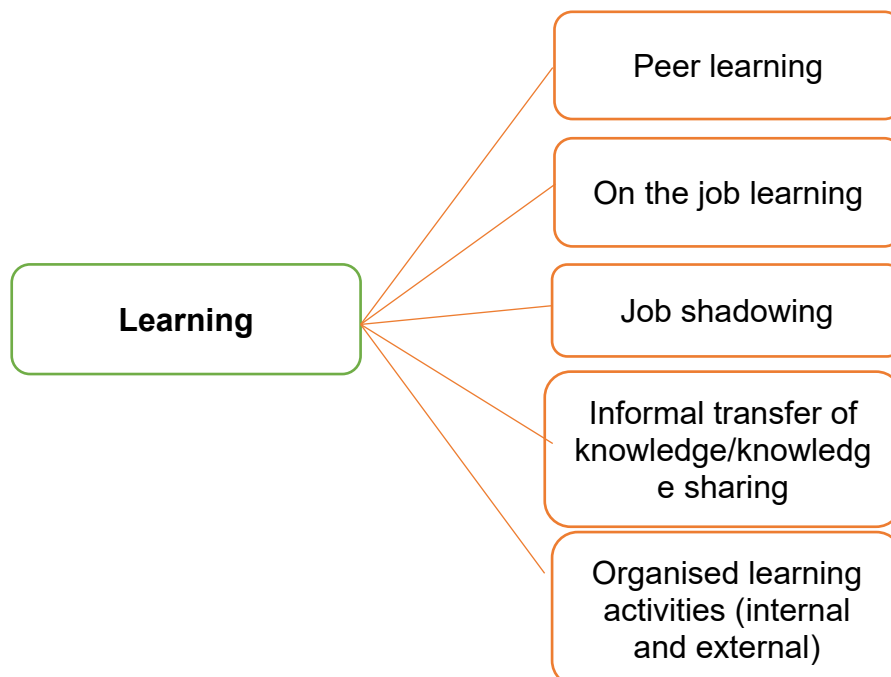
Org.II *“We are very much about giving our employees so much so if they have like an open forum where if somebody is not getting the right kind of support, they are able to come and see myself or our HR manager, and we can then obviously make sure that that person is given the right support that will enable them to develop.”*

The learning and development theme is discussed individually in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2.

4.4.1 Learning

Learning is the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, or behaviours through experience, teaching, study or training (Anderson et al., 2001). The research finding revealed learning was exhibited in various forms. The methods of learning identified by the research participants are shown below in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Findings from the Learning Sub-Code



Peer learning was pointed out to be the easiest method of learning especially for new recruits. Through peer learning, new recruits could understand the organisation culture better and know who to go to for help:

Org.11 *“So, we have a lot of our training sessions delivered by a senior consultant to other senior consultants, so we have peer learning going on there. And we encourage them to have a body scheme as we introduce them to ask anybody. And then, it will be somebody of the same level, but they will help them through understanding the culture of the business and understand who to go to for what.”*

Peer learning is an effective method to learn because employees can relate, ask questions, and learn from their peers on a more personal level rather than a manager-employee level:

“And it kind of help things to work but on a more personal level rather than a kind of manager-employee level. It’s more of an employee-employee level.”

Similar to peer learning, on-job learning, and job shadowing were pointed out as forms of learning. A manager pointed out:

Org.13 *“They mainly learn from their colleagues, to be honest, so they mainly learn from their colleagues around them rather than specific training, if you know what it means. Well, like work shadowing, shadowing their colleagues. They learn on the job, I will say. But generally, we find that it's actually best that people learn the job better from other people already working on it, you know what I mean rather than meeting to going to get other qualifications.”*

Here Org.13 stresses the importance of peer learning over taking specific training courses. Taking professional courses and specialized trainings are excellent ways to learn and acquire skills. However, Org.13 emphasizes that

it is best to learn from people already working on the job. Peer gives employees the opportunity to understand the culture of the business in a relaxed way and know who to go to for what. Peer learning, on-job learning, and job shadowing can sometimes be a substitute for specific training.

Peer learning was exhibited in putting up a weaker employee with a stronger one:

Org.10 *“All the designers buddy up with each other. So, what we tend to do is we put a weaker one with a stronger one. So, that’s how we sort of develop our staff.”*

Peer learning also existed on a managerial level. For example, manager to manager learning:

Org.8 *“So, the board very much encourages us to, there is a programme of work that I can then invite my senior managers to participate in when it suits, if there's a topic that's going to suit them. So, bigger bits of work sometimes a lot of you know conferences is a good example of when it's peer to peer sharing that suite them.”*

In addition to peer learning and job shadowing, informal transfer of knowledge or knowledge sharing was also another way of learning:

Org.18 *“You know, we have the likes of myself and another colleague who we've been here a number of years and we pass on our knowledge to the rest of the staff on a daily basis without there being an actual set-in stone process for that to happen.”*

Another manager stated:

Org.21 *“Generally, whenever, we usually do kind of a knowledge sharing and if, you know, we have kind of appraisals to go, and have work, that's what is trying to be positive”*

Informal transfer of knowledge was also done through teaching:

Org.10 *“So, I am a great believer in bringing people in who have got good attitudes, who are willing to learn and people who want to succeed. And that's how we do it. We bring them and we teach them what we need to teach them to create a person we want to create. And that's the way we do it for all our staff.”*

Org.1 stood out among the others because they showed they were strongly interested and involved in investing in and growing their staff as a company.

Organised learning activities arranged by the management for employees was in existence:

Org.1 *“We do take part in national campaign that happens every year called ‘Learning at Work’ week as well. So, we organise different learning opportunities; we might bring in trainers, we might send staff away or just get them to access resources as part of their dedicated week. And it's been acknowledged through our investors in people accreditation that we are good employer who does invest in its staff and wants to grow our own and we have mechanisms in place to help people progress”*

Org.1 emphasized that they have received good commendations from external bodies because of their commitment to investing in staff and growing their employees. Here, the ‘invest in staff’ theme emerges which would be discussed in further sections. It is worth noting that learning is not limited to the boundary of an organisation, external form of learning was encouraged

such as bringing in trainers or sending staff away for training. A good example is employees going for exhibitions which provides an opportunity to learn outside the organisation:

Org.10 *“We then give them the opportunity to have days through the year where they can go to exhibitions, or you know anything which is based around what they want to do.”*

4.4.2 Development

Development means investing in staff and growing them according to Org.1 in sections 4.4 and 4.4.1. Staff development could be upskilling and giving them the opportunity to take on leadership responsibilities within the organisation:

Org.8 *“So, what we've decided to do is upskill two members of staff and ask them to take on more of a leadership role and we are supporting them with, actually we're getting them both a coach. So, as part of their kind of package we're going to get a bit of salary uplift and a coach to be able to support their leadership development now.”*

Employees who take on new leadership roles require extra training to equip them for the new task and this training comes in the form of coaching as stated above. A manager or a member of staff in a higher position and with a wealth of experience chosen by the senior management team can assume the role of a coach to staffs newly picked for leadership roles. This therefore provides a platform for one-on-one personal training, and this supports their leadership development. Emerging out of the data is coaching which is an example of career management practices. Coaching is an OCM practice, and it would be discussed in detail in section 4.7.

The use of a development program creates a formal and structured approach to managing employee development. Org.1 highlighted that a functioning management development program existed in their organisation which covered vital management, training and development modules:

Org.1 *“And we currently have a management development program that we have designed internally to aid and support existing managers to do their work and also to encourage aspiring managers who might want to take that next step. So, we have a 5-module management development program that covers things like performance management, problem solving and all those sorts of hot topics.”*

A development program is not only beneficial to employees, but it is of benefit to managers and aspiring managers as cited above. It is recalled that Org.16 had something similar to a development program which was some sort of a career map or skill matrix in section 4.3. In addition, the allocation of a budget for learning and development shows that Org.1 understands the importance of learning and development:

Org.1 *“So, we do have a budget for learning and development and that fits as part of the first, part of the HR function. And people will apply to that budget if they think their staff needs some training or the HR manager will use that budget to fund some group wide activities as well”*

Furthermore, the advantage of investing in staff learning and development is that it grows a motivated, well-trained and highly skilled workforce. A managing manager in the creative industry highlighted that the development of staff helps to boost confidence and enhance productivity:

Org.10 *“The development is things like, we get a young designer comes here and we build them up to build their confidence. Then we get to a stage where we take them to see a customer. Ben who is one of our creatives, he’s been here for few years now. We took him to Los Angeles in New York to go and meet the customers because a lot of the work we do is on email you know, and you don’t always see them. So, it built his confidence going all the way across to Los Angeles to meet the customers and go to places like the 12th Century, Fox and Universal Studios.”*

Here, the managing director emphasized that he was able to build the confidence of his staff by providing an opportunity for interaction with a client abroad. Alongside confidence boost, staff development is associated with employee motivation:

Org.19 *“I think that developing staff does enhance motivation and gives confidence because they must be confident of what they’re doing and know what they’re doing is correct all the time”*

Majority of the managers asserted that learning and progress of employee development were monitored through personal development plans, performance management and performance development reviews.

4.4.2.1 Personal Development Plan (PDP)

A personal development plan (PDP) is a written plan to develop, improve and sharpen skills, talents, abilities, and wellbeing of employees in a workplace (Putter, 2021). A personal development plan is agreed upon between a manager and an employee once L&D needs and objectives have been identified (IES, 2022). The use of PDP was engaged by managers to plan, set milestones, examine productivity, and track the progress of staff development:

Org.15 *“Really, the process of development is we have development plans which are monthly which covers a number of key areas, we kind of address any concerns we might have from the previous month. We look at productivity reports based on time spent on jobs. We kind of have milestones in this development plan of things that we always want to discuss.”*

An organisation stated that in the absence of a formal career framework, a PDP was used to identify talents and determine when and how employees could grow and progress within the organisation:

Org.11 *“It's more about sort of identifying talent really. For example, myself, I joined the business in November 18, I came in as Head of Finance, Human Resources and Business Systems. I obviously would like to progress further, so the next step for me to go would be to go into a Directorship and now, I wouldn't necessarily have a career plan to be able to do that, but I would have a learning and development Plan that would help me, support me into proceeding into that level”*

Employers can track the progress of an employee performance using the performance development plan and this helps to determine how fast an employee can progress within the organisation. There was a response similar to the above organisation. This organisation didn't have a formal career framework, but the organisation engaged the use of a PDP. Personal development plan also referred to as performance development plan can be used as a reward system to reward employees in the area of career progression:

Org.13 *“So, we have appraisal system and performance development plans. No, it's not formal, it's just through the PDP, through the Personal Development Plan, and we do kind of encourage the people that we want to encourage to progress, and we reward them in that way, but we also rely on them wanting to develop themselves through their performance development plan”*

In addition to identifying talents and a prerequisite for career progression, a PDP can be used as a guide for career planning:

Org.20 *“Our main aim is to grow talent from within. So, we monitor people on a much more personal level, and we develop them within the business and guide them through which path is right for them according to their skills. So, we had a number of employees that had started off in one department and they ended up running another department”*

A PDP provides a solid foundation for career planning because it identifies areas for development, talents, strengths, weaknesses, career interests and career aspirations of employees. Managers can then make informed career decision based on the PDP of each employee. Once a personal development plan is set, development of employees can be monitored through performance management and performance development reviews.

4.4.2.2 Performance Management

Performance management refers to monitoring, maintaining, improving, and developing employee performance in line with an organisation’s strategic goals (Atkinson, 2012; Lin & Lee, 2011). Performance management is considered part of L&D because its ultimate aim is to improve performance and provide L&D opportunities (CIPD, 2021). Org.14 highlighted that performance management involves setting performance objectives and agreement on development plans between line managers and member of staff:

Org.14 *“Everybody has what we call a performance management. So, beginning of every year, objectives are set, and the development plans agreed*

between the line manager and the member of staff and that's used to then progress in their career that way."

Strategic objectives are set in order to ensure improved employee development and organisational performance. Performance management includes setting out proposed action plans to be achieved with the use of a personal development plan and appraisals or reviews of employee performance with the use of performance development reviews:

Org.12 *"The monthly ones are the ones that kind of fall into all sort of six-monthly kind of part year review for like half year review. And an annual review of 12 months so that they're kind of, I suppose, structured performance management side of things."*

Reviews can be done monthly, bi-annually, or annually as stated by Org.12 above. The frequency of reviews or appraisals depend on the nature and organisation structure of a business. Employee performance is measured with appraisals and criteria unique to each organisation:

Org.19 *"Well, you measure performance with appraisals, you have to have criteria to measure them. So, for you to measure people, there's got to be standards to make sure you can't just say, well, you want to do this. We will have expectations of capability and so people should be able to be capable of doing certain things. You know, if they're not, then they've got to be trained to do what we require them to do."*

For example, Org.19 above which is involved in installation and maintenance of security equipment measured performance based on the capability criteria. Other organisations had their own unique performance and productivity measurement which is discussed later in this chapter.

4.4.2.3 Performance Development Review (PDR)

A performance development review or appraisal is an assessment of employee performance to identify individual needs for better performance and personal development (Personio, 2022). Performance development review was a common method used in the organisations to evaluate staff performance and identify areas of development to be improved upon. PDRs were usually done annually as revealed by the participants:

Org.1 *“So, learning and development activities can be identified through the performance development reviews that we have annually with each member of staff. So, every member of staff is entitled to a performance development review.”*

Something tangible to note is that every member of staff is entitled to a PDR annually and at the sixth month from the point of the last review:

Org.1 *“And they are reviewed annually and then at the sixth month point from that review. To make sure that everything is going well and that any learning and development is being actioned or received as planned.”*

PDRs were also conducted frequently every six months (bi-annually):

Org.3 *“But basically, what we do is everybody get to review every 6 months. So, we do it bi-annually. So, what our system is set up to do is that we would sit down and have that formal review every 6 months”*

Thus, engaging in PDR would improve employee productivity. Because employees will work with the consciousness that their performance would be reviewed annually or bi-annually and won't want to fall below expectation.

According to a creative and design organisation, performance development reviews were done monthly:

Org.22 *“Yes, we do kind of fixed monthly reviews, performance reviews, and then we look at areas which can be improved, and then we might send somebody on a course or a workshop or something like that. It's more person by person. It's kind of based on their skills so that when we do our performance reviews, we are able to look at where we think they can grow and progress in that sense. So, it's kind of quite specific to design and to the environment that we are working”*

The creative and design industry requires skill acquisition and precision; therefore, a monthly review is needed to identify areas of improvement and development ahead of the next creative or design job. At the end of every performance development review, strategic objectives, and action plans to be achieved before the next meeting are specified:

Org.3 *“That review everybody get a set of objectives for the next 6 months. Some people they do have objectives you know sort of kind of at the top, to the senior level, executives. They do have you know more strategic objectives and they do last 6 months, they can last up to 12 months to be honest”*

It is important to note that apart from using a performance development review to measure and track employee performance, it is a tool used to determine employee career progression within an organisation based on their performance:

Org.II *“And we do Test Development Review with every member of staff on an annual basis and from there we would then identify any sort of training development to help progress into a higher next level role.”*

Performance development reviews are part of performance management. Thus, information derived from the development reviews can serve as guide

for a personal development plan. The similarity among personal development plan, performance management and performance development reviews are that they are all aimed towards enhancing employee performance through learning and development. The next section discusses the presence of career paths in MSMEs.

4.5 Career Path

Career path was the fourth HOC identified during data analysis. A career path also known as career ladder refers to the sequence of positions or job roles occupied by an individual within an organisation or outside the boundary of an organisation (Greenhaus et al., 2010). Chapter 2 established that a career path within an organisation can either be vertical (hierarchical/upward movement) or horizontal (lateral movement). A clear career path shows how employees can progress within an organisation either through upward movement (promotion) or lateral movement (getting transferred to different departments with similar status but with different responsibilities) (Doyle, 2020). Therefore, a career path determines if organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) would exist in an organisation. This argument agrees with Org.23 who stated that a career framework was absent in their organisation because there is nowhere else to go:

Org.23 *“Not really, because there is nowhere else to go, we are all filmmakers. There is nowhere else to go.”*

This statement means that there is no career path in Org.23, hence the absence of a career framework and organisational career management. Org.23 explained that a career framework or path was absent because of their small size. Also, Org.13 pointed out that a career path was absent at that moment because of their size:

Org.13 *“No. not really. We are just small so just progress up to a manager but maybe one day we might have senior positions, but we don't have at the moment.”*

Similarly, organisations 6,7,18, 20, 23 asserted that a career path was absent because of their small size.

Whilst some organisations asserted that a career path was absent in their organisations, others affirmed the presence of a clear and well-defined career paths in their organisations. The study findings further revealed that pre-defined career paths exist in certain professions. For example, a manager in an accounting firm highlighted that there is a set career path for accountants and accountants have to pass certain professional exams in order to have career advancement:

Org.9 *“Well, whenever we take on an employee. We have got different grades of employees, so what we have are students who are trained to be accountants. And if they are training to be accountants, then that their career is basically mapped out for them by the institute. So, they go to the various exams. They have three or four years and then they qualify as chartered accountants.”*

Org.9 added that even though there is a mapped-out career path by the accounting institute, they promote employees internally:

Org.9 *“Once they are qualified, then we keep their training going but we also try to ensure that they move up the ladder, so we promote internally. So, we have people who are qualified or those who are now managers of some of our offices.”*

Org.14 who is also in the financial industry, pointed out that there exists a clear progression plan for employees in the business with clear job roles and specifications relevant for career progression:

Org.14 *“There are people who come in at entry-level like graduates, we have a progression plan for those people, if they want to become a financial advisor or progress within the company, there is a plan, and they can do that. We do have clear roles, job roles, written out and job specifications. So, anyone could look at those, anyone who works here could look at those job roles and specifications.”*

Org.14 included that though there is presence of a career path and opportunities for career progression in the organisation, some employees are not interested in career progression. Thus, a career path within an organisation is more useful to employees motivated by career progression:

Org.14 *“But this also depends on whether you've got the right person as well. It has to be somebody who is motivated by progression because there is always going to be some people who don't really care.”*

Org.17 agreed with Org.14 and argued that it is not all employees that want a career progression. Org. 17 explained that some employees work mainly to earn a living and are not bothered if an organisation has a career path or not:

Org.17 *“I think most people work to live in other words they need to earn money to support their family, to pay the bills. It's a really interesting question I suppose people who want to keep their job, they need to maintain an income where we came in really to support the living”*

A manager in an oil and gas consultancy firm provided a rich and detailed explanation of the career pathway in his firm. He described the career path through which junior engineers can progress to becoming principal consultants in the organisation:

Org.5 *“So, typically there are individuals that would come into the organization as an engineer and then after a certain amount of experience and quality experience situation, so, two to three years we would alleviate them to a senior engineer position. And then after a further, wider exposure of technical work and responsibilities, after five years to seven, we would promote them to a consultant role. And then after that, we haven't got any extra obligation, but after 10 to 11 years, they would probably be moved to a principal consultant role after that. So that would be the stages: Engineer-Senior Engineer-Consultant-Principal consultant.”*

Although Org.5 is a small business, Org.5 has a clear and well-defined career path for its employees. Organisations 11 and 16 also had clear and well-defined career paths in their organisations:

Org.11 *“For our recruitment consultants who is the majority of the business, for those, there are 7 different levels of role which grow from researcher to trainee all the way up to director. And there are different criteria to each of those roles. Yes, we employ people as consultants. Certain people would start higher up depending on what they have done before. But in general, yes, people start as a consultant and then move up. We have two different paths as well.”*

Org.16 *“So, we have to 5 levels in the business from quite junior graduate level through to director level.”*

From the above, it is deduced that organisations 5, 11 and 16 have vertical or hierarchical career path in their organisation. A similarity among the businesses is that they are all consultancy firms

This section explored career paths in the MSMEs. While career paths were absent in some organisations, others had clear and well-defined career paths. The next section explores the organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) theme.

4.6 Talent Management and Career Planning

Talent management is the identification, engagement, development and retention of high potential and high performing individuals who are of value in an organisation (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Pauli & Poczowski, 2019). A Finance and Human Resource manager in the study posited that a functional career system begins with identifying talents when asked how the career framework operates in their organisation:

Org.II *“It's more about sort of identifying talent really. For example, myself, I joined the business in November 18, I came in as Head of Finance, Human Resources and Business Systems. I obviously would like to progress further, so that the next step for me to go would be to go into a Directorship and now, I wouldn't necessarily have a career plan to be able to do that, but I would have a Learning and Development Plan that would help me, support me into proceeding into that level”*

Here, we see that identifying talents and talent management precedes career planning, development and career progression. And with the help of a learning and development plan, employees can progress within an organisation. Managers look out for highly productive employees or employees with high potential and once they are identified, discussions about their career aspirations begin:

Org.3 *“And you know what we tend to do is you know looking at the people who are performing really well across the business and you know sit down with them and talk about their career aspirations but also talk to them and think you know how are they being so productive and what is their secret and you know, what elements of the workplace contribute to that, what doesn't contribute to that.”*

Talent management is not only limited to the identification of a talent but can also include providing opportunities to grow a talent. For example, a

recruitment agency pointed out that a member of staff was given the opportunity to set up a new market even though this department was not originally in the business:

Org.11 *“Like I said before, we will encourage people to set up their own markets where they can. So, somebody has a passion for something and of interest and we consider it as a business, we would support them to go out and do it. So, as I said before the lady based in London who set up the fashion and retail desk. That’s something we didn’t do before as a business. But it’s something actually that we spotted an opportunity. So, because she was willing to do it, we were willing to give her the space and funding and flexibility to do it. And so, yes, it’s got to be a bit of both, and you’ve got to be willing to do it. And once we see that there is an opportunity in a market there for it to be viable”*

The above participant contribution shows that talent management is a two-way responsibility. Once there is a passion and willingness on the part of the employee to grow a talent, the organisation steps in and support that passion. It should be noted that managers are ready to support employees with their career aspirations by providing additional training and development in as much as they have requested for it and are willing to progress:

Org.12 *“And then, we’ll look obviously who we have in the organisation at the moment, who needs or has the potential to be developed, who has requested that; and you know what we can do and then once we’ve done that, we look to see if there is any gaps and where we might need to either bring in some additional training or somebody from outside if we don’t feel like we’ve got anybody who can fill that gap.”*

Org.11 *“What we like to do is we like to obviously identify talent and if people want to sort of progress, we will help them do that with coaching and mentoring.”*

Here, we see the coaching and mentoring themes emerge. Coaching and mentoring are part of OCM practices used for employee development. Coaching and mentoring are discussed in detail in section 4.7. A manager further added that willingness to showcase a talent on the part of the employees can be achieved if the employees feel they are being invested in and supported by the organisation:

Org.21 *“So, similarly there are people who hadn't want to but we've kind of said you have got all the skills, you've done this. People are more willing to when they know you have got their backing because I think some people can do it, but they would never come out of their shell and openly tell you that they can do it. So, I think that's definitely on management to kind of spot that and say like that person can and we need to speak about it and yeah go from there.”*

And managers are aware to equally support employees who are happy with their current role and have no desire to have a career progression:

Org.II *“But equally, anybody that is working and is quite happy to stay within that role and they don't want to progress any further, we will still help make sure that they are doing the very best that they can within that role”*

There are different reasons as to why employees might not be ambitious or want to have a career progression within an organisation. Some might be because of work-life balance. They enjoy their current role because it is less demanding and taking more responsibilities would mean less family or personal time:

Org.21 *“I mean, as an example, there are people who we sat down with who we wanted to progress, and they haven't wanted to because they didn't want to take extra responsibility in doing that and that's absolutely fine”*

A Chief Executive of a mental health charity explained that most people are not concerned with career planning or progression but are more interested in the financial rewards they get:

Org.17 *“I think most people work to live in other words they need to earn money to support their family, to pay the bills”*

The above statement is true because most people are motivated by the salary they get and work to earn a living and support their family. However, this does not imply that less productive employees are ignored. In fact, a managing director highlighted that they are interested in growing talents from within as a business:

Org.20 *“Well, our main aim is to grow talent from within. But we don't actually limit that to being within each department. So, we monitor people on a much more personal level, and we develop them within the business and guide them through which path is right for them according to their skills. So, we had a number of employees that had started off in one department and they ended up running another department”*

This is commendable as all employees are monitored on a personal level and are given the opportunity to develop their skills and versatility is encouraged through cross-skills.

Organisations I, II, 3,8, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23 ,24 and 25 affirmed that career planning is a joint effort between the organisation and the employee.

Career planning begins with an existing organisational career framework and once there is a career framework in place, steps towards career planning can commence:

Org.16 *“I think it’s a joint effort really. I think it’s up to us sort of managers and me as a company leader to make sure we’ve got a framework in place, and everybody understands what it will take to level up to the next thing.”*

As mentioned previously when discussing about talent management, the organisation has the responsibility to reach out to employees and discuss their career aspirations. Likewise, guide them through the career opportunities existing in the organisation and provide training or development as required:

Org.17 *“In terms of career planning, as a Chief Executive if I am aware of people who are really successful or conscientious or great or have the potential to grow and develop, I will try and reach out to them and talk to them and try and guide them or give them opportunities for training or development or to do mentoring with them to be honest.”*

Org.14 *“But I think if somebody has that desire to go on, have enough career management and a progression plan in place, we help somebody to see how he can achieve higher grade or higher status in the company.”*

Org.11 emphasized that even if employees are willing to plan their careers within an organisation, the organisation needs to have positions available for career advancement:

Org.11 *“It’s definitely hand-in hand/jointly because the company needs to have the roles available. So, not everybody can be a manager obviously. Not everyone can lead every team, but we are flexible in a way if we have a good person.”*

Moreover, employees have the responsibility of meeting certain criterions in order to be considered for career planning:

Org.11 *“So, that’s where they have criteria that is set for them to move into. So as long as they start behaving and have activity of a certain level, that’s where they would be promoted into. There are basically different activities and behaviours at each level”*

During career planning, the joint effort of both the organisation and the employee manifests when the organisation engages the employees in career planning through a personal development plan and appraisals:

Org.13 *“We do engage with them through the personal development plan, but you know we appreciate that potentially the opportunities we can offer here are a bit limited and in terms of the future scope, so you know. But no, we don’t*

probably talk through about the next 20 years what they want to do but we certainly work with a next 2-year plan or whatever through their appraisals”

And with the personal development plan, line managers are very clear on the performance objectives and targets to be achieved and employees make sure they achieve those objectives:

Org.16 *“So, we have that in place now and now that we have that framework in place, we feel that it’s the responsibilities of the line managers to be very clear on what the annual objectives should be for each of their direct reports, but we also feel that the individuals themselves must, it’s ultimately up to them whether they achieve those objectives or not and they are also allowed to ask for any training and coaching that they feel is necessary to achieve them. So, it’s a mixture, it’s got to be both parties I think”*

Most times, organisational career planning and management in MSMEs exists without a formal career framework in place. As highlighted earlier by Org 12, career planning and management can be done informally and embedded in the business operations or process. However, a learning and development plan is pertinent for career planning:

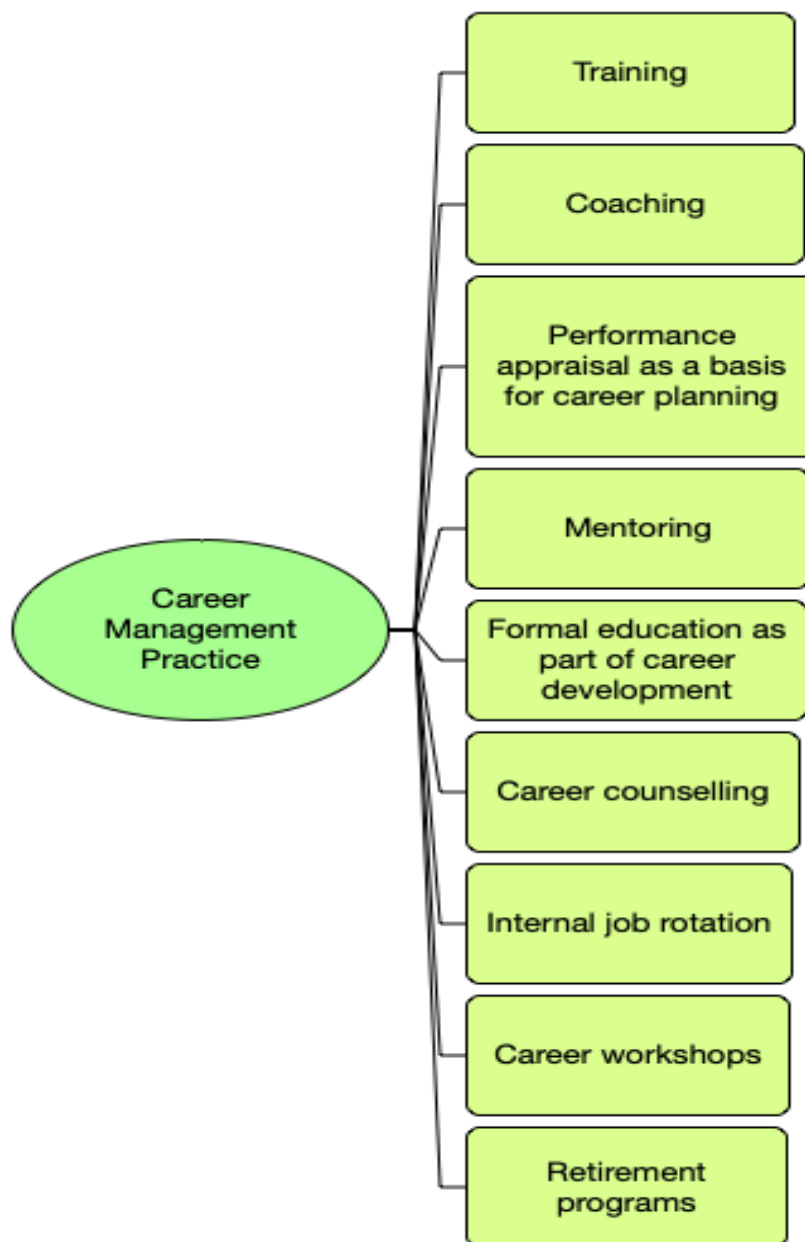
Org.12 *“We don’t have a written down policy but it’s quite structured, it’s an embedded process in the business, so, kind of, I suppose, it becomes structured over time as we’ve grown as an organisation”*

4.7 Organisational Career Management Practices

Organisational career management practices also known as career development was the sixth identified HOC. Figure 21 shows the OCM practices that existed in the MSMEs. The organisations in this study engaged in at least one OCM practice. Training was the most engaged HR practice. Coaching, mentoring and performance appraisal as a basis for career planning

emerged as the most engaged OCM practices. This was followed by career workshops, formal education as a basis for career planning and career counselling. Internal job rotation was the least engaged OCM practice while none of the organisations engaged in retirement programmes. The OCM practice theme and its sub-codes are shown below in Figure 23.

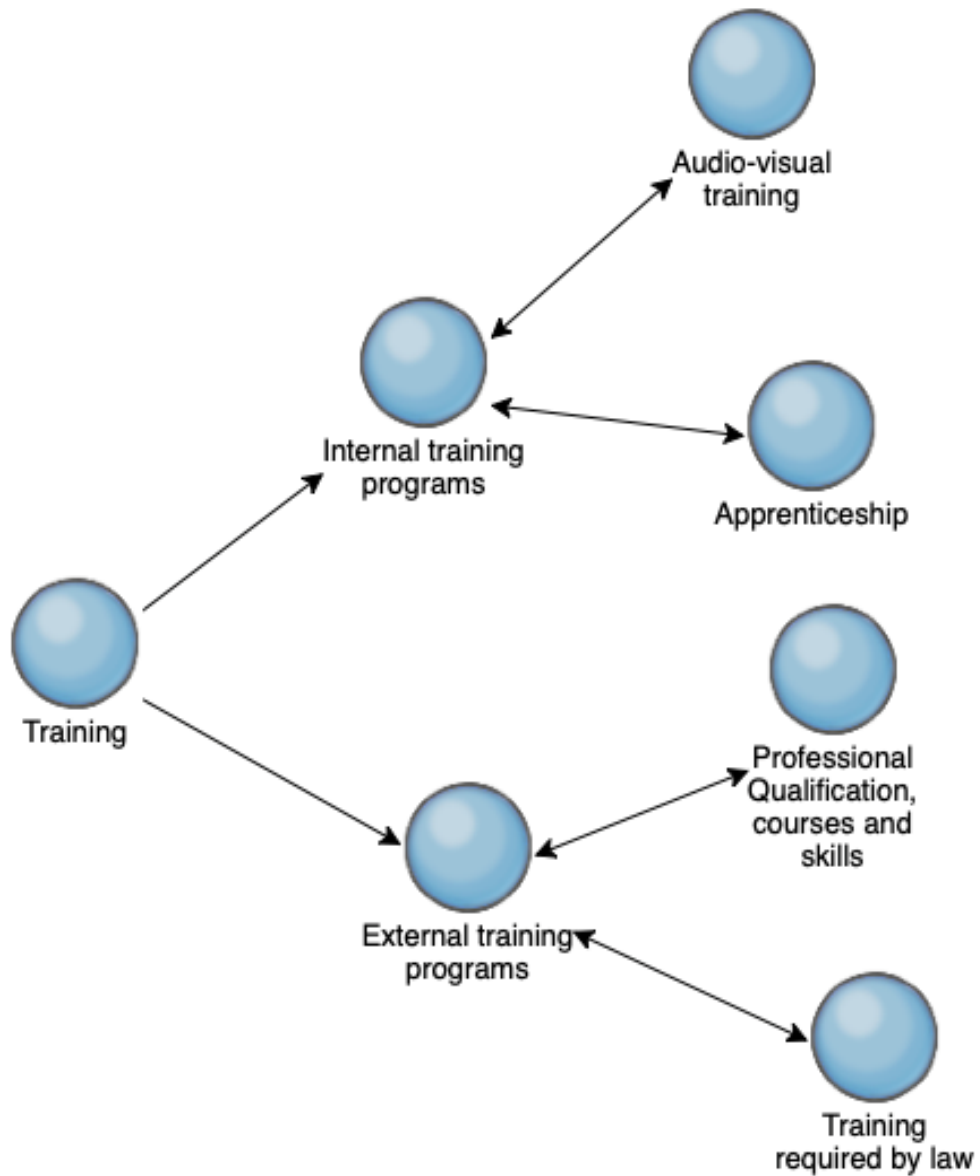
Figure 23: Organisational Career Management Practices HOC and its Sub-codes



4.7.1 Training

Aside from learning and development, training programmes were widely engaged in. The training programs found to exist in the MSMEs are classified into internal and external training programmes. Figure 24 shows the training sub-code and its tertiary and auxiliary codes. From Figure 24, it is seen that the training activities existing the MSMEs are grouped into internal and external training programs. The internal training programmes consist of audio-visual training and apprenticeship while the external training programmes consist of professional qualification courses and skills and training required by law. The next two sections provide a detailed discussion on the training programmes.

Figure 24: Training Sub-code and its Tertiary and Auxiliary Codes



4.7.1.1 Internal Training Programmes

Internal training programmes also referred to as on-the-job training was the most common type of training. The study findings show that internal training programs consist of audio-visual training and apprenticeships as shown in

Figure 22 above. According to Org.11 training was broken down into a 12-month program commencing from probation period when employees are freshly recruited:

Org.11 *“When somebody starts, we have a 12-month program of training which is broken into. We have a probation criterion. And basically, that training is set to help them pass the probation criteria. So, it shows them how to do each part of the criteria. And that’s kind of over 12 months period.”*

This comment explains that training is required to help new recruits pass the probation criteria which determines their future with the organisation. If successful after the probation period, on-the-job training also referred to as in-house training commences. In-house training focuses on teaching and empowering employees with skills needed to perform their individual roles efficiently:

Org.11 *“We would expect them to pass and so it’s basically just teaching them how to do each individual part of the role.”*

Once the initial on-the-job training is completed, additional training takes place over the course of the year. Org.7 explained that their organisation sets up internal workshops and take members of staff on management courses such as time management, risk assessment and others:

Org.7 *“We do train them. Before they work for us, they have to undergo our training. And once they’ve completed our training, they then have workshops to provide them with ongoing training from the time. So, stuff like sales training and risk assessments, how to register for self-employment, time management, conflict management. So, we have a lot of workshops there for the staff. They’re not compulsory, but they’re there to help them if they need them.”*

The statement from Org.7 clearly shows that a one-off training is not sufficient but regular additional training is needed to improve efficiency and productivity in the workplace. Organisation 14 stated that additional training can be quarterly:

Org.14 *“So, we have training. We have quarterly training anyway that we have to do and then there is additional training that people can do, and so we can do that within here.”*

Also, Org.16 stated that additional training is beneficial for all staff members although no certificate is issued at the end of the training:

Org.16 *“So, we also do that, so every year we would have a piece of sort of formal training I suppose it’s not necessarily, it’s not like they get a certificate at the end of it but it’s a piece of training that we believe that everybody can benefit from if that makes sense.”*

Org.11 further affirmed that additional training is needed to refresh employees’ memories around certain activities and for training when the organisation launches something new things:

Org.11 *“And so that’s kind of a structure program for the first year and we also have after those annual sessions which go on, which either refresh people’s memories around certain activities or we launch new things”*

The type of in-house training undertaken is distinctive to each organisation because of the nature and type of service provided by each organisation. Org. 20 which supplies tableware equipment to hospitality businesses embraced training fresh graduates with no prior experience in catering or hospitality:

Org.20 *“And when we started this business, some of our previous employees came to join us and we trained them right from their leaving school or university and because what we do is very customer-focused, it tends to focus on how you treat people, so we actually have probably a softer framework for recognising achievements.”*

Here, Org.20 expresses that because the nature of their business is customer focused with a softer framework, a prior experience of the job is not needed but training is done right from recruitment stage. Moreover, Org.13 whose business focuses on managing professional conferences and events across UK specified that they engage their employees on training sessions like First Aid qualification:

Org.13 *“The learn on the job, I will say. I mean we do sometimes take people on specific training sessions like First Aid qualification, London Overseas First Aid training course, and if they need to learn a specific skill, we’ll be very open to them going for a training course.”*

This statement indicates that though the business specializes in professional event management, members of staff are required to take first-aid training course. In line with this, Org.17 a charity which provides social care services to people with mental health disorders stated that their staff engage in comprehensive care training programme due to the nature of their job:

Org.17 *“They have quite a comprehensive training programme all from the start. A lot of it is because we have contact with the local authority and they insist upon certain standards, we have people who work in care for example, so they need a GQ level 2 in care the minimum.”*

It is seen above that due to the sensitive nature of the service provided by Org.17 and because of their contact with the local authority, certain standards

and trainings have to be met. Here, we can see the theme training required by law emerging from the data. Specialist training is important to Org.19 because they major in installation and maintenance of security equipment:

Org.19 *“We may have to go for specialist training with the manufacturer if we are bringing in some very specialized equipment then, we would probably go to the manufacturer and get training specific to that equipment.”*

It is therefore imperative for employees in Org.19 to undergo specialist training with the manufacturer of a specialized equipment because precision and accuracy is vital for the installation and maintenance of security equipment. Likewise, a creative agency engaged in specialist software-based training because of the creative nature of the business:

Org.22 *“It's a very much hands-on training. It is software based. If it's training in terms of software, we do that. If it's training in terms of giving a presentation, we kind of develop them”*

A drama and theatre company highlighted that training does not only involve on-the-job training, but it can also include equipping employees with skills needed to develop their own careers:

Org.8 *“We run a training programme called North which is sort of active training skills and business skills to basically equip those independent artists with the skills that they need to be able to sort of develop their own careers because the majority of our industry is freelance and not salaried.”*

Org.8 employs both permanent staff and freelancers for rehearsals and performance and the statement above shows that it supports training and developing the careers of independent artists. The above statement also

indicates that training is part of career planning and development. This action is exemplary as Org.8 invests in freelancers though they are not permanent members of staff. Org.8 also discussed that training could take place after appraisals once training and development needs are identified:

Org.8 *“So, we have a performance development review process every year and as part of that, training is on the list of other any training needs that you need to have in this, and it's expected that the manager will have that conversation with the employee, and we try to sort of pull those so that.”*

A branded merchandise further re-enforced that training is supported with appraisals which is carried out every six months. In-house training is carried out on different machines:

Org.21 *“Trainings, we do kind of continue with in-house, in terms of training on different machines and that's all supported by appraisals. I will say appraisals are done once every 6 months so everyone has appraisal once every 6 months and training wise it can be fairly constant depending on what level people are at.”*

Most times for in-house training, the organisation employs the use of experienced and skilled internal staff members to train new recruits and recently joined staff members. This method is less costly than bringing in external consultants for training and training is effective because new recruits get first-hand knowledge from those already working on the job. Org.16 pointed out a form of training similar to the above called peer-to peer training which involves more skilled employees who have been on the job a bit longer teaching their peers:

Org.16 *“We do internal training where we have, we have sort of peer-to-peer training because we sometimes have instances where we’ve got people at the same level doing the same job, but one person has been here a bit longer so sometimes we have peer-to-peer training.”*

Org.11 re-enforces this and further explains that peer-to peer learning helps employees to understand the culture of the organisation faster and know who to go for what because it is more of an employee-employee level:

Org.11 *“So, we have a lot of our training sessions delivered by a senior consultant to other senior consultants, so we have peer learning going on there. And then, it will be somebody of the same level, and they will help them through understanding the culture of the business and understand who to go to for what. And it kind of help things to work but on a more personal level rather than a kind of manager-employee level. It’s more of an employee-employee level.”*

Because the social care works in partnership with the local authority, training must meet certain standard. Org.17 discusses:

Org.17 *“We have quite a comprehensive training programme all from the start. A lot of it is because we have contact with the local authority and they insist upon certain standards, we have people who work in care for example, so they need a GQ level 2 in care the minimum.”*

Org.4 further re-enforces that an external company provides in-house training for its staff members:

Org.4 *“And for the training, we have a company who provides the training, in-house training as well. They come in once a week and they kind of work with individual staff members to ensure that they are complying with what they meant to be working here for.”*

This type of training exists in the charity and social care industry because they have to ensure compliance with regulations of health care professionals.

Furthermore, on-the-job training can involve teaching via visual demonstration of the job description role. Visual demonstration eliminates ambiguity in learning and gives clear first-hand representation of what is being taught. Org.2 a storage solution company emphasized the importance of visual demonstration:

Org.2 *“They get trained on the job which is just a case of sort of like being shown how to use machinery because we use seesaw less and booms and forklifts and things like that”*

Visual demonstration is important to Org.2 because it is essential that workers are shown on the job how to use machinery and install storages and shelves. In addition, Org.17 stated that their organisation engaged in audio-visual training which involves the use of DVD's. The statement emphasized that the use of audio-visuals is a cheap way of training employees. This method of training is unique and different from the common methods mentioned by other organisations:

Org.17 *“We also have a range of DVD's which cover things like health and safety, First Aid, fire safety, equality, and diversity, safeguarding of children, safeguarding of adults, various sort of things, deaf awareness for example. It's a very cheap way of training people to show them the DVD and then get them to do a quiz. But it is also about affordability, if you look at the induction that people go through, it's substantial because they're also given lots of policies and procedures to read.”*

Apprenticeship emerges as a method for both internal training and recruitment. Apprenticeship is an arrangement whereby an individual learn a job, an art or trade under a professional. After the completion of the

apprenticeship training, apprentices can either move on to start their own trade or get recruited by the trainer. Apprenticeship manifests in the study findings either by bringing in interested individuals or placing employees on apprenticeship programs within the organisation. Org.19 expresses that young people are brought in to learn on the job:

Org.19 *“Well, if we bring young people in, we'll do a modern apprenticeship, and they will learn. Normally in the old days, an apprenticeship was five years, and this was what I did in 1970 to 1975. I did apprenticeship. Now it's condensed and to about three years. At various times we bring in apprentices and develop them. Some of them stay, some don't. And so as required, we'll bring apprentices in from time to time.”*

Here, Org.19 mentioned that it took about five years to train as an apprentice in the old days, however, the apprenticeship training in their field has now been condensed to three years. This statement agrees with an article published by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) as modern-day apprenticeship takes about three to four years to complete depending on the level of programme, the apprentice's ability and the industry sector. Org.21 expressed that some of the employees and managers they have now were trained and recruited through apprenticeships programmes:

Org.21 *“We've got two people currently who work here who did apprenticeships with us and they've been here for about more than five years now so within that time, we probably had another I would guess maybe 6 or 8 apprentices. The production manager is from New Zealand and the screen-printing manager is from Australia and they did like 3 years apprenticeship in this company.”*

The study findings further revealed that an apprenticeship programme is seen as part of employee development and as a medium for career progression:

Org.II *“We have very different programmes. We do apprenticeship. So, we currently have apprentice butcher, and we also have an apprentice business administration person. So, we would work with the local organisation for that person to work through their apprenticeship and to either become a qualified butcher or, in the case of the lady doing business apprenticeship, she would work on the Level 2, and she would proceed to Level 3 once that is completed”*

As seen above, an organisation can organise an apprenticeship training so members of staff can get a qualification which helps in career progression.

Furthermore, in-house apprenticeship programmes provide a platform to work as well as to learn on the job. According to Org.12, members of staff were placed on a leadership, management and sales training through apprenticeship programmes. This is advantageous because it gives members of staff the opportunity to work and upskill themselves while in the same organisation:

Org.12 *“So, we deliver apprenticeship programmes. So, in the business we have got 2 members of the team going through some leadership and management training through an apprenticeship program at the moment and 4 or 5 members of the team who are going through some sales training as well on a sales apprenticeship”*

Org.II added that in-house apprenticeship is about internal development and continuous training of staff:

Org.II *“It’s really a case of internal development for apprenticeship, so we will continue to train them on the job, providing as much training as we possibly can, and it will then depend on the role they are doing. For example, the*

administration apprentice, she would undergo some Excel and Word training and she would also undergo some training on our internal systems, the IT systems that we have.”

4.7.1.2 External Training Programmes

External training programmes emerged as the second order sub-code under the training theme. A substantial number of the respondents engaged in external training (Org. 1, 2, 4, 7,8, 13, 14, 16, 19, and II). The need for an external training is sometimes identified through personal development reviews:

Org.II *“We do these basically following the personal development review we would do. Identify where on-the-job training is needed and we also do external training if we felt it to be appropriate”*

Depending on the industry sector, external training was engaged in for different reasons. A respondent asserted that external trainers are brought in whenever they don't have the capacity to carry out a specific training or a specialist training is needed:

Org.1 *“So, we trying to develop our own internal training programs, but if is something that we don't have the capacity to deliver ourselves or if it is a specialist area, we would bring in external consultants and trainers. So, we have brought in recently some external training around emotional resilience and emotional intelligence as well and cultural change”*

A social care agency emphasized that external trainers are brought in in order to ensure compliance with certain care standards:

Org.4 *“And for the training, we have a company who provides the training, in-house training as well. They come in once a week and they kind of work with*

individual staff members to ensure that they are complying with what they meant to be working here for”

For the storage or construction industry, external training is required because employees need to have certifications in order to use certain equipment and perform specific tasks. And the company has to pay for this qualification:

Org.2 *“But we do use external training agencies for them to get like a certificate. So, they are certified using this equipment because obviously within the construction industry, there is often lot of protocols to jump through so like all of our staff have got the CSCS card which is the construction skills card. The biggest site would not take any staff without this qualification. So, we have to pay to get them through that.”*

In addition to outsourcing training because of specialist training needs, a different perspective to engaging in external training can stem from helping employees overcome a difficulty at work:

Org.7 *“So, what we would do is, have a look out for the staff. So, if it's the staff that caused the complaints, the staff welfare manager, she will then say, I don't know what to do about this. I don't know what to do about that. So, then we will outsource some training for her to be able to deal with that problem. And same with the account manager. And if they don't know how to resolve a complaint of the client, we will then at look at it”*

And with an external assistance, employee competency is improved. External training was highlighted to improve competency of employees:

Org.19 *“I think now with mature employees, we may have to go to external training provided for them, but that is really training to make them competent to do the work.”*

External training can be on a long-term basis. A consultancy business mentioned that they work with an external consultant for a year-long to deliver leadership skills training:

Org.16 *“And we also work with an external agency that is delivering some, a year-long programme on leadership skills with us”*

Employees are sent on conferences:

Org.14 *“There is additional training that people can do, and so we can do that within here or they be allowed to attend seminars or conferences provided by third parties”*

Conferences are important in certain industry because of the exposure needed. For example, drama:

Org.8 *“So, training might mean this is a number of industry conferences so sending people to industry conferences. So, they run an annual conference for ticketing professionals’ (people who run box office). So, will send on, we might send our box office or marketing staff to that conference because they can. So, we do quite a lot of that of sending people off to conferences and seminars.”*

And also in the creative design:

Org.22 *“So, we might send somebody on to a course, workshop, conference, a design conference, or a digital conference. So, we kind of invest in, I suppose, kind of stepping out of your day-to-day, you know what you might consider as skill training or just kind of open your mind a little bit more or things like that, are really important”*

Sending employees on training makes them feel invested in and improves employee productivity. External training can be a way of developing employees

Furthermore, the study findings reveal that certain professional qualifications are needed in some industries for example the financial and education industries. The responses from the interviewees revealed that professional qualifications are the same as formal education:

Org.12 *“But obviously there is other training that they can do for their own development so we can give them the next level of training qualification or an information advice as a guide for qualification. They have things like IQAS, Independent Quality Assurance qualification. So, it depends on the mix of skills that we need from the team and also what they have expressed an interest in. So, we kind of use it as an incentive for individuals but also obviously to meet the needs of the business”*

From the above participant contribution, external training can also be in form of an advice. Qualifications are tailored towards meeting the needs of the business and employees are encouraged to get a professional qualification for personal development:

Org.5 *“And we also encourage them to join appropriate professional institutions and the Institute of Engineers to actually develop from a personal development perspective”*

Specific type of qualification for an industry and professional training or qualification is a way of career development and career progression:

Org.6 *“For example, we've got quite a few staff that are doing NVQs (National Vocational Qualification) in customer service at the moment. Some are also doing NVQs in lean management. We have recently and we're just in the process of putting somebody through the CPC, which is a certificate of professional competence to be to be a transport manager. So, we do quite a bit in that way and that is obviously career development.”*

In accordance with the above participant contribution, Org.II pointed out same thing:

Org.II *"We also have progression for anybody who we have, it's like an internal progress tracker, so we are looking to continue to develop our staff. So, we use a local provider to do ILM courses. So, the Institute of Leadership and Management Courses and will do those range from Level 2 through to Level 5"*

The financial advisors require qualifications to work:

Org.14 *"The financial advisors have to have a certain minimum level of qualification and they have to do continued professional development but, obviously we like to go further than that and encourage higher qualifications."*

And the employees have opportunities to have more qualifications and become a specialist in their chosen field:

Org.14 *"I mean there are opportunities for those advisors to do more qualifications if that's what they want and they might then have more of a specialism area. So, there is the opportunity there"*

Some organisations offer financial assistance to support employee when getting academic or professional qualifications:

Org.14 *"We provide that. Well, it's more of financial assistance, really, for the exams they need to take. So, the exams are external because they're industry-standards"*

A marketing agency added:

Org.24 *"So, we pay for all of our employees to get a qualification of/from Chartered Institute of Marketing. So, probably everyone does that throughout their career so there are 6 stages of that which starts from having that knowledge of that to what is effectively about a post-graduate degree."*

While organisations who are unable to provide financial support, give their employees extra time off:

Org.8 *"So, one of my members of staff requested to do an MBA wish we were very supportive but they're very expensive to do you know and so we said well"*

we can't pay for you to do your MBA but what we can do is we can give you the time off, field study days to go, so she essentially gotten an additional hours of many days off to go and do those study days..”

Not only are employee sent on training for qualifications, but employees can also be sent on training to get soft skills like leadership skills:

Org.8 *“We have sent people onto common purpose for example or to run a programme of short courses in leadership development. So, often they tend to be a sort of, the individual has to be in the right point in their career to want that kind of driving and when they are, we will have a look at what our available resources and can we do that.”*

Finally, some trainings are required by law before practice:

Org.8 *“For example, on the training side of the business, there are some trainings that is required by law, so they have got to do things like sales guarding training and presentation training, you know those kinds of things.”*

Especially in the social care and health sector:

Org.17 *“They have quite a comprehensive training programme all from the start. A lot of it is because we have contact with the local authority and they insist upon certain standards, we have people who work in care for example, so they need a GQ level 2 in care the minimum. We also have a range of DVD's which cover things like health and safety, First Aid, fire safety, equality and diversity, safeguarding of children, safeguarding of adults, various sort of things, deaf awareness for example”*

4.7.2 Coaching

Coaching was the most widely engaged OCM practice. Coaching is a form of employee development in which an experienced person be it a manager or supervisor assists an employee with their current performance by providing training and guidance (Olivero et al., 1997). Majority of the interview participants (Org. 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 12, 23, and II) stated that employees were engaged in coaching by teaming a junior employee with

a line manager or a more experienced staff for training and guidance. This opinion is expressed in the following quotes:

Org.10 *“All the designers buddy up with each other. So, what we tend to do is we put a weaker one with a stronger one. So, that’s how we sort of develop our staff.”*

Org.5 *“In terms of coaching, we do conduct coaching, mentoring with the junior members of staff. We will sit with them and talk through how to develop them.”*

Org.11 *“We identify where on-the-job training is needed and we also do external training if we felt it to be appropriate. And our supervisors and line managers would be responsible for mentoring and coaching their team. And they will have the support of myself and of our HR manager as well.”*

Coaching could be anytime depending on the time most convenient in individual organisations. A monthly coaching session was common:

Org.12 *“So, each individual within the business has a monthly one to one meeting with their line manager, which is really more of a kind of I suppose call it if you like be it coaching, be it guidance”*

Org.11 was involved in monthly coaching as well and provided a detailed explanation of how employees were engaged in coaching:

Org.11 *“What I do with them is that I meet with them every month on an individual basis, and I talk to them. I tell them some things to work on so that if I can identify that a particular person needs to work on her communication skill. Then we will sort of set a plan from there”*

The participants (Org. 1,5, 6,14, 17, and 23) highlighted that coaching and mentoring are similar as they are informal methods of training and employee development. Through coaching, managers are able to support employees struggling with tasks. This narrative was supported by Org.1 who outlined that

coaching provides a platform to get pastoral support from a mentor and also get trained by someone who has done the job before:

Org.1 *“They need coaching from somebody who has done the job before for a while or a mentor to give them you know that pastoral source of support, confidence boosting; you know (you can do it, you can progress you know, be ambitious for yourself) that sort of self-esteem stuff you do for coaching and mentoring which is often.”*

Coaching was not only limited to junior or weaker employees being coached by line managers, but line managers also had the opportunity to be coached.

A talent manager

Org.11 expressed that an external coach was sometimes brought in to coach senior managers:

Org.1 *“Aside the training, we also offer more senior people coaching sessions with external coaches. We get somebody external to the business to talk to people, to find out what their needs and problems are and then talk them through it, get more information”*

Org.11 further explained that by doing this, senior managers are able to express their challenges and needs to an external coach without the fear of being judged.

4.7.3 Mentoring

Mentoring is a learning relationship focused on long term career development in which a more experienced colleague shares their knowledge and skills to support the development of an inexperienced member of staff (Baruch, 1999).

Mentoring and coaching are both effective approaches to developing employees and the respondents referred to them interchangeably. The

supervisors and line managers are usually responsible for employee coaching and mentoring:

Org.11 *"We do training mentoring and coaching. And our supervisors and line managers would be responsible for mentoring and coaching their team. And they will have the support of myself and of our HR manager as well. We often use the method of coaching and mentoring, as we call it. It's very much about having an organisation where everybody is allowed to grow to their full potential. So, we are very much about coaching and mentoring."*

Employees could also enjoy pastoral care and support from their managers through mentoring:

Org.17 *"So, we do training, we do mentor, probably informally in terms of what we, I think it's about the manager getting on board, sort of pastoral care as well as an individual something like that, which that's my natural style to do that"*

A financial firm asserted that new employees are usually mentored by an experienced colleague for about six months and as they progress within the organisation, the employees are mentored by the Chief Executive:

Org.9 *"We've got mentoring where when a new employee starts, they get what we call a buddy. So that person mentors for the first six months to make sure that everything's going all right with them, everything's going okay with them. As they get more senior, they tend to be mentored a bit more by me. So, I would take them out to clients, I would take them out, I would first train them into more specific pieces of their work"*

The above statement was supported by Org.20 who mentioned that as the Managing Director she mentors who she thinks have management capability:

Org.20 *"Well, we do a lot of mentoring. So, we will do that within each department. So, we have a very flat management structure. So, I mentor people who I think have management capability so and then there are other people who mentor new starters so that they can actually develop within their role but in the way that we want them to develop. We do on the job training and each new starter is assigned a mentor to train them and mentor them so"*

that they are happy in their job as well. It isn't just a training role. They will train them, but they will also mentor them."

A unique type of mentoring identified by the respondents was business or external mentoring:

Org.15 *"But we've also used external mentors and consultants to help with that. So, I've got a mentor through the Northwest Entrepreneur scheme, and I'm focused on that. I've been on that for nine months probably going to be about 18 months, is to plan for the future of the business and kind of make sure we work as much as possible to achieve those goals really."*

The respondents highlighted that they have mentors as a business and external mentors are most times used for the senior management team:

Org.3 *"So, we just starting, we do work with a mentor, a business mentor who does work with more of our senior management team. So, we do quite a bit of mentoring as well. So, we do quite a bit of mentoring as well. And that's one-on-one kind of talking through what it is to manage a team and the responsibilities that come with that"*

Organisations 1, 1, 5, 6, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 21 also engaged in mentoring.

4.7.4 Performance Appraisal as a Basis for Career Planning

Performance appraisal as a basis for career planning and mentoring were the second most engaged OCM practices. Org.13 asserted that although they don't engage in most of the OCM practices because of their small size, performance appraisals are part of the business process:

Org.13 *"We basically don't have much structure in terms of all of the things you've asked. Obviously, we have the full reviews and appraisals and we promote people internally but we don't have many of these things that you are asking me about because we are just too small for that"*

Many of the respondents (Organisations 1,3,4,7,8,9,11,13,14,21,23,24,25,II) agreed with the above statement as they affirmed that performance appraisals and reviews were part of their business structure and used as tools for career planning and progression:

Org.11 *“We do quality appraisals with all of our staff every quarter to go through their objectives, their career plans and where they are getting to, any issues that they might have, any individual problems that they might have that we need to help them with. That’s done every quarter”*

Org.8 *“So, for example through the appraisal process, come here have you thought where you want to be going next year? five years from now? How can Org.8 help you on that? Is it about training? Is about giving you exposure to different skills you know”*

According to Org.17, performance appraisal is perceived as a form of regular supervision to assess how employees are performing:

Org.17 *“Performance appraisal, we do regular supervisions which are basically a catch up on what people are doing within the designated role that they’ve got. So, I guess it’s supervision in an informal pattern”*

In line with Org,17, performance appraisals were also perceived as performance management:

Org.7 *“Performance management, not just appraisals. So, you just sit and have appraisals with your staff and you and listen. Listen to what your staff tells you. Listen to what they’re saying”*

Org.14 *“And we have, everybody has what we call a performance management. So, beginning of every year, objectives are set and the development plans agreed between the line manager and the member of staff and that’s used to then progress in their career that way”*

The study findings show that performance appraisals were performed annually, quarterly, six-monthly and monthly across the organisations:

Org.9 *“And then we have annual appraisals for all the staff”*

Org.11 *“We do quality appraisals with all of our staff every quarter to go through their objectives, their career plans and where they are getting to, any issues that they might have, any individual problems that they might have that we need to help them with. That’s done every quarter”*

Org.21 *“I will say appraisals are done once every 6 months so everyone has appraisal once every 6 months and training wise it can be fairly constant depending on what level people are at”*

Org.22 *“Yes, we do kind of fixed monthly reviews, performance reviews, and then we look at areas which can be improved”*

4.7.5 Formal Education as part of Career Development

Formal education as part of career development was fairly engaged by the organisations. Org.11 and Org. 24 asserted that they encouraged and sponsored the professional development of employees:

Org.11 *“So, for formal education, we do send some of our support staff on professional qualifications. So, myself I worked through CIPD in this business and some of our account team have worked through AAT or CIMA or ACCA. So, we do go through professional qualifications as well. We had two apprentices also who have gone through NVQ’s and apprenticeship”*

Org.24 *“Yes, so we pay for all of our employees to get a qualification of/from Chartered Institute of Marketing. So, probably everyone does that throughout their career so there are 6 stages of that which starts from having that knowledge of that to what is effectively about a post-graduate degree”*

The above statement by Org.24 shows that professional development is a prerequisite for career development of employees. This statement agrees with

an accounting firm which stated that formal education is part of the training process and it is an important requirement for recruitment:

Org.9 *“And formal education we have, obviously, they all go on to go on courses up to the point when they're qualified, which are actually formal courses run by the institute. We probably do the formal education piece, probably the most we do linked also with the normal training piece”*

Few of the organisations engaged in career counselling and career workshops while none engaged in retirement programmes. This section provided a detailed report on the OCM practices or career development programmes existing in the MSMEs. The next section explores the career progression theme.

4.8 Opportunities for Career Progression

Career progression is the last dimension explored in the organisational career management theme. As established in Chapter 2 that MSMEs have flat organisational structure and limited career progression opportunities. Question 7 sought to explore the presence of career progression opportunities in the MSMEs.

The managers agreed that they face the challenge of limited career progression opportunities in their organisations. Also, the managers reached a consensus that small size was the reason for the limited career progression opportunities. Lack of career paths and limited career progression opportunities were more evident in the creative, branding and design industry. Because the creative industry is skills based and people operate as specialists, the managers expressed that there are limited or no opportunities for career progression:

Org.15 *“We don't do any formal training in terms of career management because it's skills-based stuff. Possibly nothing as formal as that.”*

Org.10 *“We don't have anything; we don't do a certain development program. But what we do is that every Monday we all sit round the table and talk about what is happening in our work.”*

Org.23 *“Not really, because there is nowhere else to go, we are all filmmakers. There is nowhere else to go.”*

However, the managers pointed out ways employees can progress within the organisation. The managers emphasized that opportunities for career progression were only available when vacancies arise within the organisation.

And that vacancies arise when people leave the organisation or when an employee gets promoted and so the previous position is vacant:

Org.17 *“So, the opportunity for creating progression is basically, so unless somebody leaves that job or gets promoted up the, or if it is a vacancy that is advertised that would be the only way that people would generally be able to switch jobs unless as an organisation we needed to reorganise. “*

Organisations 1, 8, 18 and 22 all agreed with the above statement:

Org.1 *“Yes, absolutely! There are those opportunities. As people move on, you know they might move out of the organisation, or they may be promoted. Then vacancies arise within the structure.”*

Org.8 *“Because what we found is you know we are a small organisation, there's often career progression that demands somebody else in the organisation above you leaving and if they're not leaving then how do you progress in your career?”*

Org.18 *“You know, you can't move up the ladder until the person immediately above you leaves.”*

Org.22 *“So, we have, if somebody at senior level leaves then a designer can be promoted, does that make sense? So, we recently hired a junior designer and then we were able to promote a junior to a middleweight designer, so some kind of progression in that sense”*

Org.1 highlighted that though they have limited promotional opportunities, they look for opportunities to make people leaders without being functional managers:

Org.1 *“I think in a small business, you know, you are a bit limited by less people. People don't leave so if you don't leave, then how do other people get opportunities? So, we try to be creative about that. So, we got to give people opportunities to be a leader in the business without necessarily being a functional manager. So, we create quite a lot of opportunities for people to*

step up. If you just, did it on hierarchy and function people could never do that because it wouldn't be enough"

It is seen that that Org.1 engages in lateral moves or horizontal career progression. Thus, rather than an upward or vertical career progression, employees are able to progress and grow within the organisation by taking up different responsibilities but with similar status. Also, Org.17 pointed out that vacancies can arise within an organisation when someone retires from a management position:

Org.17 *"As I said I'm not really sure that career progression is in the fore front of people's minds working in an organisation like because there is just no, there's very little opportunity for it. I mean the only reason that I was able to get this job is because the other guy retired."*

In addition to vacancies within the organisation, the managers emphasized that employees with good employee performance and capabilities have great opportunities for career progression:

Org.24 *"We also do on-job training, and we have monthly objectives set in. So that when people meet their objectives every quota, we can have an idea of when they would get promoted or when they would get a pay rise and so on."*

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that employees with great qualifications and skills have better opportunities for career progression in MSMEs. Organisations in the financial or accounting industry emphasized that certain qualifications are required for career progression within the industry:

Org.9 *"And if they are training to be accountants, then that their career is basically mapped out for them by the institute. So, they go to the various*

exams. They have three or four years and then they qualify as chartered accountants. Once they are qualified, then we keep their training going but we also try to ensure that they move up the ladder.”

Org.14 *“The financial advisors have to have a certain minimum level of qualification and they have to do continued professional development but, obviously we like to go further than that and encourage higher qualifications.”*

Growth and expansion of the business provided opportunities for career progression:

Org.19 *“There's always going to be a need for people to be supervising the other employees. And as the businesses grow and we end up employing more people and I guess it can be a career path for certain ones.”*

Some managers asserted that personal development plans served as means through which employees can develop and progress in the organisation:

Org.11 *“But then again, they will have a personal development plan set for them and if they want to progress within the business then we will develop a plan for them that will allow them to develop to the next level.”*

Org.13 *“Through the personal development plan, and we do kind of encourage the people that we want to encourage to progress, and we reward them in that way.”*

Org.22 *“It's more person by person. It's kind of based on their skills so that when we do our performance reviews, we are able to look at where we think they can grow and progress in that sense. So, it's kind of quite specific to design and to the environment that we are working.”*

The above quotes imply that managers can track the performance and development of employees through PDP's and make informed decisions regarding their career progression.

Finally, other ways through which opportunities for career progression exist in the MSMEs include: innovation, internal job application, internal job promotion, employees having a good understanding of their individual role, and interest in business and product knowledge.

4.9 Organisation's Perception of Employee Productivity

The eight higher order code was the organisation's perception of employee productivity. The study findings revealed that the perception of employee productivity varied across the organisations. This was because the type of service provided by each business determined the perception of employee productivity. The organisations perceived employee productivity as achieving business key performance indicators (KPIs) and the key performance indicators varied across the organisations:

Org.1 *“Depending on what team you are in within the group; we have different key performance indicators. So, in the business development team, they will have income related targets on how many qualifications they sell. In the quality assurance team, they will have approval targets how quickly they can work with customers to get their approval through.”*

Org.1 *“Well, we use key performance indicators, so you're encouraged but if you hit your key performance indicators, which are basically target set which is different depending on what your job is that's how we measure success but it's also how you are as a colleague”*

Efficiency and meeting targets on time was the most common type of KPI mentioned by the managers:

Org.1 *“Productivity for us would be people working most efficiently with the resources.”*

Org.7 *“Targets! Deadlines! So, we have sales targets that we have to hit, and we have said like we have the right time.”*

Org.14 *“For my team side, the administration team, it would be about the quality of work, to making sure that they're doing it in a timely manner, that the advisers are getting the work done accurately and timely.”*

Org.16 *“I would say obviously being able to hit deadlines.”*

Organisations I, II, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 17, 19, 21, 23 and 24 all acknowledged that employees being efficient and meeting targets was perceived as employee productivity.

Furthermore, the managers asserted that increase in their income generation meant employees were productive:

Org.5 *“Yeah, the revenue stream for our company is based on time based on fees. We charge clients on a weekly basis. Yeah. So, it's clear that our productivity level can be linked directly to the finances and revenue of the company.”*

Org.22 *“But also, in terms of profit, you know I think we could be working really fast. So, my team are highly productive, but they also need to kind of show earning figures as well, you know earning monthly billings.”*

In line with income generation, Org. 21 asserted that lower cost also meant productivity:

Org.21 *“We do kind of productivity every month. Productivity stats based on the percentage that the wages cost us against what we brought in, in production. And so, we continue to look at our costs per month trying to get that lower basically.”*

In addition, high quality customer service was perceived as a key indicator of employee productivity:

Org.1 *“Productivity for us would be people working most efficiently with the resources that they have to deliver the highest quality customer service and volumes of accreditation to our customers.”*

Org.6 *“If you've got good service quality that's really important. We've got to be able to make collections on-time. Our customers- Western world-renowned quite well renowned for having a higher service quality.”*

Org.14 *“But on our side as well, we would judge productivity by good customer service, good customer outcomes and the fact that they then refer people to us. For my team side, the administration team, it would be about the quality of work.”*

Similarly, organisations 1, 4, 7, 11, 13, 15, 19, 20 and 24 mentioned that employees are regarded as being productive when they provide high customer service.

Other perceptions of employee productivity were: positive feedbacks from clients (customer satisfaction), research, innovation and strategy, efficient communication, increase in the number of clients brought into the business, investing in artificial intelligence and keeping up to date with training materials.

4.10 The Impact of Organisational Career Management on Motivation, Employee Retention and Productivity

The previous sections discussed the career framework, career path, organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) themes and explored the perception of employee productivity. Building on the previous sections, this section explores the impact of organisational career management on employee motivation, retention and productivity in the workplace. Some of the participants mentioned that OCM improves motivation, employee retention and productivity. However, based on the study findings, OCM was not the key factor that improved motivation, employee retention and productivity in the MSMEs. Rather than OCM, the managers stated that employees with high job satisfaction (happy in a job) are likely to be more productive:

Org.8 *“So, if we can make you feel good about coming to work that means including your sort of personal motivation you will be more productive.”*

Org.20 *“But I think in smaller businesses people accept that there aren't the number of internal opportunities so a lot of people that work for us are happier to work for smaller organisations because it's the sense of enjoyment from the job which actually contributes to productivity rather than just career progression.”*

Feedback, communication and team meetings emerged as one of the key factors that improved employee motivation in the MSMEs:

Org. 10 *“But what we do is that every Monday we all sit round the table and talk about what is happening in our work. All the designers buddy up with each other.”*

Org. 11 "Our employees have to give us feedback on all of the training they go through. So, we then review that feedback every 12 months and refresh all of our training programs and make sure they are fit for purpose."

Org.12 "But what we need to be kind of being mindful is communication as well. We need to make sure that we regularly communicate. We move at quite a fast pace, so it's making sure that everybody knows what is happening all the time. I think it's helpful as well."

Organisations 1,3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 17 and 22 all agreed that feedback and regular communication helped improve employee motivation.

The managers emphasized and reached a consensus that investing in staff was the major key to employee motivation retention and productivity:

Org.6 "And I think if your employees see that you are willing to invest in them, I think it's definitely good for morale and people can see that they're not standing still"

Org.11 "I think when people feel that they are being invested in, they work harder for you."

Org.19 "I think it does. I think that developing staff does enhance motivation and gives confidence because they must be confident of what they're doing and know what they're doing is correct all the time."

This argument is plausible as everyone loves to be invested in. Employee engagement emerged as another key factor that improved employee motivation:

Org.8 "We have an annual company day where we shut most of the office systems down for a day and we just go out, we go into, we've done everything from an escape room to go to a National Trust property, we always end up playing rounders and then have some food."

Org.10 *“So, it’s just how do we engage with the staff. So, every month we have a company lunch. So, I buy them food, and we sit round, and we talk about what’s happening in the business.”*

The managers pointed out that employees are engaged through team meetings, and planning social events

Other key factors highlighted to improve employee motivation were: opportunities for career progression, engaging employees in appraisals and performance reviews, employees feeling supported, positive organisation culture, recognition, reward and reassurance and annual pay rise. Other factors identified to improve employee motivation were: attractive work environment, self-motivated employees and transparency with pay structure and company goals.

The managers stressed that employees feeling valued was the key factor to improving employee retention:

Org.1 *“And we think investing in staff sends a really positive message that we are serious about them. That we want to retain them as staffs and if they feel valued which is- we place a lot on value as an organisation. If they feel valued, they will want to stay, and they will want to do a good job.”*

Org.8 *“If people feel valued, people want to especially in this industry we are a charity as well as a business”*

Org.14 *“So, you’ve obviously got to do things to retain good staff. So, people need to be motivated and feel valued.”*

Elements of organisational career management such as career development and opportunities for career progression emerged as factors that helped

improve employee retention. Other factors highlighted to improve employee retention were: job satisfaction (employees happy with their jobs), employers being transparent and clear with progression opportunities, competitive salaries, employee engagement, flexible working, good management, investing in staff and organisation culture.

While the managers discussed about factors affecting employee retention, employee turnover theme emerged. Employee turnover refers to the annual percentage of employees that leave an organisation during a certain period of time (CIPD, 2021). The managers highlighted that a major reason for employee turnover is employees feeling that there are no career progression opportunities:

Org.1 *“As soon as people, you know if people are leaving the organisation, you’ve got high staff turn-over. You know they are miserable at work because they don’t think there is anywhere to go to.”*

Org.8 *“And I think it is really important; because otherwise what happens is people stay in a role for too long, they get frustrated that they can’t move on and then they get resentful to the organisation that you’re not allowing me, you’re not supporting me in my career development”*

Org.9 *“No, I think the employees, whilst they may be motivated, can be demotivated if they don’t get the proper development and they don’t see their career moving forward and they get demotivated and they move, they leave and move somewhere else.”*

Another reason mentioned to cause employee turnover is lack of employee engagement:

Org.I *“If you don't have quality conversations there is less of a connection and people are more likely to leave and if there's development on top of that, fantastic.”*

In summary, OCM was not the leading factor that improved motivation, employee retention and productivity. Investing in staff, employee engagement, feedback, communication and team meetings were the key factors to improving motivation. While employees feeling valued was highlighted as a key driver of employee retention. Career development and opportunities for career progression also improved employee retention. The managers emphasized that employees with high job satisfaction are likely to be more productive.

4.11 Drivers of Productivity in MSMEs

This section addresses questions 10-12 on the interview guide (see Appendix 2). Question 12 sought to know other factors that influence productivity in MSMEs apart from the principal theme of organisational career management. Various factors were highlighted to improve productivity. Majority of the research participants mentioned that training and development were key factors that improved productivity. The research participants mentioned that they engage in on-the job training frequently:

Org.7 *“We do train them. Before they work for us, they have to undergo our training. And once they've completed our training, they then have workshops to provide them with ongoing training from the time.”*

Org.20 *“We do on the job training and each new starter is assigned a mentor to train them and mentor them so that they are happy in their job as well.”*

Also, positive organisation culture emerged as an important factor that improved productivity:

Org.12 *“We have quite a nice and formal family-oriented environment, so people know that we do care for them which I think it is a motivating factor itself”*

Org.20 *“Yes. I mean obviously we try to make the working environment a pleasure to be in and so we have a fairly sort of a very friendly atmosphere, and we try to, if there are any issues, we try to resolve things fairly and we don't have to be strict.”*

Org.22 *“I think kind of a good team culture, involvement and transparency especially for a small team, kind of regular communication”*

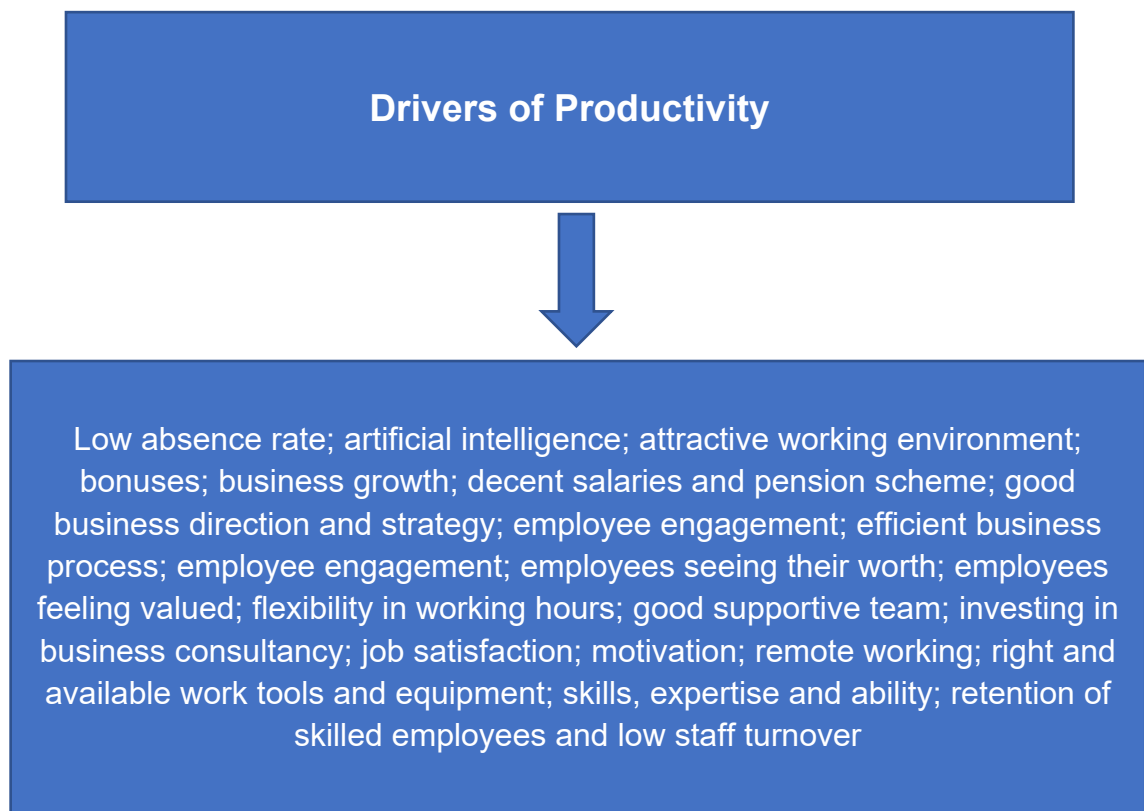
In addition, autonomy or employees having a sense of independence emerged as a way to improve productivity:

Org.19 *“Give them some autonomy. I think people like the small autonomy where they can make their own decisions, you know, so there's a lot of other factors there.”*

Org.22 *“Planning is really important, planning and scheduling as well as creativity and also having a sense of autonomy. Although we are a very small team, we give our team ownership on the project and that's really important.”*

Figure 25 shows the drivers of productivity HOC and its sub codes. The drivers of productivity are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Figure 25: Drivers of Productivity Higher Order Code and its Sub-codes



4.12 Challenges Hindering the Adoption of Organisational Career Management practices in MSMEs

The MSMEs affirmed that insufficient time was the major challenge preventing the adoption of OCM practices. A manager explained that because they are small, they are unable to balance the time between servicing clients and training their employees:

Org.11 *“The challenges probably are balancing training people against servicing clients and candidates. So, people tend to be very busy doing a lot of different things. We manage all of our training internally.”*

Org. 24 *“The main challenges for me are making sure that we have the time to do it. Time can be something that you end up pushing down the list because you are doing client work instead. Especially me being the Executive, so, it has to be prioritised.”*

Similarly, organisations II, 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 17, 18 and 21 asserted that insufficient time was a major hinderance to engaging in career development.

Financial constraint was the second major challenge identified by the MSMEs:

Org.1 *“There are certainly challenges in terms of financing it. Having the right levels of funding. Some people you know might want to do a master’s in management or PhD or whatever but trying to find the funds for that is impossible”*

Org.24 *“And also having the money to bring in sometime external trainers or other people from outside the business. Yeah, so having the time and having the money are usually costly.”*

Also, challenges in terms of financing were common to organisations 5, 8,13, 15 and 17.

Other challenges hindering the adoption of career management practices were: absence of a formal career system, unrealistic expectations, not placing importance on career management, size of the organisation and unavailability of staff and expertise.

4.13 Challenges Faced by MSMEs in North East England

Challenges faced by MSMEs in the North East emerged as the research participants discussed about the challenges hindering the adoption of OCM practices. The predominant challenge faced by the MSMEs was inability to recruit the right set of people for the job they do:

Org.9 *“It's quite difficult to get staff members at the moment. So, we're finding the markets quite tough to get new members of staff.”*

Org.14 *“Finding the right people as I said. The industry itself of financial services offers us a little bit from, it's more of an aging population, all of our advisors are over 49,50. So, attracting people, younger people into that sort of business.”*

Org.20 *“Well, I think that as we grow finding more people that fit our culture is a challenge”*

Org.21 *“So, attracting the right sort of persons who want to learn and understand certain type of progression, but understand kind of right now that the way it isn't there is tricky.”*

Org.22 *“Probably, I suppose, I guess the challenge is in recruiting the right, for us a small studio, in recruiting people with the right skills and not just talent but also the skills to get on with the team.”*

Managers also complained that many fresh graduates prefer to go to London or down south for job opportunities rather than staying in the North East:

Org.10 *“I think one of the biggest problems we’ve got in North East is people go to universities or to college then they seem to think that they have to leave the North East to go and get a good job. So, we lose a lot of talent up here from people moving south.”*

Org.16 *“If we could hire graduates that came to us with more refined skills or if we were able to more easily attract experienced trend forecasters to the North East because many of them live in London or New York or Paris and we find it really difficult to persuade them to move to Newcastle to do the job.”*

Other key challenges highlighted by the MSMEs were: inability to retain good staff and talent, insufficient income, insufficient opportunities for career progression, lack of external training bodies and inability of employees to keep up with job description and business growth. Other challenges were: challenges of new technology, lack of product knowledge, lack of data base, the business not performing the kind of work employees are willing to do and inability to measure productivity and keep record of time.

4.14 Human Resource Management Practices Existing in MSMEs

Apart from the presence of OCM, the presence of HRM practices were explored in the MSMEs. Majority of the businesses asserted that a formal HR department was absent in their organisations because of their small size:

Org.10 *“No, we don’t have an HR department because we are quite a small business.”*

Org.12 *“No, we don’t. We are basically kind of a small organisation.”*

Org.15 *“No, not really, the only thing we do is kind of having a payroll adviser, an accountant, who advises us on a lot of contract-based stuff, at the minute we are too small to do such.”*

Org.20 *“Because I think the size of the business that we are doesn't warrant any HR manager.”*

However, they further explained that they made use of external HR consultants. Some of the MSMEs asserted they are subscribed to external professional HR service:

Org.16 *“We also have an external legal practitioner who works in HR that we pay a subscription service for, so if there is any sort of legal questions around things like maternity and that kind of stuff then she will advise us as of when we need that advice and those are the main two things that we do.”*

Org.17 *“We have a service that we subscribe to nationally which is like a call centre which we can ring up for advice. I've also got a kind of HR consultant that I've used various times with different organisations who is very good and very reasonably priced.”*

Org.20 *“No. We have an external support company that keeps us updated on legislation and documentation and if we need any HR processes or handling sickness or anything like that then they advise us on processing procedure.”*

Organisations 4, 13, 19, 21 and 24 also made use of external HR consultants.

Also, a managing director in the study asserted that he was in charge of the HRM functions in his company:

Org.I *“We don't have an HR manager as such other than myself as the director. So, I am the one responsible.”*

On the other hand, some managers asserted that HRM was formalised in their organisation and there exist formal HR policies, procedures and handbooks. They emphasized that their HR policies complied with the government regulations:

Org.11 *“So, obviously from the HR point of view, we have a policy and handbook process which we review to make sure that we are in line with regulations and changes that we want to bring in.”*

Org.1 affirmed that they possess certain accreditations related to HRM:

Org.1 *“We actually hold an investors people accreditation. We also hold a diversity accreditation as well. so, we uphold all those values and behaviours, who we are as an organisation.”*

In addition, Org.1 pointed out HR policies which promote equality, diversity and wellbeing of employees exist in their organisation:

Org.1 *“So, we have an equality diversity wellbeing committee which focuses on making sure that we are a leader in diversity, that we are equal and fair”*

Organisations II and 8 also affirmed that staff well-being groups were present in their organisation:

Org.II *“And we have employee welfare. We like to make sure that everybody has what they need to do their job.”*

Org.8 *“We have a staff well-being group, so we’ve set up that group to be, it’s led by employees who have basically you know are consultants, sharing basically, set up initiatives to support staff well-being.”*

Finally, regarding recruitment and selection which is a HRM function, the MSMEs mentioned that employees are recruited through direct entry, apprenticeship and internship:

Org.12 *“We recruit all sorts/types of people. So, we have recruited fresh graduates in the past and we’ve recruited people into training roles, we have recruited school leavers into apprenticeship positions and then obviously we have recruited more experienced people into different roles as well.”*

Org.16 *“So, it depends what level they are at. So, if they were a Level 1 employee, we could take them straight from university and we have a really good internship scheme here, so we take lots of interns.”*

4.15 Chapter Summary

The study findings chapter began with presenting the demographics of the interviewed businesses. Table 16 presented the organisation code and a detailed description of the demographic information of the research participants. Thereafter, the demographic information of location, size, annual turnover, industry sector, gender and managerial positions were discussed in detail. The chapter moved on to present the key study findings relevant to the research aim and objectives. The themes were discussed in relation to the questions on the interview guide. The sections represented higher order codes and their respective sub-codes were discussed accordingly.

The first higher code identified was career framework. The study findings revealed that few MSMEs had formal career frameworks. For the MSMEs who asserted that formal career frameworks were absent in their organisation, the study findings revealed that they engaged in OCM practices embedded in a career framework. While some managers asserted that their career framework is not very efficient, others affirmed that their career framework was very efficient. The organisations with a career framework all agreed that their frameworks still needed improvement. The presence of a career framework in an organisation was perceived as the function of the HR department

The learning and development theme emerged from the career framework theme. The MSMEs that affirmed the absence of a career framework mentioned that they engage in learning and development. Peer learning, job

shadowing, informal knowledge sharing, on the job learning and organised learning activities were the various types of learning methods identified by the research participants. Furthermore, the research participants mentioned that employees were developed through personal development plans and their performance were monitored through performance development reviews and performance management. The managers asserted that engaging in learning and development is useful for building motivated, highly skilled and confident employees.

The study findings revealed that small size was the major reason for lack of career framework and clear career path. The presence of clear and defined career paths was peculiar to certain industries. Firms in the financial industry had clear and well-defined career paths. For example, an accountancy firm stated that there exists pre-defined career path for accountants. And that certain qualifications are required for career progression. However, firms in the creative, branding and design industry expressed that career paths were lacking in their industry because their jobs are skills based. They further explained that there is nowhere else to progress to because they are creatives and specialists. Hierarchical and horizontal career paths were found to exist in the MSMEs.

Talent management was found to precede career planning. The managers mentioned that they have career discussions with employees with high potential and grow talent from within. Furthermore, the managers emphasized that some employees are not interested in career planning or career

progression. They explained that such employees are content with positive organisation culture, bonuses and great salaries. There was a consensus that career planning is a joint effort between the organisation and employee.

Training emerged as the most engaged HR practice while coaching, mentoring and performance appraisal as a basis for career planning were the most engaged career development programs. The training activities found to exist in the MSMEs were categorized into internal training programs and external training programs. The internal training programs include peer-to-peer training, audio-visual trainings and apprenticeships while the external training programs include attending conferences and exhibitions, professional courses and training required by law. Regarding OCM practices, some businesses asserted that they have external business mentors. The MSMEs also engaged in career counselling, career workshops and formal education as a form of career development. Professional development and certifications common in the financial or accounting firms. Retirement programs and internal job postings were the least engaged OCM practices. The MSMEs acknowledged that they have limited career progression opportunities. However, they mentioned ways opportunities for career progression can arise in the organisation. The managers emphasized that vacancies within the organisation is the easiest way opportunities for career progression can be created in the organisation. They further explained that vacancies within the organisation exist when people leave the organisation or employees are promoted. Personal development plans emerged as a tool useful for career planning, career development and career progression.

OCM was not a key factor that improved motivation, employee retention and productivity. The managers asserted that employees with high job satisfaction would be more productive. Investing in staff emerged as a key factor that improved employee motivation. Feedback, communication and team meetings were also key factors that improved employee motivation. The managers stated that employees who feel valued are more likely to be retained for long. Career development emerged as a factor that improved employee retention.

The organisation's perception of employee productivity differed across the industry sectors. However, achieving business key performance indicators was the central perception of employee productivity. Various drivers of productivity were identified by the research participants. Training and development emerged as the key driver of productivity in the MSMEs. Other major drivers of productivity were employee engagement, organisation culture, career development and opportunities for career progression, positive organisational culture and genuine interest in staff. The major challenges hindering the adoption of organisational career management practices were insufficient time and money. While the North East England MSMEs faced a major challenge of recruiting the right kind of people for their business.

Finally, HRM procedures and policies which are compliant with government regulations were found to exist in the MSMEs. However, HRM procedures or departments were not formalised in most of the organisations due to small size. The study findings revealed that some directors were responsible for their

HRM procedures. Most of the research participants affirmed that they subscribe to external professional HR services. HR policies and procedures relating to accreditations, equality, diversity and employee wellbeing were found to exist in the MSMEs.

The next chapter interprets the study findings and provides an in-depth synthesis of the research findings with relevant existing literature. And from this synthesis, the theoretical and practical contributions of this research study are identified.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth explanation and interpretations of the study findings identified in chapter 4. It synthesizes the study findings with extant literature already reviewed in chapter 2. And from this discussion, the significance, contributions and implications of the research findings are deduced. The chapter begins with recalling the research question and objectives which serve as a guide for the discussion of the key study findings. Finally, this chapter highlights this study's major contributions to theory and practice by presenting a productivity framework which captures drivers of productivity in MSMEs and an organisational career and development framework.

5.1.1 Review of Research Question and Key Objectives

It is important to reiterate the research question and objectives before discussing the key findings. The research question and objectives are reiterated in order to explain how the study findings answer the research question and achieve the objectives of the study. Employees expect more than job security from an employer; they expect to build skills through experiences useful for career progression (KBRS, 2019). However, with changes in the business environment, flatter organisational structures, unstable and highly competitive global marketplace (Greenhaus et al., 2010; Patrick, 2008; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009); contemporary organisations are faced with the challenges of managing the career expectations of their employees (KBRS,

2020). Thus, failure to meet these career expectations often lead to demotivation, decreased employee productivity and eventual loss of skilled and committed employees (Appelbaum et al., 2002; Gunz, 1989; Kidd & Smewig, 2001; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Napitupulu, et al., 2017). The aim of this study is therefore to explore if engaging in organisational career management impacts and improves the productivity of employees. To this end, the following research question was proposed:

RQ: How impactful is organisational career management to the productivity of North East England micro, small and medium-sized enterprises?

To address the above research question, the following research objectives were developed:

RO1: To explore the presence and efficiency of organisational career systems in MSMEs.

RO2: To explore the organisation's perception of employee productivity

RO3: To explore the impact of career planning, career development and career progression on productivity.

RO4: To explore the perceived barriers hindering MSMEs from engaging in organisational career management practices.

RO5: To develop a conceptual organisational career framework based on the empirics of the study.

The remainder of the chapter discusses the research objectives in relation to the existing literature and finally establishes the study's contribution to theoretical knowledge and practice.

5.2 Presence and Efficiency of Organisational Career System in North East England MSMEs

As established in Chapter 2, a career system or framework consists of set of interrelated human resource policies, actions and practices used by an organisation to manage the flow of employees in, through and out of an organisation over time (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Sonnenfield & Peiperl, 1988). In detail, an organisational career structure consists of planned sequence of employee moves and flow of employees from entry-level recruitment, through training and development, job rotation, promotion, succession management and finally to the exit of employees (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). Baruch and Peiperl (2000) posited that there is no HRM in most small organisations, let alone organisational career management. Based on this argument, the third research objective sought to investigate and confirm the presence of organisational career systems in MSMEs and the effectiveness of these systems. It should be noted that the presence of a career system is explored first because organisational career management is one of the components of a career system. According to Mercer (2017), a career framework is a platform whereby organisations can pivot and respond to challenges in labour markets by linking vital HR processes such as workforce analytics, selection and retention, performance management, career management, development, rewards and succession management. Contrary to Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) claim, organisational career system and HRM practices were found to exist in MSMEs though not present in all the businesses. While majority of the MSMEs did not have a formal career system in place, the OCM activities (training, development, appraisals) embedded in

a career system were existing in the business processes of the MSMEs. The MSMEs confirmed that organisational career management is a function of their HR department, and the HR members of staff were responsible for the development of the career framework. This finding agrees with the prominent statement in career literature that organisational career management is a function of HRM (Appelbaum et al., 2002; Baruch, 1996, 1997; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2006; Gutteridge & Otte, 1983).

Baruch and Peiperl (2000) considered organisational demographic features while building their career system model. This consideration was grounded on the fact that every organisation has their unique organisational characteristics and strategy and so a career system differs across organisations (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). The demographic features considered were age, size, industry sector, organisational climate and internal characteristics such as career system strategies (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Evidence from the study findings show a relationship between organisational demographic characteristics (age, size and industry sector) and existence of a career system in the MSMEs. The demographic characteristics of industry sector and size played a significant role in determining the presence of a career system in the MSMEs. However, company age was not a key determinant of a career system existing in the MSMEs. It has been argued that organisations large in size and older in years would engage more in OCM than small organisations because they have more resources and management capabilities to implement OCM activities (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Mayo, 1991). Although OCM is being studied within the MSMEs

context, the researcher had assumptions that a career system should exist in organisations older than 10 years or with organisational size of more than 50 employees. On the contrary, some businesses older and larger did not have a formal career framework. For example, Org.8 (theatre and drama company), 51 years old with 46 employees did not have a formal career framework in place. This was similar to Org.6 (recycling company) 35 years old with 65 employees. Inference from this finding suggests that it is either these organisations do not need a career system or they had challenges with building a career system. From the findings, the common challenge preventing the existence of a formal career system in the MSMEs was their small size. This statement agrees with literature that engagement of OCM is limited in small businesses (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2006; Creed & Hood, 2009; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Mayo, 1991). Apart from the general constraint of small size preventing the existence of a career system in the MSMEs, the industry sector or nature of business was another major factor a career system was not present. For example, there was a consensus among the creative industries that a career system was not present in their businesses because their job was skills-based. The managers explained that majority of their staff members are specialists and at the pinnacle of their career and so there was nowhere else to progress to.

Furthermore, Org.25 identified that a career system was absent because their organisation is artificial intelligence driven with little need for a management or career structure. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the two leading factors preventing the existence of a career system in MSMEs are small size and

nature of the business. While there is literature that relates development of career systems and usage of OCM practices to unique organisational characteristics (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Mayo, 1991), there is little or no literature that explore if these organisational characteristics determine the existence of a career system in an organisation. This study findings therefore makes its first contribution to knowledge by revealing that there is a relationship between industry sector demographic characteristic and the presence of a career system in an organisation.

Baruch (2004b) CAST model of a career system depicts that an ideal career system should satisfy both individual and organisation needs. Therefore, a career system is considered efficient if through the use of HRM activities in alignment with the organisation's goals and strategies, the system is able to meet the needs of both the employees and organisation. However, at the time of data collection, efficiency of a career system was viewed as how effective the career system was used and the results it yielded. Responses from organisations that had a career system in operation showed that all the businesses concurred that their career system still needed improvement. Though some organisations affirmed their career system was efficient and produced the results they expected. The study findings further revealed that there was an association with efficiency of a career system and the size of the company. The managers asserted that the bigger their businesses expand, the more efficient their career system would be. There is a consonance between this finding and studies that suggest that organisational career

system and OCM practices are more utilized in larger organisations than smaller organisations (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000, Baruch & Budhwar, 2006).

In conclusion, although a formal career system was not present in most of the MSMEs, the study findings establishes that a career system exists in MSMEs as opposed to Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) statement that a career system might not be present in small organisations. Moreover, businesses that did not have a formalised career system in operation still engaged in practices embedded in a career system. Lastly, there was a consensus among the managers that their career systems were not fully efficient and there was room for improvement.

5.2.1 Presence of Human Resource Management Practices in North East England MSMEs

Further to exploring the presence of a career system in the MSMEs, the presence of HRM practices in MSMEs was explored. The study confirms that HRM exist in MSMEs which is in accordance with studies that have explored the presence of HRM in SMEs (Brand & Bax, 2002; Kok, 2003; Heneman et al., 2000; Mollah et al., 2015; Umer, 2012). HR practices found to exist in the MSMEs include recruitment and selection; training, learning and development; performance development reviews; performance management; rewards and appraisals. The practices highlighted by the managers align with the list of HRM practices existing in literature (Mollah et al., 2015; O'riordan, 2017). According to HR research, HRM becomes more formalised in SMEs as the

business grow and increase in size (number of employees) (Umer, 2012). Evidence from this doctoral study disclose and confirms that within the MSMEs, HRM was formalised in larger organisations while the smaller organisations made use of external HR consultants. The businesses with formalised HRM had HR policies, procedures and handbooks which complied with government regulations. HR policies regarding employee wellbeing, accreditation and promotion of equality and diversity in the workplace were highlighted by the managers.

5.3 Perceived Employee Productivity in North East England MSMEs

According to Prowle et al. (2017), productivity of an organisation consists of combined productivities of labour force and fixed assets (plant, equipment and space) of the organisation. This doctoral study centres on organisational career management which is a function of human resource management. Thus, this research focuses on the human resource (labour/employee) productivity side of an organisation. Productivity is generally defined as “a ratio to measure how an organisation converts input resources (labour, materials, machines, money) into goods and services” (Green, 2017, p. 340; Tokarčíková, 2013). And labour or employee productivity as the assessment of the efficiency of an employee or group of employees’ (Hanaysha, 2016). The perception of productivity is therefore bound to differ across industry sectors because of each organisation’s unique products and services. Since the main aim of the research is to study how organisational career management impacts productivity in MSMEs, the perception and

understanding of employee productivity in organisations had to be established first. This therefore leads to the fourth research objective which aims to explore the organisation's perception of employee productivity. Insights from the study findings show that the perception of productivity was unique to each business because of their goals and nature of business. However, there were some commonalities among the productivity measures. From the study findings, completing tasks on time (effective time management) was the most common type of perceived employee productivity. Other perceptions of employee productivity identified amongst others were achieving key performance indicators unique to individual business goals, quality customer service, innovation and customer satisfaction. Also, the managers highlighted that the more productive the employees were, the more profitable their business became. This affirmation agrees with the studies that have asserted that profitability and growth of a business depends to a large extent on labour productivity (Mararleveld & Been, 2011; Prowle, et al., 2017; Sharma & Sharma, 2014). Review of literature suggests that studies have explored the impact of several factors such as training and development, flexible working arrangement, work environment and human resource management on employee productivity (Hashmi et al., 2021; Horrevorts, et al., 2018; Iqbal et al., 2018; Mararleveld & Been, 2011). However, these studies have a preconceived idea of employee productivity and fail to capture exactly what employee productivity means to the organisations in the research study. This study therefore fills a gap in literature by exploring the perception of employee productivity.

The literature review chapter established that there has been a productivity puzzle within the UK economy since the 2008 financial crisis (Grail, 2019; Round et al., 2019) and there has been a challenge with raising productivity in the UK and North of England (Round et al., 2019). Evidence from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) on SMEs in the Northern Powerhouse show that MSMEs in the North East England were 27%, 25% and 33% less productive than the national average respectively in 2018 (ONS, 2018c; Round et al., 2019). Thus, in addition to the perception of employee productivity, the drivers of productivity in NE England MSMEs were explored to know the factors that could improve productivity in this region.

5.3.1 Drivers of Productivity in North East England MSMEs

Chapter 4 presented the list of drivers of productivity identified by the MSMEs. These drivers of productivity are categorized into groups based on how the businesses emphasized their importance. The different categories include:

- **Category 1 (Primary drivers of productivity):** Training and development; employee engagement; career development and opportunities for career progression; positive organisational culture; and genuine interest in staff.
- **Category 2:** Hiring of skilled and experienced workers; good management and leadership style; employees feeling valued; flexible working and granting holidays; right and available work tools or equipment; autonomy/independence and bonuses.
- **Category 3:** Specialism; attractive and good work environment; low absence or sick rate, use of technology (artificial intelligence); employee

motivation; business growth, use of external skillset/support; versatile/multi-talented employees, decent salaries and pension scheme.

- **Category 4:** Business direction and strategy; efficient business process and operations; planning and scheduling; remote working and retention of skilled workers.

Studies have identified several drivers of productivity. A study on improving productivity in UK SMEs conducted by Prowle et al. (2017) categorized drivers of productivity into two namely: primary drivers (operational processes, technology, human resources and information) and secondary drivers (intrinsic (ownership of business, firm size, management arrangements) extrinsic (legal and regulatory constraints, degree and nature of competition), and organisational cultural factors). This doctoral study relates with these findings as drivers such as business operational process, skilled human resources and technology were among the identified drivers of productivity. Intrinsic factors such as leadership and management were suggested to be drivers of productivity. However, extrinsic drivers of productivity were not found to exist in the North East England MSMEs. Contrary to the study conducted by Prowle et al. (2017), organisation culture and positive working environment were among the primary drivers of productivity in the North East England MSMEs. Other primary drivers highlighted in the study findings were training and development, opportunities for progression and genuine interest in staff. Though the MSMEs asserted that they might not have sufficient promotion opportunities, they acknowledged that opportunities for progression would drive productivity. The managers also emphasized that genuine interest and

investing in staff are key drivers of productivity. Through investing in staff, employee motivation improves which eventually drives up productivity. Academic and professional literature have emphasized the importance of employee development as drivers of productivity (Appelbaum et al., 2002; Hartzenberg, 2002; Kakui & Gachunga, 2016; Lyria, et al., 2014; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018; Milkovich et al., 1985; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Robbins, 1993). Specifically, the research study carried out Prowle et al (2017) revealed that employee development was rated by the research participants as the most important means of improving productivity in their businesses. The participating MSMEs in this study confirmed the findings of Prowle et al (2017) as training and development emerged the highest driver of productivity.

Round et al. (2019) highlighted that skills and education, investment and innovation, employee health and wellbeing are drivers of productivity. This study confirms that recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced workers drive productivity. Some managers further explained that improving employees' knowledge of products and systems within the business improved productivity. Moreover, in relation to the employee health and wellbeing factors highlighted by Round et al. (2019), the MSMEs noted that less sick leaves and absenteeism improved productivity. An uncommon driver of productivity identified in this study was job autonomy or independence. A manager emphasized that giving employees the liberty to make their own decisions improved productivity. This statement agrees with studies that have defined job autonomy as giving a chance to employees to make decisions towards tasks (Khoshnaw & Alavi, 2020; Kim et al., 2009; Lin et al., 2011; Sisodia &

Das, 2013). Job autonomy was prevalent in the creative industries. The managers in the creative industries asserted that creativity improves when employees have a sense of autonomy and ownership of a project. The sense of autonomy and ability to make decisions independently ultimately results to increased employee productivity. Khoshnaw and Alavi (2020) reviewed the interrelation between job autonomy and job performance, and they concluded that there is a positive relationship between job autonomy and improved job performance. The study also highlighted that excessive autonomy could be disadvantageous both at organisational and personal levels and it might lead to unwanted actions that are detrimental to organisational goals (Khoshnaw & Alavi, 2020; Lu et al., 2017).

This section achieves the fourth research objective by highlighting the organisation's perception of employee productivity. In addition, drivers of productivity in MSMEs are identified and categorized according to their level of importance. A pertinent question emerges from the discussion of the productivity drivers. The question seeks to know why productivity is still low in North East England despite the fact that the organisations are aware of the drivers of productivity. The barriers to high productivity rate in North East MSMEs are therefore revealed in section 5.7. That section addresses the challenges faced by the MSMEs. The following section discusses the dimensions of organisational career management.

5.4 Dimensions of Organisational Career Management

It has been stated previously that this study explores organisational career management in three dimensions (career planning, career development and career progression). The fifth research objective therefore aims to explore the impact of organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) on productivity. This objective is similar to the research question which would be addressed in section 5.5. Before the impact of organisational career management on productivity is discussed, the three dimensions of organisational career management are explored separately in relation to productivity.

5.4.1 Organisational Career Planning

Career planning has been identified as the first stage in the career management process (Appelbaum et al., 2002; Noe, 1996) with employees, managers and the organisation playing certain roles in career planning (Antonio, 2010). The study findings show that the MSMEs linked talent management to career planning. Likewise, Waheed and Zaim (2015) affirmed that career planning is closely related to talent management. The MSMEs perceived that talent management precedes career planning. And through talent management, they could grow talent from within. From the findings, the managers explained that their role in career planning was to identify employees who need or have the potential to be developed, identify the training needed and start career development. Furthermore, a talent development manager affirmed that they look out for employees with great

performance and discuss their career aspirations. These findings support Antonio's (2010) claim that managers play the role of a coach and counsellor in career planning. And that they need to form a complete understanding of employees' career goals (Antonio, 2010; Otte & Hutcheson, 1992). In addition, managers speaking to employees about their career aspirations translate to counselling with managers or HR professionals. And career counselling by direct supervisor or HR department have been identified as part of organisational career management practices or career development (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).

The study findings revealed that career planning matches the needs of an employee and the organisation. The study findings also revealed that once employees who need or have the potential to be developed are identified, the organisation pinpoints their needs and relevant training needed. Here, it shows that career planning has to meet both the needs of the employee and the organisation. It also highlights the organisation's role in providing resources for training and career development. This finding confirms Antoniu's (2010) argument that effective career planning requires that individuals know their career aspirations and abilities and organisations identify their needs, opportunities and make provisions for required training and career development. Thus, career planning leads to the matching of individual and organisational career needs and goals (Mwashila, 2017). The managers emphasized that the success of career planning depends on employees' willingness to participate and their interest in career progression. This report reinforces that an individual or employee has a role to play in career planning

(Antonio, 2010; Byars & Rue, 2000; Creed & Hood, 2009; Mwashila, 2017; Noe, 1996). Emphasis was laid on the use of personal development plans for career planning and development. The managers asserted that employees progress and development were tracked using personal development plans. Written personal career plans for employees is one of the organisational career management practices identified by Baruch and Peiperl (2000).

Moreover, the findings revealed that there is a relationship between motivation and career planning. As stated previously, the findings suggested that the success of career planning depends on employees' willingness to participate and their interest in career progression. Account from the managers showed that some employees are ambitious, motivated to engage in career planning and enthusiastic about promotions. While others are un-motivated about career planning and progression but value work-life balance, positive work environment, development, organisational support and content with decent salaries. This difference in attitudes, personalities and needs among employees can be linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. This motivation theory is based on the fact that human needs are hierarchically ranked and prioritized according to their importance (Badubi, 2017; Maslow, 1943, 1954; Smith & Cronje, 1992;). This theory has been linked to workplace setting and career planning (How, 2020). Therefore, some employees are satisfied and content once their physiological needs (basic needs of access to a rest room, comfortable working environment and breaks), safety needs (feeling that personal property is safe and protected), social needs (feeling loved and having a sense of belonging in the workplace), esteem needs

(feeling respected, admired, positive feedbacks from peers and managers) are met (Indeed, 2022). And do not make self-actualisation needs (career progression opportunities) a priority.

Finally, the study findings establish that organisational career planning is a joint responsibility between an employee and organisation. And requires inputs from the employees, direct manager and organisation. These findings agree with the studies of Antoniu (2010), Atkinson (2002), Barnett and Bradley (2007), Byars and Rue (2000), Chetana and Mohapatra (2017), Lyria et al (2012), Wesarat et al (2014) and Yahya (2004). It is also deduced that organisational career planning is not a direct driver of employee productivity. However, it increases motivation and employee engagement which invariably improves productivity.

5.4.2 Organisational Career Development

Organisational career development refers to programs and activities carried out to manage and develop the careers of employees in an organisation (Baruch, 1996; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Singh, 2018). Career development programs are synonymous to organisational career management practices (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). They include activities such as coaching, mentoring, career workshops (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). While employee development refers to programs or activities facilitated by an organisation to improve the skills, competencies and productivity of employees (Creed & Hood, 2009; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018). Both career development and employee development are aimed at enhancing the

competitive advantage, productivity and profitability of an organisation (Creed & Hood, 2009).

The present study reports that employee development and training were widely used in the MSMEs. Rather than engaging intensively in career development programs, employee development and training were the major approaches to organisational career management. The employee development programs identified in the study were training, learning and development, personal development plans, performance appraisals, performance management and performance development reviews. These development activities are components of HRM (Mollah et al., 2015; O’riordan, 2017) and the MSMEs used them as basis for career planning, career development and progression. Evidence from the present study show that all the MSMEs engaged in training. Also, learning and development was widely engaged in and emerged as an alternative to the presence of a career framework in the MSMEs. Inference from this finding clearly shows that training, learning and development are crucial to MSMEs as they were prioritized above organisational career management. It can also mean that the MSMEs engage more in training, learning and development than in career development programs because they can’t meet the career expectations of their employees. This finding strongly agrees with Ball (1997) who asserted that because of flatter hierarchies, contemporary organisations avoid the mention of the word “career” and focus on initiatives such as personal development plans, training and development rather than career progression within the organisation. Nevertheless, training and development emerged as

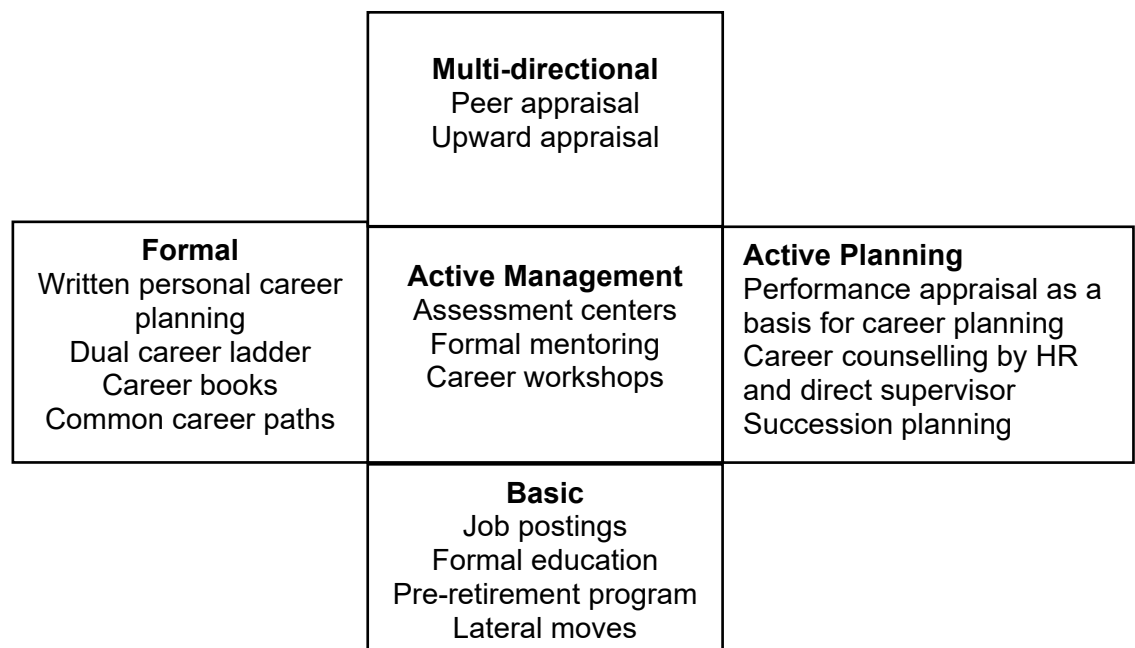
the leading and major drivers of productivity in the MSMEs as shown in section 5.3.1.

Career studies have emphasized that usage and applicability of OCM or career development practices vary across organisations depending on organisational characteristics such as age and size of a company, business strategy, technological infrastructure, industry sector and organisation culture of an organisation (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Gunz & Jalland, 1996; Krisnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Nguyen & Bryant, 2004; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988). The findings reports that size, age and industry sector had a relationship with the usage of OCM practices in the MSMEs. Age of a business did not impact the usage or applicability of the programs in the study. It is assumed that older businesses should engage more in OCM practices than younger businesses (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2006). This assumption was confirmed in Lewis and Arnold's (2012) study of organisational career management in UK retail businesses. The study reported that older organisations engaged in more OCM practices than younger businesses. On the contrary, this present study findings revealed that some younger businesses engaged in more OCM practices than older businesses. Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) study confirm this result as age of company had no significant relationship with how OCM practices were engaged in the surveyed organisations. Furthermore, size and industry sector (nature of business) determined how widely used the OCM practices were and the types of OCM practices engaged in each organisation respectively. Medium and small enterprises engaged in more OCM programs than micro

enterprises. This finding is similar to the studies of Baruch and Peiperl (2000) and Lewis and Arnold (2012) who reported that engagement of OCM practices were predominant in larger organisations than smaller ones.

As stated in Chapter 2, Baruch and Peiperl (2000) identified 17 organisational career management practices and grouped them into five clusters according to levels of sophistication and involvement. The clusters are presented here again to serve as a reminder. Figure 26 shows the organisational career management practices found to exist in organisations.

Figure 26: Clusters of Organisational Career Management practices



Source: (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000, p.359)

Coaching is not among the above OCM practices listed by Baruch and Peiperl (2000), however career studies have identified coaching as an important career development program (Goyer, 2010; O’Neil et al., 2015; Parker &

Arthur, 2004). It should be noted that all the OCM practices did not exist in the MSMEs. The study provides account for the OCM practices that existed in the MSMEs as recorded in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 presents the list of the engaged OCM practices from the most engaged to the least engaged. The study findings report that active management (coaching, mentoring) and active planning (performance appraisal as a basis of career planning) were the top three most engaged career development programs. These were followed by written personal career planning or personal development plans, career counselling by direct supervisor and HR, career workshops, formal education, peer appraisals, job postings, lateral moves, succession planning and retirement preparation programs. Succession planning and retirement preparation programs were the least engaged programs. Majority of the participants did not have a succession plan because they were the business owners. Though the survey was conducted with large organisations, Baruch and Peiperl (2000) suggested that older organisations would engage in more retirement programs than younger ones. However, this study reported that older organisations did not engage in retirement programs and there was little or no retirement programs evident in the MSMEs. The participants reported that it was because of the small size of the businesses. Furthermore, the findings show the MSMEs engaged in at least one of the OCM practices in each cluster. All the OCM practices in the basic cluster (low on sophistication, medium on involvement) were engaged in. This confirms Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) statement that most organisations with HRM system would frequently engage in practices in the basic cluster. OCM practices in the formal cluster (moderate on sophistication, low on involvement) were the least engaged set

of OCM practices. Based on these findings, the study therefore proposes that MSMEs should engage more in active management programs (moderate on both levels of sophistication and involvement) and in active planning programs (moderate on sophistication, high on involvement). Through the active management programs, employees can gather information useful for their career development (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). And the active planning programs reflects the organisation's active involvement in the careers of employees and considers future plans of an organisation regarding vacant positions (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). As shown in section 5.3.1, career development was one of the drivers of productivity. This report agrees with several studies that have posited that career development improves the skills and capabilities of employees which ultimately increases productivity and competitive advantage of an organisation (Creed & Hood, 2009; Robbins, 1993; Kakui & Gachunga, 2016; Leibowitz et al., 1986; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Pavloff & Amitin, 1984). The study therefore confirms that organisational career development improves employee productivity. Training, learning and development also impacted productivity positively.

5.4.3 Organisational Career Progression

Regarding organisational career progression, the present study reports that there were opportunities for career progression in the MSMEs. Furthermore, clear and pre-defined career paths existed in certain industries such as the financial industry. Majority of the businesses had informal or no career paths. This report agrees with Baruch's (1999) claim that clear and defined career path is widely used in large organisations compared to small businesses with informal or no career path. Both hierarchical/vertical and horizontal career paths were found to exist in the MSMEs. This finding negates the assumption in the career literature that vertical career paths or hierarchical organisational structures are absent in small businesses (Ball, 1997; Greenhaus, et al., 2010; Peiperl & Baruch, 1997). A point worthy of noting is that the MSMEs acknowledged that they knew that they might not be able to fulfil the career expectations of their employees and so they tried their best to progress their employees within their best capacity. A micro business bluntly admitted that there are no opportunities for career progression at all because of the size and because the business comprises of creatives and specialists. This connects to the reason why the micro businesses did not have a career system in operation. In the absence of vertical or upward career progression up the organisational ladder, the findings showed that lateral moves or horizontal career progression was predominantly engaged in. This finding resonates with the argument in the career literature that there has been an exit from the traditional bureaucratic career in which employees progress in an upward or vertical hierarchal manner (Arthur et al.,1999; Hall, 2002, Mulhall, 2014,

Peiperl & Baruch 1997; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) to horizontal career paths where employees advance by moving sideways rather than moving up (Peiperl & Baruch 1997). Evidence from the present study show that employees were able to progress laterally by getting transferred to different departments with similar status but with different responsibilities (Doyle, 2020). By so doing, employees are able explore their skills and creativity in different fields (Daisy, 2018).

Whilst the MSMEs acknowledged that there are limited promotional opportunities, they also identified ways through which career progression opportunities can arise within the organisation. The MSMEs strongly emphasized that progression opportunities are available only when there are vacancies within the organisation. The businesses asserted that they can't create another department because of progression opportunities unless there is a need for it. Because of their small size, some managers firmly asserted that progression opportunities arises mostly when somebody on a senior level leaves the job. Rather than bringing in outsiders to fill up managerial positions, the MSMEs suggested that they grew talent from within through internal advertisement of job openings. Growth and needs of the business were highlighted as possible ways progression opportunities could arise often. Furthermore, the MSMEs accentuated the employees with good performance, qualifications, skills and understanding of job role are inclined to move up the organisational career ladder fast. It has been previously stated that the participants affirmed that a personal development plan was one of the ways through which career planning and development was carried out. Again, the

participants mentioned that employees could progress through personal development plans. It is therefore obvious that a personal development plan is essential for career planning, career development and career progression.

This section concludes by stating that career paths exist in MSMEs, but it gets clearer and more defined as the organisation grows. Because of the organisational structure, horizontal career path was predominant. Opportunities for career progression exist in MSMEs, and a major determinant of this is vacancies within the organisation. As shown in section 5.3.1, opportunities for career progression emerged as one of the drivers of productivity in the MSMEs. Therefore, organisational career progression improves employee productivity in the MSMEs. The fifth research objective is therefore achieved in this section. Insights from the study findings show that career planning does not directly impact employee productivity, however it enhances motivation which eventually improves employee productivity. Career development and career progression positively impacted productivity in the MSMEs.

5.5 Impact of Organisational Career Management on Motivation, Employee Retention and Productivity

Organisational career management has been established as a unique form of strategic human resource management that promotes employee engagement, commitment and ensures the long-term retention of skilled and competent employees (Appelbaum, et al., 2002; De vos et al., 2008; Lazarova et al., 2012). Research studies have linked engaging in organisational career management to various benefits such as improved motivation, organisational performance, career satisfaction, commitment, employee retention and career success (Atkinson, 2002; Barnett & Bradley, 2007; De Vos & Cambre, 2017; Kong et al., 2012; Lyria, et al., 2012; Wesarat, et al., 2014). Thus, the study investigated the impact of organisational career management motivation, employee retention and productivity in the workplace.

Results from this research agrees with the above studies and confirms that organisational career management was among the factors that improved employee motivation in the MSMEs. However, it was not a key factor. Employee engagement was identified as the key factor that improved motivation. It should also be recalled that employee engagement was among the drivers of productivity identified in section 5.3.1. The MSMEs affirmed that motivation greatly improved when the employees felt engaged through feedback, regular communication and team meetings. The MSMEs emphasized that employees felt involved and appreciated when able to communicate, receive and give feedbacks to the organisation. Indeed, this finding agrees with several studies that have asserted that employee

engagement positively improves motivation and employee productivity (Hanaysha, 2016; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Mohanan et al., 2012; Sundaray, 2011). Another leading factor that improved motivation was investing in staff. There was a consensus that investing in employees' make employees feel valued and motivated to perform efficiently. Other factors that enhanced motivation were positive organisation culture, recognition, reward and reassurance, pay rise and transparency.

However, organisational career management did not emerge as part of the factors that improved employee retention in the study. This finding negates the common claim in literature that organisational career management ensures the retention of skilled employees (De vos et al., 2008; Kong et al., 2012; Lazarova et al., 2012). The MSMEs stressed that the keys to retaining skilled workforce is to make employees feel valued and happy in their jobs. Job satisfaction has been linked to retention of employees in literature (Chiaburu, et al., 2013; Kong et al., 2012), however making employees feel valued as a strategy to employee retention is not widely discussed in literature. The findings also highlighted that engaging in career development programs and the presence of a good management structure or leadership retained skilled staff. In addition, the MSMEs suggested that lack of employee engagement and feeling that there are no career progression opportunities can lead to staff turnover. This statement resonates with the researcher's personal motivation for carrying out this research. Due to the high employee turnover rate in the SME the researcher worked for, the researcher embarked on this research to investigate if there is a relationship between lack of career progression and

loss of skilled staff. The finding therefore confirms that lack of career progression opportunities can cause employee turnover.

In conclusion, inference from the study findings show that organisational career management impacts motivation, employee retention and productivity. Though not a major determinant of motivation, employee retention and productivity. Employee engagement, positive organisational culture, investing in staff through training, learning and development, career development, opportunities for career progression and employees feeling valued were management practices that emerged across the three themes (motivation, employee retention and productivity). Based on this finding, they are confirmed to be the key factors to improving motivation, employee retention and productivity in MSMEs. The study of Prowle, et al. (2017) confirms this argument as organisational culture was among the important factors that improved productivity in SMEs.

Based on the empirics of the study, Figure 27 shows a pictorial representation of the drivers of productivity existing in MSMEs. The drivers of productivity are grouped into three tiers based on their level of effectiveness. Tier 1 represents primary drivers of productivity. Tiers 2 and 3 follow according to importance. Because training and development emerged as the most engaged practices across the MSMEs and was identified as the main driver of productivity, it was linked directly to productivity as shown below. Training and development; recruitment and retention of skilled employees, employees feeling valued and employee motivation were highlighted because they are important factors.

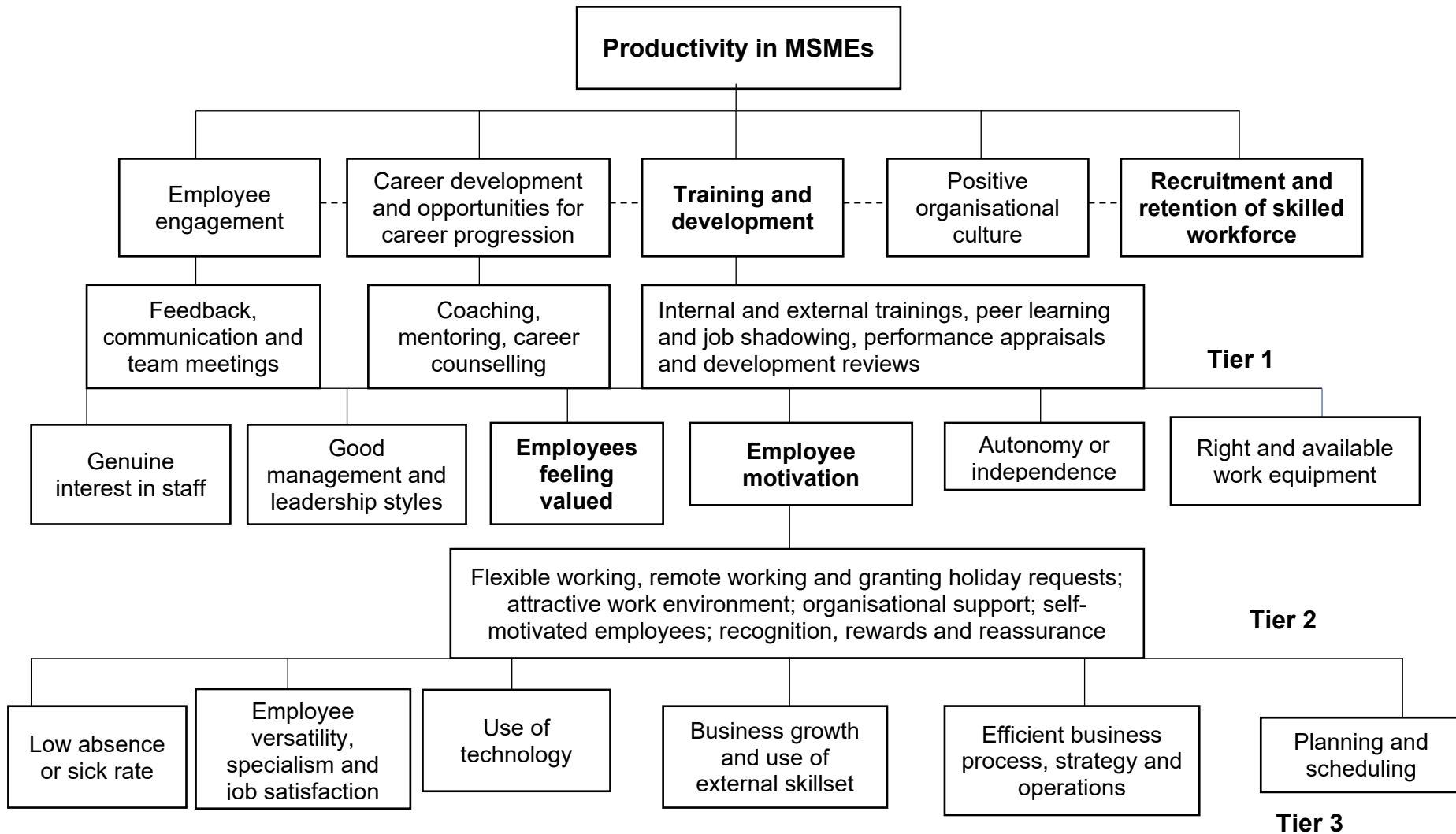


Figure 27: Visualisation of Drivers of Productivity in MSMEs According to Importance, Obtained from the Study Findings

5.6 Challenges Hindering the Adoption of Organisational Career Management Practices in MSMEs

The present study reports that inadequate time was the greatest challenge hindering the MSMEs from effectively engaging in OCM practices. The managers explained that it took time to develop training programs and to balance training against servicing their clients. The MSMEs expatiated that their small size makes it difficult for employees to engage in OCM practices because these same employees are expected to perform their duties without fail. This finding resonates with the study of Lewis and Arnold (2012). The study highlighted that lack of time was the biggest perceived barrier to using OCM practices in the UK retail buying and merchandising community. Another pertinent challenge was finance. The MSMEs complained that it was expensive engaging in development programs especially bringing in external trainers and coaches. Other challenges include absence of a formalised career system, employees leaving after being trained or invested in and not placing importance on organisational career management. These findings agree with Goyer (2010) who confirmed that lack of financial resources, fear of seeing employees leave after the training is over, lack of time and lack of knowledge of training opportunities were factors that discouraged SMEs from engaging in career development programs.

According to the study findings, small size was a recurrent constraint that hindered the optimum operation of organisational career management in the MSMEs. However, the study findings also revealed that the MSMEs were aware of this constraint and they had alternative strategies in place to help

combat this constraint. For example, OCM practices were embedded in the business process of MSMEs that did not have a formal career framework. As promotional opportunities are limited in MSMEs, the MSMEs focused more on learning, training and development of staff. The MSMEs also engaged in horizontal career progression where employees have the opportunity to work in different departments and take on new responsibilities but still on the same status. Therefore, the small size impact was effectively managed by the MSMEs.

5.7 Challenges Faced by North East England MSMEs

Report from the participants emphasized that the North East England MSMEs suffered greatly from inability to recruit people with the right set of skills to perform their jobs. The businesses explained that they perceived this exists because majority of skilled workers are in major regions like London and the Midlands. This clearly points to the reason why productivity is lower in the North East compared to other regions in the UK. Research by Prowle et al (2017) on improving productivity in UK SMEs strongly confirms this finding. The study reported that the SMEs affirmed that the major barrier to improving productivity is difficulty in recruiting skilled staff (Prowle, et al., 2017). This finding therefore poses a recommendation and question for future research. The question of how can MSMEs in the North East England break the productivity gap despite the on-going challenge of inability to recruit skilled workers. This question takes into consideration that previous research has explored productivity in the North East and the MSMEs in this present study

are engaging in the identified practices that improve productivity. Still yet, MSMEs in the North East England are falling short of productivity targets compared to the national average. According to the study findings, the following are the challenges faced by North East England MSMEs in order of severity:

1. Inability to recruit people with the right skills and expertise
2. Inability of staff to keep with job description and business growth
3. Low revenue and profitability
4. Insufficient opportunities for career progression
5. Retention of skilled staff
6. Inadequate product knowledge and external training bodies to carry out specialized training
7. New technology and changing markets
8. Inability to measure productivity and keep track of time in the creative industry
9. Employees not interested in the type of work their employer do
10. Lack of database

5.8 Proposed Conceptual Framework of Organisational Career and Development System for MSMEs

The final research objective which is the study's main contribution to the body of knowledge and practice is to develop a career framework based on the empirics of the study. Before a framework is built, it is prudent to consider insights from the academic literature and empirics of this present study. The study findings and discussion chapters clearly show that training and employee development emerged as key drivers of productivity and they were prioritized above organisational career management. Rather than focusing on only careers, this framework merges career and development components to make a wholesome framework.

This present study considers several factors and dimensions prior to developing its proposed career and development framework. The development of the framework begins with exploring different definitions and models of career and development frameworks existing in literature. This exercise provides a clear understanding of how a career framework should be structured and identifies integral components of a career and development system. Sonnenfield and Peiperl (1988) asserted that a career system consists of set of interrelated human resource policies, actions and practices used by an organisation to manage the flow of employees in, through and out of an organisation over time (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011). From this definition, Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) identified that a career system should consist of employee entry, development and exit. This definition also shows that HR practices and policies are integral components of a career

system. This viewpoint agrees with Mercer's (2017) assertion that a career framework is a platform that links together vital HR processes such as workforce analytics, selection and retention, performance management, career management, development, rewards and succession management. This definition highlights the specific HR practices that should be included in a career framework. Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) asserted that a career structure consists of a planned sequence of employee moves from entry level recruitment through to training and development, job rotation, promotion, succession management and finally to the exit of employees. These career framework definitions depict the flow of employees from the point of recruitment all through to their exit from an organisation.

Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) added that through a career structure, an organisation is able to maintain and develop the needed talent to satisfy its needs. Here, satisfaction of organisational needs emerges. A career structure should as well satisfy the needs of employees. It is recalled that it is an established fact in career literature that organisational career management (career planning and career development) should satisfy both the needs of the organisation and the employees (Bolyard, 1981; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Gutteridge, et al., 1993; Gyansah & Guantai, 2018; Kakui & Gachunga, 2016; Leibowitz et al., 1986; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Pavloff & Amitin, 1984). Furthermore, career scholars have affirmed that career development in organisations should be linked to the business plan and strategy in order to achieve maximum results (Creed & Hood, 2009; McClelland, 1994; Winterton & Winterton, 1999). Based on this argument, existing models of organisational

career development systems in literature link individuals career needs with the organisation's workforce requirements (Gutteridge, et al.,1993; Herriot & Pemberton, 1996; Leibowitz et al., 1986; Schein, 1978; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988). Thus, it is inferred that a career and development framework should meet the needs of employees and the organisation. Building on this argument, it is therefore crucial to identify employee and organisation needs before developing a career and development framework. The following is the list of employee and organisation needs obtained from the present study findings and discussion.

Individual needs

1. Need to feel invested in and valued
2. Need for a positive organisational culture and conducive working environment
3. Need for opportunities for career development and progression
4. Need for autonomy or independence
5. Need for decent salaries, bonuses and rewards
6. Need for regular communication, support and feedback
7. Need for job security.

Organisation needs

1. Need for recruitment and retention of skilled and productive workforce
2. Need for employees with great product knowledge
3. Need for employees to understand to business processes, visions and goals
4. Need for employee commitment and loyalty

5. Need to remain competitive and profitable in the labour market
6. Need for favourable government policies.

The employee needs outlined above resonates with Baudouin's (2010) study. Baudouin (2010) explored career development in SMEs and the study findings revealed five major individual needs. The needs identified were: need for career satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment; need to have a good match between workplace duties and their skills and interests; need for maintenance of independence or autonomy; need for positive communication and work relationships; and need for engaging in career planning (Baudouin, 2010). Though data was only collected from managers, this doctoral study is able to present a good representation of employees needs judging from the similarities with Baudouin's (2010) study.

In addition to a career and development model meeting the needs of both the employee and organisation, literature show that organisational characteristics are important factors to be considered before building a framework (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Gunz & Jalland, 1996; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2010; Mishra & Akman, 2010). Baruch and Peiperl (2000) considered organisational characteristics such as age, size, industry sector, organisational climate and career system strategies. Bolton and Gold (1994) provided a detailed list of factors that affect the way in which employees' careers are managed in an organisation; and which serve as a base for developing a career system. The factors include: appraisal; organisational structure; strategy; organisational culture and values; training and development; career counselling; profits and

growth; promotion processes; communication and succession management (Bolton and Gold, 1994). From this list, it is seen that some of the factors constitute HR and OCM practices earlier identified in this chapter. Krishnan and Maheshwari (2011) added that OCM practices or a career system would vary across organisations because of specific organisational characteristics such as strategy of an organisation, firm size, technology infrastructure, geographical and cultural context (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Gunz & Jalland, 1996; Mishra & Akman, 2010; Nguyen & Bryant, 2004; Singh & Vohra, 2009). Again, firm size, organisational culture, structure and strategy emerge. These recurring themes appear to be important factors worthy of consideration prior to building an organisational career and development framework. This present study attests that all mentioned factors in this paragraph are accurate as some of the highlighted factors emerged in the study findings.

It is recalled that Chapter 2 asserted that this study builds on existing models of organisational career systems in literature. The present study continues the works of Baruch (1999); Baruch and Peiperl (2000); Baruch (2003); Baruch (2004b) and a more recent model of Krishnan and Maheshwari (2010). OCM practices were first identified in Baruch's (1999) study. These practices were then integrated to build a two-dimensional model of OCM practices in Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) study. This model of career system depicts the levels of sophistication and involvement of OCM practices that are currently used in organisations (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). However, this model is highly criticized because it only provides clusters of OCM practices according to levels of sophistication and involvement; and does not provide a framework

that shows how they can be integrated into an organisation's HRM processes and used to an organisation's advantage. Baruch (2003) therefore addressed these limitations and added four dimensions to make a normative six-dimensional model of career system. The dimensions added were: strategic orientation, developmental focus, degree to which practice is relevant to organisational decision-making issues and innovative approach (Baruch, 2003). With these additional dimensions, the model became more comprehensive and a detailed explanation of how OCM practices can be used to the advantage of an organisation was provided. The dimensions also reflect factors to be considered when building an organisational career system. Baruch's (2004b) career active system triad (CAST) model looked beyond OCM practices and affirmed that a career system should explore careers from both the individual and organisation perspectives. The model emphasizes that a career model should match individual and organisational needs and expectations (Baruch, 2004b, 2006). The CAST model presents three levels of a career system. The model of career system reflects that there has to be a match of individuals A's (aspirations, attitudes and actions) with organisation's P's (philosophy (strategy), policies and practices). Building on these theoretical constructs, Krishnan and Maheshwari (2010) developed a more recent model of a career system called three-factor model of career systems. The model considers three major dimensions of labour market orientation (openness of a career system to internal or external recruitment of people for managerial positions), employee advancement orientation (career progression of employees within the organisation) and institutionalized socialization (Krishnan and Maheshwari, 2010). While building these models,

the academic scholars emphasized that a career system cannot be developed in isolation but should be developed in line with business objectives, strategy and needs (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003; Baruch, 2004; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2010). The following summarize the crucial points identified during the review of literature on career and development systems in this section:

1. A career system consists of flow of employees through an organisation (entry, development and exit of employees)
2. A career system comprises of interrelated HR practices and policies
3. A career system should meet the needs of both the individual and organisation
4. Vital organisational characteristics such as size, strategy, culture, technological environment, policies should be considered before developing an organisational career system
5. A career system should be developed in alignment with business objectives and needs

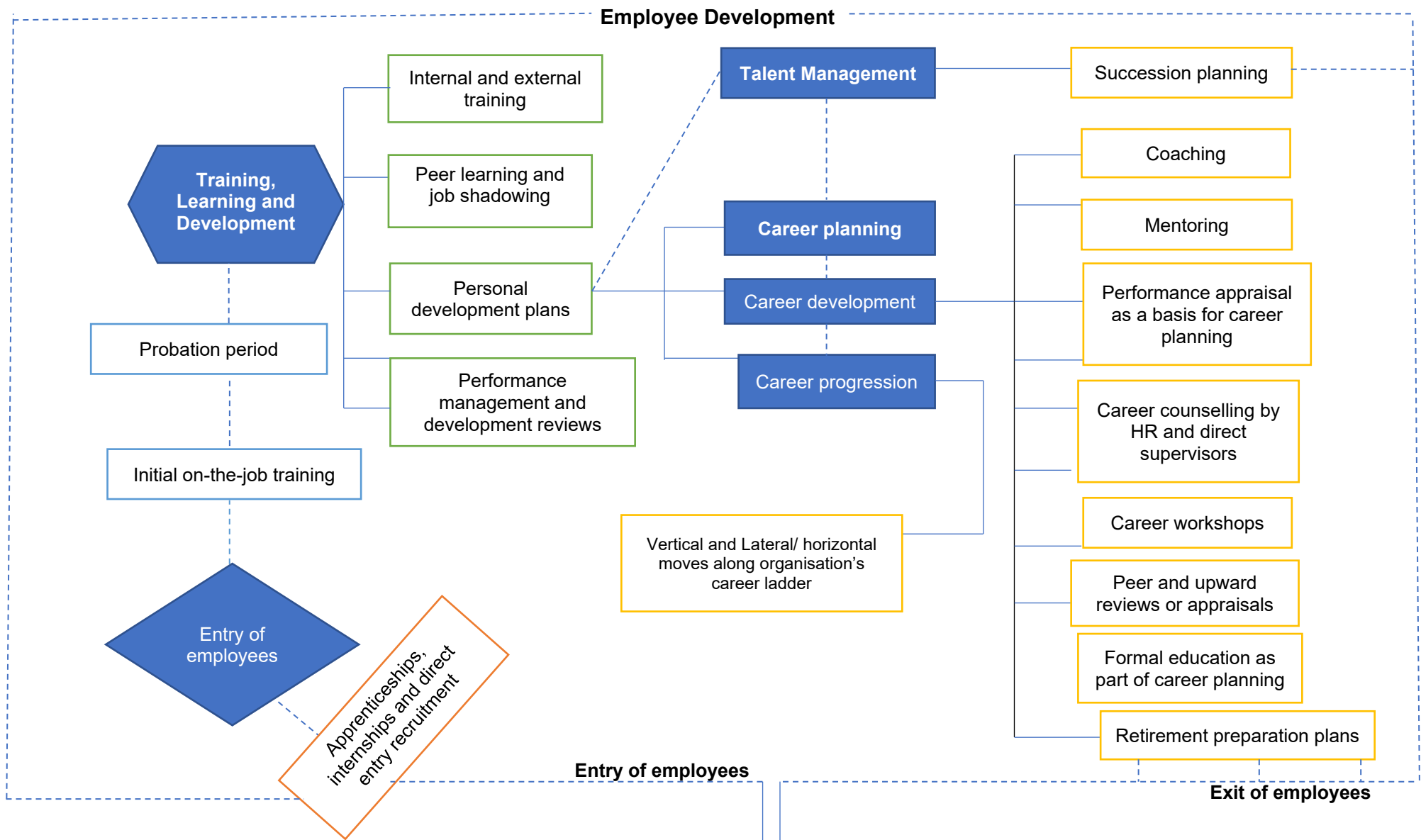
The present study therefore takes cognisance of the above points identified from literature. In addition, the researcher considers results from this study while building its proposed framework. It should be noted that the models of organisational career system existing in literature are based on data from large organisations (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003; Baruch, 2004b; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2010). Since the organisational career theorists perceive that organisational career management might not exist in small businesses (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003, 2006, Baruch & Budhwar,

2006). This study therefore makes a huge contribution to the career literature and body of knowledge by developing a career framework for MSMEs. The study considers the peculiarities of MSMEs (size, flat organisational structure) and builds a career framework based on the empirics of the study. Based on the review of literature and empirics of the study, the following were the final factors considered prior to developing the career and development framework:

1. Organisational structure (flat organisational structure and horizontal career path)
2. Organisational size (takes into consideration the small size of the MSMEs)
3. Major drivers of productivity (training and development through peer learning, job shadowing, performance management and performance development reviews)
4. Use of personal development plans for career planning, career development and career progression
5. Commonly engaged career development programs (coaching, training, performance appraisal as a basis for career planning, career counselling by direct supervisor and HR department, lateral moves and internal job postings). Though succession planning and retirement preparation programs were the least engaged OCM practices; this framework includes them because they are vital HR practices that ensure the longevity of a business and plans for the exit of employees from an organisation respectively.
6. Challenges hindering the effective engagement of OCM practices in MSMEs (time, money, unavailability of employees to participate in career

development) and challenges faced by MSMEs (inability to recruit people with the right skills, insufficient product knowledge).

The model was unable to consider factors such as organisational culture, strategy, business objectives and technological environment because they are unique to each organisation. This framework therefore presents, and links management practices currently used in MSMEs. Based on the limitation highlighted earlier, the study therefore asserts that this career and development framework serves as a guide to MSMEs and should be used in alignment with their unique organisational culture, strategy, objectives and needs (individual and organisational needs). Figure 28 presents the proposed conceptual career and development framework.



A career system consists of interrelated human resource policies, actions and practices which manages the flow of employees in, through and out of an organisation over time (Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2011; Sonnenfield & Peiperl, 1988). Therefore, as shown in Figure 27, the proposed career and development framework consist of the entry, development and exit of employees from an organisation. The three components of the career and development framework are discussed below.

Entry of employees: Based on the study findings, employees can enter an organisation through direct entry recruitment, apprenticeships and internships. After recruitment, employees are expected to undergo initial on-the-job training to learn the necessary job skills required for their new position.

Development of employees: Thereafter, employees who pass the probation period are engaged in training, learning and development activities. According to the training programs found to exist in this study, employees can be engaged in both internal (in-house training, audio-visual training and apprenticeships) and external training programs (sending employees for conferences, seminars and exhibitions, acquiring professional certifications and educational qualifications, engaging employees in training required by law). Also, employees can learn on the job through peer learning, job shadowing, informal transfer of knowledge and organised learning activities. Employees can be developed with the use of personal development plans and their performance can be monitored through performance management and

performance development reviews. Thus, engaging employees in training, learning and development is required for a motivated, highly skilled and productive workforce.

Through personal development plans, high performing employees or employees with high potential can be identified. Thus, leading to talent management. Managers can engage employees simultaneously in both talent management and organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression). A personal development plan is also linked directly to the organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progress) process. Career development programs found to exist in MSMEs include coaching, mentoring, career counselling and career workshops amongst others. Therefore, based on a company's strategy, employee and organisation's needs, managers can engage employees in relevant career development programs. Depending on the needs of an organisation and availability of promotional opportunities within an organisation, employees can either progress vertically or horizontally on the organisation's career ladder.

Exit of employees: Depending on the values of an organisation, managers can engage employees in succession planning and retirement preparation programs. Finally, depending on circumstances distinctive to employees, employees can choose to either leave or stay in an organisation.

5.9 Chapter Summary

The discussion chapter began with outlining the research question and objectives which served as a guide as to how the study findings answered the research objectives. The study findings were synthesized with existing literature; and interpretations and conclusions were deduced from them. Firstly, the presence of a career system was explored in the MSMEs. The study findings established that career systems exist in MSMEs though not present and formalized in all businesses. This finding contradicts Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) statement that organisational career system might not exist in small businesses. On average, the career systems were fairly efficient and the MSMEs concurred that their career systems needed improvement. The findings revealed that industry sector or nature of business was an impact factor that determined the presence of a career system in an organisation. This finding is uncommon in the career literature, and it was highlighted as this study's first contribution to the body of knowledge. Also, company size determined the presence of a career system, but age was not significant. The MSMEs engaged in HRM practices and HRM was formalized in the medium-sized organisations. Majority of the micro and small businesses outsourced their HR activities and made use of external HR consultants. Vital HR practices such as selection and recruitment; training and development; performance management; performance appraisals; performance development appraisals and career development were found to exist in the MSMEs. In addition, some businesses had HR policies around diversity and inclusion, and promotion of equality. The managers ensured that their HR policies, procedures and handbooks complied with the government regulations. The perception of

employees' productivity was explored. Perceived employee productivity included: meeting business KPIs, completing required tasks on time, good quality service, customer satisfaction and others. The managers agreed that increase in employee productivity eventually leads to increase in business profitability. Drivers of productivity in MSMEs were also explored. A number of factors were identified as drivers. The drivers of productivity were grouped into four tiers according to their importance. The primary drivers of productivity identified were training and development, employee engagement, employees feeling valued, opportunities for career progression, good working environment and positive organisational culture. External factors such as government policies and labour market were not identified

There was a consensus among the MSMEs that career planning is a joint responsibility between the employee and the organisations. Furthermore, the managers asserted that employees who are not enthusiastic about upward career progression exist. And that such employees are rather contented with organisational support, job security, positive work environment and organisational culture. Also, it was pointed out that employees must be willing to engage in career planning. Through personal development plans, managers were able to identify talents and commence career planning and development of employees. Training, learning and development emerged as the most widely used practices in the MSMEs. The present study reports that development of employees was conducted through personal development plans, performance development reviews, peer learning, job shadowing and training. The most engaged career development or organisational career

management programs were coaching, mentoring and performance appraisals as a basis for career planning. These were followed by career counselling, career workshops, peer appraisals and job postings. The least engaged practices were succession planning and retirement programs. Clear and well-defined career paths were present in the MSMEs. In addition, both vertical and horizontal career paths were found to exist in MSMEs. However, horizontal career paths were predominant because of small business size, flat organisational structure and limited promotional opportunities. The managers emphasized that career paths become clearer when business grows, and new departments emerge. Major factors that improve opportunities for career progression are: good performance and skills, product knowledge and vacancies within the business. Personal development plans emerged as an activity common to career planning, career development and career progression.

The impact of organisational career management on motivation, employee retention and productivity were explored. Evidence from the study findings show that organisational career management as an entity did not impact productivity strongly. However, career development and career progression have a direct impact and association with increased employee productivity. Career planning does not directly impact productivity; however, it enhances employee engagement which leads to increased productivity. Employee engagement through regular communication, feedback and team meetings greatly enhanced motivation. Other factors that improved motivation were opportunities for career progression; recognition rewards and reassurance;

positive organisational culture; appraisals and performance reviews; transparency with business goals and career path; career development and progression opportunities; and decent pay. Some MSMEs asserted that they had high levels of employee retention and they identified that employees feeling valued and invested in are the major approaches to retaining skilled staff. The participants also pointed that when employees are happy in their jobs, they stay longer. Other identified approaches to retaining talents are through career development, transparency with career progression opportunities, employee engagement and others. The MSMEs added that employees feeling that there is no career progression and lack of employee engagement might lead to staff turnover.

The greatest challenge impending the adoption of OCM practices is insufficient time. Other leading factors are inadequate finance, lack of formalized career system, unavailability of staff and expertise to carry out training. The greatest challenge faced by North East England MSMEs is inability to recruit workers with the right set of skills. This challenge also affects productivity, and this challenge can be highlighted as the major challenge hindering the high rate of productivity in North East England MSMEs. Other challenges include inability of employees to keep up with job description or less productive employees, financial loss, inability to retain skilled employees.

Finally, based on the empirics of the study, a conceptual framework of a career and development system was developed. Prior to building the framework, several factors obtained from the review of literature and empirics of the study

were considered. The factors were: peculiarities of MSMEs (small size and flat organisational structure), primary drivers of productivity, existing career development programs in the MSMEs and challenges faced by the MSMEs. This framework captures current management practices in MSMEs and accommodates business expansion and growth. The career and development framework could not account for characteristics that are specific to organisations (organisational culture, business strategy, objectives and needs). The discussion chapter closes by emphasizing that this framework can be used to an organisation's advantage when aligned with its unique organisational culture, business strategy, objectives and needs. The next chapter expatiates on this study's contribution to theory and practice, suggest recommendations for future research, highlights the limitations of the study and finally concludes this doctoral thesis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this doctoral research by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research aim and objectives. Also, the study's major contributions to academic body of knowledge and its practical implications are discussed. This chapter reviews the strengths and limitations of the study. And also makes recommendations for future research. Finally, the thesis closes with the researcher's personal reflection on conducting the research and PhD journey.

6.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The research question and central aim of this research study was to explore organisational career management in North East England MSMEs and its impact on productivity from the perception of managers. To address the research question and aim, five objectives were developed to be achieved. Before the five research objectives are addressed, it is important to provide a brief summary of how the literature review and methodology chapters were achieved.

Literature Review Chapter: *To critically review academic and professional literature on organisational career management and productivity; explore research gaps and identify theoretical constructs.*

A review of entrepreneurship and small business, strategic human resource management, organisational career management and productivity streams of literature were conducted. The principal theme of organisational career

management was reviewed in terms of career planning, career development and career progression. Also, existing theories of career development and models of organisational career systems were critically reviewed. From the review of literature, the theoretical constructs of Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Maheshwari (2010) which underpins this research were established. Finally, the gaps in literature revealed that there are insufficient studies on organisational career management in MSMEs. And that the models of organisational career systems existing in literature might not be entirely applicable to MSMEs because the models were developed based on organisational characteristics pertaining to large organisations.

Methodology Chapter: To design and adopt an appropriate research methodology required to achieve the primary research aim.

An appropriate research methodology was designed to answer the research question and achieve the primary research aim. An interpretivist philosophical position was assumed leading to the choice of a qualitative research methodology. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to recruit research participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 line and senior managers of different MSMEs industries in North East England. Data generated from the interview transcripts were subject to template analysis. Reliability and validity of the methodology approach were conducted to increase rigour of data analysis and interpretation of study findings.

A summary of how the research objectives is provided as The research objectives were achieved as follows:

RO1: To explore the presence and efficiency of organisational career systems in MSMEs.

This research objective was achieved, and it led to the following insights:

The third objective aimed to investigate the existence and functionality of organisational career systems in MSMEs. This objective was driven by the proposition that human resource management might not be present in MSMEs let alone organisational career management (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). The research findings revealed that organisational career systems exist in MSMEs as opposed to the argument in literature that they might not be present. Though career systems were present in some organisations, majority of the businesses especially the micro businesses did not have a formal career system. Rather than having structured career systems, the MSMEs focused on training, learning and development. The study findings further revealed that training activities consist of internal training programs (peer-to-peer training, audio-visual trainings and apprenticeships) and external training programs (conferences, exhibitions, professional courses and training required by law). Learning was exhibited as peer learning, job shadowing, informal knowledge sharing, on the job learning and organised learning activities. And employee development and performance were monitored through personal development plans, performance management and personal development reviews. Size and industry sector were the two major factors which determined the presence of a career system. The organisations with career systems asserted that their systems are yet to be fully efficient and would still need improvement.

RO2: *To explore the organisation's perception of employee productivity.*

This research objective was achieved, and it led to the following insights:

Prior to exploring the impact of organisational career management on productivity, it was paramount to seek and gain in-depth understanding of the organisation's perception of employee productivity. Employee productivity was perceived and measured differently across the organisations because of the differences in industry sectors. The central perceptions of employee productivity were employees working efficiently with resources, employees hitting targets and deadlines on time, positive feedbacks from clients, high-quality customer service and eventual increase in profitability of businesses. The understanding of the perception of employee productivity provided deeper insight into the study of the impact of organisational career management on productivity.

RO3: *To explore the impact of career planning, career development and career progression on productivity.*

This research objective was achieved and led to the following insights:

Organisational career management was explored in three dimensions: career planning, career development and career progression. The findings of the study reveal that career development and opportunities for career progression improve employee productivity, but career planning does not directly impact productivity. However, career planning enhances motivation and employee engagement which eventually improve employee productivity. Furthermore, the study explored the impact of organisational career management on motivation and employee retention. Evidence from the research findings show

that organisational career management was not a leading factor to improved motivation and employee retention. The key factors to increased employee motivation were employee engagement through feedbacks, regular communication and team meetings; and investing in staff. Employees feeling valued and job satisfaction (employees happy in their jobs) were highlighted as major keys to maintaining and improving employee retention. Training and development emerged as the most widely used practices and were among the primary drivers of productivity. Other primary drivers of productivity were employee engagement; career development and opportunities for career progression; positive organisational culture and recruitment and retention of skilled workforce.

RO4: To explore the perceived barriers hindering MSMEs from engaging in organisational career management practices.

This research objective was achieved and led to the following insights:

The primary barrier hindering MSMEs from engaging in organisational career management practices was insufficient time, and this was followed by financial constraints. Other challenges were absence of a formalised career system, employees leaving after being trained or invested in and not placing importance on organisational career management. In addition, the challenges faced by North East England MSMEs were explored. From the research findings, the persistent and greatest challenge faced by MSMEs in the North East England is difficulty in recruiting people with the right set of skills and expertise. Other major challenges are inability of employees to keep with job

description and business growth; low revenue and profitability; and insufficient opportunities for career progression.

RO5: To develop a conceptual organisational career framework based on the empirics of the study.

This research objective was achieved and led to the following insights:

Based on the empirics of the study coupled with insights gained from review of literature, a conceptual framework of organisational career and development system for MSMEs was developed. This proposed framework is further discussed in section 6.3.

Thus, by achieving the above research objectives, the research question was answered, and the central purpose and aim of this research study was met.

6.3 Contributions of Study to Body of Knowledge

This study makes four major contributions to knowledge and these contributions are discussed below.

Firstly, this research contributes to the knowledge of organisational career management in MSMEs. The review of the career literature revealed that large organisations are often the focus of academic researchers (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Bagdadli & Gianecchini 2018; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Guo et al., 2019; Lyria, et al., 2017; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Salau, 2022) and there is limited research on

organisational career management in MSMEs. Due to this limited knowledge, the current state of organisational career management in MSMEs is unclear, practitioners struggle with career-related challenges and academic researchers have limited literature on this subject area. Thus, undertaking this research makes a vital contribution to the body of knowledge as this study presents an in-depth insight on the existing mode of operation of organisational career management in MSMEs. Furthermore, the types of OCM practices engaged by MSMEs and challenges hindering the adoption of OCM practices were revealed in the study. Additionally, this study provides recommendations (section 6.4.1) for practitioners based on the empirics of the study.

Secondly, this research is a great addition to knowledge as it addresses the long-standing productivity challenge faced by the North East England MSMEs. Since the economic downturn in 2008, the North East England has suffered low productivity levels compared to other regions in the UK (ONS, 2018). Although, research has been conducted on productivity in UK SMEs (Maioli et al., 2020; Prowle et al., 2017) and productivity in North UK SMEs (Round et al., 2019), there are insufficient productivity studies focusing on the North East England region. This doctoral research study fills this knowledge gap as it provides knowledge on the cause of the long-standing productivity challenge in North East England MSMEs (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). Also, based on the drivers of productivity and challenges hindering productivity levels identified in the study findings, a conceptual productivity framework was developed.

The third major contribution of this research to the body of knowledge is the development of the conceptual framework of organisational career and development system useful for MSMEs. This research continues the works of Baudouin (2010) and Goyer (2010) who explored career development in SMEs; builds on the theoretical constructs of Baruch and Peiperl (2000), Baruch (2003), Baruch (2004b) and Krishnan and Maheshwari (2010) and extends the application of their career system models to MSMEs. Drawing from the research findings, the framework was developed based on the current management and career development practices existing in MSMEs. The framework is unique as it considers the peculiar organisational characteristics of MSMEs (small size, flat organisational structure, horizontal career path) and includes the major drivers of productivity and commonly engaged career development programs found to exist in the studied MSMEs. Hence, this framework can serve as a theoretical construct for future research aiming to explore organisational careers in UK MSMEs and beyond.

The last major theoretical contribution of this research is the development of a framework capturing major drivers of productivity in MSMEs. The productivity puzzle has been a major concern to the UK economy since the 2008 financial crisis (Grail, 2019; Round et al., 2019) especially in the North East England region where there is a huge productivity gap compared to the national average and other regions in the UK (ONS, 2018c; Round et al., 2019). Despite the persistent productivity gap challenge in the North East England, there is insufficient research addressing this issue. This study therefore builds on previous research that have explored productivity in North of England and

UK SMEs (Maioli et al., 2020; Prowle et al., 2017; Rounds et al., 2019) and provides a comprehensive framework of major management practices that improves productivity. This framework groups the drivers of productivity into three tiers according to level of importance based on the research findings. The productivity framework lays a solid foundation for future research aiming to study productivity in SMEs especially in North East England. The framework can also be extended to future research aiming to explore productivity in large organisations and may serve as a theoretical construct.

6.4 Contribution of Study to Practitioners and Public Policy

In addition to the contribution of this research to academic body of knowledge, this research is highly beneficial to practitioners and policy making. Firstly, this study's framework of organisational career and development system can serve as a guide to senior managers (HR managers, talent managers, owner-managers, CEOs/MDs) in MSMEs who are unaware of how to structure a career system. With this guide, managers are well-informed of the career development practices existing in MSMEs that could be engaged in. Therefore, the career and development framework can be aligned with each organisation's culture, business strategy, objectives and needs to yield maximum results. Secondly, the productivity framework is of great importance and a useful tool to businesses aiming to improve their productivity. Specifically, this productivity framework is beneficial to MSMEs in North East England as they struggle with low productivity levels. With managers in North East England MSMEs having access to this productivity framework, they

would be informed of the major drivers of productivity and make significant changes as required in their organisations. Evidence from literature reveal that effective management practices improve firm performance and employee productivity irrespective of firm-specific characteristics (Bloom & Reenen, 2006; Gosnell et al., 2019; Siebers et al., 2008). Building on this notion, the productivity framework developed in this study might be relevant to large organisations as the framework constitutes management practices and strategies proven to improve productivity of employees in North East England MSMEs.

Furthermore, this research is beneficial to organisations struggling with low employee motivation and retention rate. The study findings pertaining to motivation and employee retention reveal strategies that enhances motivation and improves employee retention. Thus, organisations struggling with employee motivation and retention can incorporate these strategies into their business process and strategy in order to ensure retention of motivated and highly skilled employees. Also, the research findings pertaining to HR practices and policies in MSMEs can help inform newly established MSMEs of the HR practices and policies to incorporate.

Based on the study findings, this study acknowledges that MSMEs are faced with the challenges of flat organisational structure, limited promotional opportunities and insufficient time and money to engage in career development. Thus, this research is also directed at positively changing the perceptions of MSMEs managers about organisational career management.

With MSMEs managers having access to this type of research, their confidence in handling OCM is improved and they would be encouraged to engage more in OCM practices.

The above contributions were evident during data collection. During data collection, some managers affirmed that participating in the research has motivated them to effect positive changes regarding career development in their organisations.

Finally, this research is highly beneficial to SME policy making as it presents the current state of management operations in MSMEs, and the challenges they struggle with. Hence with this information, government policy makers can design favourable economic policies (supply-side policy, government price control policy, trade policy) for MSMEs. And also, set up relevant public bodies and schemes to support MSMEs growth and productivity.

6.4.1 Recommendations for Practioners

Based on the review of literature, insight gained from conducting this study and the general small size constraint faced by MSMEs , the researcher makes the following recommendations for practioners:

- ❖ **Challenges regarding difficulty in recruiting people with right set of skills:** The researcher recommends that MSMEs recruit people with close or equivalent skill sets and engage in training and development.
- ❖ The researcher recommends that MSMEs have a formal organisational career and development framework in place though it might not be fully efficient because of small size. However, as the business grows, it becomes more efficient. The career framework also helps to define a clear career path which is useful for career progression.
- ❖ The researcher recommends that managers actively engage in career planning with employees. By engaging in career planning activities (performance appraisal as a basis for career planning and career counselling with employees), managers are aware of the needs and career aspirations of their employees. With this information, managers can align employees needs with organisation's needs and develop an efficient organisational career and development framework which satisfies both needs.
- ❖ The researcher recommends that MSMEs have HR policies that promote equality, diversity and employee wellbeing which complies with government regulations. For micro and small businesses struggling with

handling HRM, it is recommended that HR related issues are outsourced to professional HR consultants.

- ❖ **Challenges regarding insufficient time and money for career development:** The researcher recommends MSMEs plan ahead and incorporate career development activities into day-to-day activities for effective time management. And also, plan ahead and engage in training and career development when needed to reduce financial constraints.
- ❖ For improved employee motivation, retention and productivity, the researcher recommends that organisations invest in employees and make them feel valued; create a friendly and positive organisational culture; and engage employees through feedbacks, regular communication and team meetings.
- ❖ Finally, the researcher recommends that MSMEs engage more in training, learning and development as they emerged as the most widely used HR practices and were the major drivers of productivity in MSMEs.

6.5 Strengths of the Study

This study is multidisciplinary as it combines the MSMEs, HRM, career, and productivity research streams. As the research contributes to these four streams of literature, it is highly valuable and can be published in relevant career development, human resource management, productivity and SMEs academic journals.

Furthermore, in-depth insight of OCM was gained by exploring OCM in MSMEs across different industries. Rather than gaining insight about organisational career management from a single industry, exploring OCM from the perceptions of managers in different industries provided a richer, varied and in-depth insight to the OCM phenomenon. In addition, the study findings revealed that some OCM practices were common to certain industry. For example, the accounting firms engaged more in formal education and professional development. Therefore, this finding is useful as newly established MSMEs are aware of the type of OCM practices relevant to their industry.

Lastly, this study makes novel contributions to both theory and practice by developing an organisational career and development framework suited for MSMEs. In addition, the study developed a productivity framework which captures major drivers of productivity in MSMEs. This productivity framework is not limited in its applicability to MSMEs, but its applicability can be extended to large organisations and any type of business establishments.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

Every research is subject to limitations and limitations should be acknowledged to ensure the integrity of the research (Nakpodia, 2015).

Therefore, this research acknowledges the following limitations:

The first limitation relates to the research methodology. Whilst a qualitative methodology allows for in-depth exploration of the phenomenon being studied and collection of data from participants in their natural settings (Daniel, 2016); qualitative methodology did not give room for the use of numbers and figures to simplify and interpret research findings (Daniel, 2016). Rather, explanations and conclusions were drawn based on the researcher's interpretations of the study findings (Daniel, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

The second limitation was exploring organisational career management from only the perception of managers and not including employees. Exploring both perceptions would have provided a balanced perspective on the impact of organisational career management on productivity. Insight from employees about the career development activities they are engaged in and the impact on their productivity would have further enriched the study. Nevertheless, there is a balance in the career literature regarding studies which have explored organisational careers from only the perception of managers (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Lewis & Arnold, 2012; Lyria et al., 2014), only the perception of employees (Ikechukwu et al., 2016, Kakui & Gachunga, 2016; Mark & Nzulwa, 2018;

Patrick & Kumar, 2011) and both the perceptions of managers and employees (Katsuro et al., 2015; Yahya & Meruda, 2004).

The last limitation relates to the proposed conceptual framework of organisational career and development. As discussed in Chapter 5, the researcher acknowledges that the framework might not be suitable for all MSMEs because it could not account for specific organisational characteristics (usage of organisational career management practices, organisational culture, business strategy, objectives and needs). This limitation is similar to the drawbacks of the existing models of career systems in literature (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Baruch, 2003; Krishnan & Maheshwari, 2010). As no career framework can be suitable for all MSMEs, it is therefore advised that MSMEs use the proposed conceptual framework as a guide and align it to their unique organisational culture, business strategy, objectives and needs.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

This research explored the impact of organisational career management on productivity in North East England MSMEs using a qualitative methodology approach. Based on the study findings, limitations and insights gained from the research, this research recommends the following:

Rather than focusing on one geographical region, future research can build on this study and conduct a cross-regional comparative study among MSMEs thriving in highly productive regions in the UK and North East England MSMEs.

For example, comparative research can be conducted between the most productive region in the UK (London) and the North East England. Such studies can explore if organisational career management impacts productivity in London MSMEs and compare the findings with this research. The studies can also explore the major drivers of productivity in London MSMEs and discuss how MSMEs in the North East England can engage in such practices in order to boost their productivity levels. Moreover, this research can serve as a foundation for future research aiming to study productivity in North East England MSMEs. The study findings reveals that recruitment of people with the right set of skills are among the core drivers of productivity in MSMEs. Since, North East England MSMEs are faced with persistent difficulties in recruiting skilled workers, this study recommends that future research explore how MSMEs in the North East England can break the productivity gap despite this on-going challenge.

This research lays a good foundation for career studies aiming to use qualitative methodology. As there is lack of career studies using solely qualitative methodology in literature, it is recommended that future career studies employ solely qualitative methodology for their research. Conversely, it is also recommended that future career research make use of mixed methods approach. The mixed methods approach will provide a richer insight as data would be collected and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Finally, it is recommended that future career research explore organisational careers from the perceptions of both

managers and employees as this will provide a balanced view of organisational careers.

6.8 Summary of Thesis

This doctoral thesis commenced with an introduction chapter which presented the background to the research study, problem statement, justifications for carrying out the research and the potential contributions of the study. Chapter 2 reviewed the main streams of literature underpinning this research. Also, the theoretical frameworks which underpins this doctoral study were discussed extensively. From the review of literature, the study established it built on Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) two-dimensional model of OCM practices, Baruch's (2004b) Career Active System Triad (CAST) model and Krishnan and Mahehwari's (2011) three-dimensional organisational career system. Insights from these existing models of organisational career systems were useful for the development of this study's conceptual career framework. Chapter 3 presented the methodological approach employed to carry out this research. The researcher's philosophical positions, methods of data collection, data analysis procedures, reliability and validity strategies were discussed extensively. In chapter 4, the study findings were presented and emerging themes relevant to the research question and objectives were discussed. Chapter 5 discussed the study findings in relation with existing literature. And from this discussion, contributions to the existing literature were established. This chapter concludes this thesis by summarising the key research findings,

highlighting the study's major contributions to theory and practice and making recommendations for both practioners and future research.

6.8 Personal Reflection

As this doctoral thesis comes to an end, the researcher deems it appropriate to conclude this thesis by reflecting on the research journey. The researcher's experience, personal development and lessons learnt during the course of the research are highlighted. The personal reflection is written in first person tense.

I embarked on this PhD journey for the primary purpose of personal career development and better career progression opportunities. As an individual with backgrounds in separate academic disciplines (Agricultural Economics and Business Analysis and Consultancy), the first major milestone I achieved as a researcher was finding clarity regarding the academic field, I wanted to specialize in. Initially, I was focused on the performance management stream of research. However, feedback from my first annual progression recommended that I narrow down the scope of my study as the performance management stream of research is broad. Hence, I had to engage in critical thinking and personal evaluation to choose my desired field of specialization. At the end of my personal evaluation and based on my past research experience, I realised that I am keen on human resource management and strategy. Knowing the academic discipline, I wanted to major in was a huge relief, but I was not sure of the specific field in HRM to research on. On the side, I worked part time in a North East England SME. While I worked in the organisation, the organisation struggled with high absence levels, low employee retention and low employee productivity rates. While the employees

complained about limited career progression opportunities, poor management and lack of positive organisational culture. Thus, the challenges faced by both the business and employees instigated the motivation to explore organisational career management in SMEs. In addition, I was motivated to explore the impact of organisational career management on employee motivation, retention and productivity. I was thankful that this research interest aligned with my interest in the HRM discipline. Hence with this insight, I had a sense of direction and was able to craft a research topic. As Noe (1996) suggested that individual career management begins with individuals gathering information about their values, skills, strengths and weaknesses. Thus, the process of finding clarity regarding my desired research field was a career planning process for me as I was able to gather information about my values, skills, interests, strengths and weaknesses.

Following the clarification of my research topic, I began in-depth research on the subject area as the research field was unfamiliar. The learning process was stress-free as HRM research is easy to understand. However, it took time to understand the theoretical constructs in the career research. During the course of my research, I engaged in personal and professional development. I attended several postgraduate development seminars organised by Northumbria University Library and the Faculty of Business and Law. The seminar topics included preparing for a literature review, research philosophies and paradigms, career planning for postgraduate researchers, careers in academia, preparing for viva amongst others. I participated and presented at Doctoral, and Faculty Research Conferences hosted by

Northumbria University. I was present at an external research conference hosted by Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE). Although, I could not present at the ISBE conference, I submitted an abstract for review. I submitted a paper for peer review ahead of a conference hosted by British Academy of Management (BAM). In addition, I peer reviewed two papers submitted into the HRM track for the BAM conference. While engaging in all these development activities, the research study was critiqued by external reviewers. Using the constructive criticisms to my advantage, I worked on the weaknesses identified and produced more rigorous research. Engaging in these activities were beneficial to my personal and professional development as a researcher.

During the course of my research, my research topic was revised severally as I gained deeper understanding of the organisational career management phenomenon. Initially, my research topic was focused on service SMEs. The old research topic was "Career Management and Employee Productivity in Service SMEs: North East England" However, the study findings revealed that the number of micro and small businesses that participated in the research were the same. Also, data was collected from businesses in different industries. Hence, with further literature review and deeper insight into the research. The research topic was modified to accommodate these new findings.

In retrospect, I am grateful I embarked on this PhD journey. Compared to when I began this research, my present knowledge and understanding of the HRM

and career research has improved tremendously. Hence, I am more confident when I write and speak as a HRM and career scholar. Moreover, my skill set improved during the course of my research. I acquired new qualitative analytical skills and my academic writing style and critical thinking skills were improved upon. Personally, I have benefited greatly from conducting this research. Insights gained from this career research are useful and would be applied to my personal career planning and development. Furthermore, the major life lessons I learnt during the course of the research were efficient time management, resilience, perseverance, persistence, diligence, faith and trust in God, and more importantly, patience.

On a final note, I strongly believe this research is valuable to MSMEs as it addresses the topic of organisational career management (career planning, career development and career progression) which managers in MSMEs are reluctant to discuss about. Having access to this research would positively change the perceptions of MSMEs managers about organisational career management and increase their confidence regarding handling career issues in the organisations. Also, this research is vital to MSMEs in the North East England as it addresses the productivity gap in the region. Having access to this research would inform managers of the key drivers of productivity existing in MSMEs. Thus, I would send a report of this research to the 27 MSMEs managers who participated in this research. This report serves as a 'thank you' gesture for their participation in my research. And with this information, MSMEs managers can incorporate these management practices into their business operations for improved productivity levels. This research ultimately

impacts UK productivity as increase in productivity in the North East England would lead to an overall increase in UK productivity. I strongly believe this research would be of great benefit to my fellow researchers and practioners. Therefore, I plan on bringing these research findings into the public domain. As an 'early researcher', my medium-term goal is to submit papers for publication to the relevant career development, human resource management, productivity and SMEs academic journals.

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7. Appendix

Appendix 1: Participant Invitation Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this email meets you well. My name is Boluwarin Kolawole, I am a PhD researcher at Newcastle Business School in Northumbria University. My research project is titled 'Career Management and Employee Productivity in Service SMEs: North East England'. This project aims at the study of career management of employees/human resources and how this impacts productivity in businesses. Although quite a number of SMEs are thriving in the North East, there are opportunities to improve the productivity output of our local service sector which stands at 15% below the rest of the UK.

We would very much like your company to be part of the study and we hope you will accept our invitation to act as a participant. We are aiming to contact a suitable number of service SMEs in the North East from mid-September to December this year. We aim to interview managers/HR managers for 25-30 minutes. The interview could be conducted via telephone call, Skype or at the business location. We were able to find your email address on FAME database which is a database of companies in the UK and Ireland. We will obviously guarantee confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with the Northumbria University research ethics policy.

We very much value your contribution this valuable study. Upon completion of the study, we aim to report our findings to the study participants, the study report should offer a valuable management insight into employee productivity in service SMEs located in the North East.

We look forward to hearing from you about your preferred date and time to conduct the interview. Would be grateful if you could please reply to my email.

Appendix 2: Research Questionnaire



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Questionnaire on Career Management and Employee Productivity in Service SMEs: North East England

Dear Respondent, thank you for taking time to respond to this questionnaire. Your responses to the questions below will help to contribute to a study that seeks to explore the impact of career management on employee productivity in service small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with the Northumbria University research ethics regulations is guaranteed. Audio recording will be taken during interview which will be retained anonymously on password-protected computer/s and not stored beyond the end of the research. Interview will last for 25-30 minutes. Thank you for your participation.

Contact: Boluwarin Kolawole (boluwarin.kolawole@northumbria.ac.uk)

SECTION A: RESPONDENT AND ORGANISATION PROFILE

Name of Organisation:	Department:
Position/Job title:	
Type of service provided by organisation:	Year of organisation establishment:
Number of employees: <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-100 <input type="checkbox"/> 101-250 <input type="checkbox"/> Over 250	
Annual turnover: <input type="checkbox"/> Less than £5m <input type="checkbox"/> £6.5m - £25m <input type="checkbox"/> Over £25m	

SECTION B: CAREER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

This section explores the influence of career management (career planning, career development, career policies and career progression) on employee

productivity. The questions are asked to identify the individual effect of each career management practices on employee productivity

1. How does the career management framework/policy in this organisation operate and how effective is the career framework?
2. Who do you think is responsible for career planning? Is it a joint effort between the employer and employee?
3. What career management practices are in place in your company? (a) training (b) mentoring (c) coaching (d) formal education as part of career development (e) performance appraisal as a basis for career planning (f) internal job rotation (g) career counselling (h) coaching (i) career workshops (j) retirement programs (k) others
4. Which career management practices are employed the most?
5. How are the employees engaged in career management practices?
6. How do career management policies/practices improve motivation, employee productivity and employee retention in the workplace?
7. How are employees given the opportunity to progress within the organisation?
8. What is the career pathway in this organisation?

SECTION C: EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

This section seeks to identify the organization's perception of employee productivity. As well as its impact on organizational performance.

9. What is the organization perception of employee productivity? (a) meeting targets (b) getting to work on time (c) good service quality (d) others
10. Do you think if employees are given more career opportunities, productivity levels will improve?
11. How does productivity lead to increase in overall organizational (financial + non-financial) performance of the company?

12. What other factors influence productivity of employees apart from career management practices?
13. What are the challenges hindering the company from engaging in career management practices?
14. What other human resource management practices does the company engage in apart from career management?
15. In general, do you think career planning, career development and career progression have an impact on employee productivity?

Appendix 3: Participant or Research Project Information Sheet

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Career Management and Employee Productivity in Service SMEs: A Case Study of North East England

You are invited to participate in the above research project about the role of career management in enhancing employee productivity. It is being conducted by:

Boluwarin Kolawole

PhD Suite, Room 417,

Newcastle Business School

Faculty of Business and Law,

City Campus East

Northumbria University

Email: boluwarin.kolawole@northumbria.ac.uk

This project is part of a PhD research at the Faculty of Business and Law of Northumbria University, and is supervised by Dr. Eustathios Sainidis (eustathios.sainidis@northumbria.ac.uk) and Professor Andrew Robson (andrew.robson@northumbria.ac.uk).

What is this Study about?

This study looks at the impact of career management on employee productivity. The main purpose of the research is to explore the relationship between career management practices and employee productivity. Also, to identify other existing human resource management practices in SMEs geared towards better employee performance. Challenges faced by SMEs in carrying out these management practices will be explored as well.

Why are you invited to participate?

We believe that this project will greatly benefit your valued organization, given that increase in employee productivity, overall organizational performance and firm growth is your top priority.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to help provide response (*through interview*) to a number of pre-defined questions relevant to the research subject. The interview is expected to last between 25 and 30 minutes.

The information you will provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and no third party will have access to it. The data you will provide will be used for research purposes only.

What if I change my mind during or after the study?

Taking part in this research is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your participation at any time without explanation or prejudice. You may also withdraw any unprocessed data from the study by contacting the researcher, Boluwarin Kolawole (*see contact details above*).

Results of this research

Results of this study will be used to produce a thesis that will be submitted to the Faculty of Business & Law and may be published on the website of Northumbria University, academic Journals, or presented at academic conferences (international, national or local). Upon request, a summary of the findings will be made available to your organization.

What if I have questions about this study?

This information sheet is for you to keep as a reference. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Boluwarin Kolawole.

If you have any complaints about the way the research project is being conducted you can raise them with the Principal Supervisor (Dr Eustathios Sainidis: eustathios.sainidis@northumbria.ac.uk).

The Researchers and the University would like to thank you for your contribution to this project.

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

RESEARCH ORGANISATION INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Faculty of Business and Law

University of Northumbria

Completion of this form is required whenever research is being undertaken by Business and Law staff or students within any organisation. This applies to research that is carried out on the premises, or is about an organisation, or members of that organisation or its customers, as specifically targeted as subjects of research.

Researcher's Name: **BOLUWARIN MARY KOLAWOLE**

Student ID Number: 17044079

Researcher's Statement:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled "Career Management and Employee Productivity in Service SMEs: East England". The study is being conducted by: Boluwarin Kolawole - PhD researcher.

This project is part of a PhD research programme at the Newcastle Business School, supervised by Dr. Eustathios Sainidis and Prof. Andrew Robson. The main objective of the research is to explore the relationship between career management practices and productivity of service employees in the North East England. This study will further explore existing human resource management practices employed by managers in SMEs geared towards improved employee productivity. It is envisioned that a conceptual framework based on the findings of the study will be generated which can serve as a guide to businesses for improved employee productivity.

Information received will be kept strictly confidential and solely for the objectives stated above. Results obtained may be reproduced and published in a variety of forms relating to the broad nature of this research. No part of the data will be used other than for research purposes without the prior knowledge and consent of the participant. Upon request, a summary of the findings will be made available to participant.

Participation in this research is voluntary and based on organizational informed consent. Respondents are free to withdraw from the project at any time. Respondents have the option of remaining anonymous

If you require further clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone via email at boluwarin.kolawole@northumbria.ac.uk Thank you.

Any organisation manager or representative who is empowered to give consent may do so here:

Name:

Position/Title:

Organisation Name:

Location:

Anonymity must be offered to the organisation if it does not wish to be identified in the research report. Confidentiality is more complex and cannot extend to the markers of student work or the reviewers of staff work but can apply to the published outcomes. If confidentiality is required, what form applies?

No confidentiality required

Masking of organisation name in research report


No publication of the research results without specific organisational consent

Other by agreement as specified by addendum

Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form can be signed via email if the accompanying email is attached with the signer's personal email address included. The form cannot be completed by phone, rather should be handled via post.

Appendix 5: Ethics Approval Form

Submission Ref	15800
Status	Approved
Submission Coordinator	
Name	<input type="text" value="boluwarin.kolawole"/>  boluwarin.kolawole
Email	<input type="text" value="boluwarin.kolawole@northumbria.ac.uk"/>
Faculty	<input type="text" value="Business and Law"/>
Department	<input type="text" value="BAL Management and Admin"/>
Submitting As	<input type="text" value="PGR - Postgraduate Research studen"/>
Externally Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Note: ONLY tick this box if your project has already received full ethical approval from an external organisation
Module Level Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Tick this box if staff and this submission refers to an entire module. ** Only to be used for low or medium risk projects as categorised by the diagnostic risk question set **
Module Code	<input type="text" value="Type a value"/> <input type="button" value="Help"/>
Module Tutor	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Find"/> <input type="button" value="Help"/> <input type="button" value="Clear"/>

Module Tutor

Find

Help

Clear

Titl...

De...

Em...

Research Supervisor

Find

Help

Clear

Titl... Deputy Campus Director

De... Vice Chancellors Office

Em... eustathios.sainidis@northumbria.ac.uk

Ethical Risk Level

[Click here to answer the ethical risk questions](#)

Risk Level Conditions:

Your ethical risk is **medium**. Your research should only consist of one or more of the following:

- Non-vulnerable adults
- Non-sensitive personal data referring to a living individual
- Secondary data not in the public domain
- Environmental issues
- Commercially sensitive information

Your project proposal has some ethical implications and will be reviewed by one independent reviewer appointed by your Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Some factors to be considered include considering obtaining informed consent forms from organisations or people involved, permission to use data from the Data Controller, as well as confidentiality/anonymity issues.

Appendix 6: Interview Transcript Sample

TRANSCRIPT TEN

SECTION A: RESPONDENT AND ORGANISATION PROFILE

Mode of interview: Face-to-face

Service sector: Creative Graphic Design

Name of Organisation:

Location: Gateshead, Newcastle

Researcher: What is your Position/Role Title?

Interviewee: I am the Managing Director and own the company as well

Year of establishment: 2006

Researcher: What type of service does your organisation provide?

Interviewee: We work with companies like Pixar, Lucas Film, or Hollywood film studios. What we do is, we do everything from creating, brand through to creating characters for films, through to doing brand strategy and then designing products and exhibition samples. So, all range of different creative things.

Researcher: So, you said you create characters? Can you please explain further?

Interviewee: So, we create it from scratch. So, have you seen a film called cars for pixar? No, I haven't. So, they made a film called cars. And they will tell us the story of the film. So, they might say we need a French/fast racing car. So, we design the characters from scratch. There is a film called 'Good Dinosaur' and we designed all those characters. So, it's very sort of not just design the character, we have to think of how the personality and how we....

Everything we do is in this building

Researcher: What is the number of employees/current number of staff in the organisation?

Interviewee: There are 10 of us

Researcher: What is your annual turnover?

Interviewee: Less than £5m

SECTION B: CAREER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Q1 and 4 Researcher: How do you develop your employees?

Interviewee: So, what we tend to do is, we tend to bring people in who haven't got huge amount of experience at what we do. Because I am a great believer that you have to give people a chance. So, I have got no qualifications. So, I didn't go to college or university. So, I am a great believer in bringing people in who have got good attitudes, who are willing to learn and people who want to succeed. And that's how we do it. We bring them and we teach them what we need to teach them to create a person we want to create. And that's the way we do it for all our staff

Researcher: So, do you need a qualification/criterion to be a graphic designer?

Interviewee: No. So, I am quite sort of controversial when it comes to this. Personally, unless you are going to become a doctor or something where you have to have, you have to have been through medical school. I don't personally think for most jobs you need qualifications. You know, I think it's about your willingness to learn and your willingness you know to have the attitude to do that. So, that's the way I do.

Researcher: How do you train your staff/employees?

Interviewee: So, we teach them everything, every basic level first. So, the way we work as a company, the way we operate, the way we deal with our customers because obviously we are working with, we are a service provider, so working with our customers is really important. So, you know it's everything, so it's all basic to start off. The designers that come here, most of them have got experience in design. They've all been designers somewhere else, but they might not have been a designer in what we do. So, you know we start at a very low level and then as they build up, they build their confidence. And we sort of throw them in the deep end. You know, and they get to work on big projects.

Researcher: How do you get clients?

Interviewee: So, majority of our work is word of mouth. So, I would say that's majority of us. We've got customers around the world who we have never met before, we don't even know what they look like. So, it's like in everything. So,

we do a good job like Pixar, somebody will hear about us, and they will come to us

Q2 Researcher: What career management practices are in place in your organisation?

Interviewee: We don't have anything; we don't do a certain development program. But what we do is that every Monday we all sit round the table and talk about what is happening in our work. All the designers buddy up with each other. So, what we tend to do is we put a weaker one with a stronger one. So, that's how we sort of develop our staff. We then give them the opportunity to have days through the year where they can go to exhibitions, or you know anything which is based around what they want to do. I have got a head of creative strategy and he is very good at getting the best out of people. So, sometimes you have got to put people in comfortable position and take them out of their comfort zone to really sort of get the best of them.

Q5 Researcher: How do career management practices/policy improve motivation, employee productivity and employee retention in the workplace?

Interviewee: Yes, developing employees improve motivation 100%. Yes, it does improve employee retention because you have got a happy workforce. So, like today for instance, we have a lady comes in and does reflexology with the staff. So, I pay for that; it doesn't cost the staff any money and she give them a massage, and you know whatever it is and that keeps them really happy, the staff. So, you know, we are not a really strict company, you know if any of the staff children are unwell or if they need to take time off, you know; I am happy for them to do that. And we spend a lot of time with our staff indirectly talking about mental health issues you know. They need to put down that there is something wrong, so we encourage them to do that.

Q6 Researcher: How are employees given the opportunity to progress within the organisation?

Interviewee: No, you can become a senior designer. What we do is, we don't tend to have like a rank. I don't think it works. Although, it's my business, I sit

with everybody else. The development is things like, we get a young designer comes here and we build them up to build their confidence. Then we get to a stage where we take them to see a customer. Ben who is one of our creatives, he's been here for few years now. We took him to Los Angeles in New York to go and meet the customers because a lot of the work we do is on email you know, and you don't always see them. So, it built his confidence going all the way across to Los Angeles to meet the customers and go to places like the 12th Century, Fox and Universal Studios. We don't sit here and say you answer to him, you answer to me. So, it's very open.

SECTION C: EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Q8 Researcher: What is the organisation perception of employee productivity/how do you know an employee is productive?

Interviewee: So, when we quote a job, we quote it by the hour. So, for instance we might design that castle there and we quote that it will take 150 hours to design that. Okay, so I can tell because they fill their time sheet in. I can tell if they are being productive. Now, sometimes we don't use that tool as a whipping tool, we use it to see who our profitable customers are. So, if I ask you to do that job and then you come back to me and say you quote 150 but actually up to 180. So, I would say oh explain. You tell me why it's like that. Sometimes, the customers are a little bit finicky, or they change things, stuff like that. Sometimes, we want to make the job the best it can be. So, if it means taking extra hours, then we just accept that. So, you always know if you've got a member of staff who isn't pulling their weight.

Researcher: If a member of staff spends more hours designing, does it mean they are not pulling their weight?

Interviewee: Oh! You just tell. You just tell that, you know if they've got to design something in a day and it takes them three days, then you know that's taking them... so yeah. But again, we don't have people like that here, we have got a really good team

Q9 Researcher: Do you think if employees are given more career opportunities, productivity levels will improve?

Interviewee: No. Sometimes in business you've got somebody who is really productive. So, if I give him more responsibilities, that takes him away from what he is actually doing. So, that way productivity drops, you know what I mean. So, that's why we tend to take away lot of responsibilities off them because designers like to design. They don't want to do paperwork; they don't want to do.... They want to design. So, that's how we tend to do it.

Researcher: So, they are not bothered about being directors, team leaders, supervisors etc

Interviewee: No, the designers just want to design. So, we work with Lucas Film and Star Wars. So, one of our designers just loves doing Star Wars. He loves it. He doesn't want to be a director; he doesn't want to be anything else. He just wants to come in and do his work

Q10 Researcher: How does career management lead to increase in overall organisational performance (financial + non-financial)?

Interviewee: Yeah, totally. Again, if you've got a happy staff who know what they are doing. You know, they will do the work to good standard which then leads to... So, if I do a job for you and you are really happy with it then you come back. So, it's a natural progression to financial gain so yeah

Q11 Researcher: What other factors influence productivity of employees apart from career management practices?

Interviewee: The type of work they do. So again, if you are doing the work that you like, then they are more productive whereas if I go and give them a project that they are not keen on, then you would see productivity drop. So again, it's identifying what key skills your staff have got and what key areas they like to work in. It's a really big thing, yeah.

Q12 Researcher: What are the challenges hindering the company from engaging in career management practices?

Interviewee: I think one of the biggest problems we've got in North East is people go to universities or to college then they seem to think that they have to leave the North East to go and get a good job. So, we lose a lot of talent up

here from people moving south. From our point of view, with the staff that we've got now, you've just got to think of new things. You've got to think of you know you can't have the same person coming all the time to do massages for instance cos they will get bored of it. So, it's just how do we engage with the staff. So, every month we have a company lunch. So, I buy them food, and we sit round, and we talk about what's happening in the business. so, I'll tell them all the good bits and all the bad bits. So, I am very honest with the staff, so they know exactly what's happening. Every time we bring a new customer, they all get told. Every time a customer emails me and says that's a fantastic, brilliant job or whatever then, I would email all round and tell everybody. So, you know it's about keeping people in the picture, talking to people

Q13 Researcher: What other HR practices does the company engage in apart from career management practice?

Interviewee: No, we don't have an HR department because we are quite a small business. So, we have an HR consultant who I pay money each month. Again, it's about making sure that everybody is up to date with the rules, and laws and everything. And just making sure that you are doing the right thing. I think there is a lot of places you might have come across already. There are lots of customer companies who basically see their staff as you are meant to be making me money. That's what you are here to do. So, we make it a joy to come to work. We have staff that have issues outside of work, you know childcare issues, you know divorces and we do our best to support them. So, it's part of being a caring person really

Appendix 7: Initial Coding Template

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. The top menu bar includes Home, Create, Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, and View. Below the menu is a toolbar with icons for Document, External, Memo, Video, Nodes, Case, Items, Collections, File Classification, Case Classification, Attributes, and NVivo Transcription. The left sidebar shows a tree view of the project structure, including DATA, CODES, CASES, NOTES, SEARCH, and MAPS. The main workspace is divided into three panes: a left pane for the coding template, a middle pane for the selected item, and a right pane for the transcription text.

TRANSCRIPT FIVE
SECTION A: RESPONDENT AND ORGANISATION PROFILE

Mode of interview: Telephone
Service sector: Oil and Gas Engineering Consulting/Technical Consultancy

Name of Organisation: Pipeline and Technology Engineers and the type of organisation is a technical consultancy

Location: County Durham
 Researcher: Ok. So, what do you do?
 Interviewee: It's an oil and gas consultancy engineering.
 Researcher: All right. OK, so you offer consultancy services to oil and gas companies?
 Interviewee: Yes, yes, yes. We work for oil and gas companies and state bodies as well, governmental departments, agencies in UK, Europe and the rest of the world.
 Researcher: All right. Ok, so can you please explain more on what you do and how do you get your clients or what services do you provide?
 Interviewee: OK. So, the services we provide is technical advice on design, construction and operation of oil and gas assets onshore and offshore. OK, for example, if a company wants to construct a pipeline from one location to another, we will advise them on design options, or we will verify their existing design.
 Researcher: Oh, OK, that's very good. And what's your role in the organization, please?
 Interviewee: I'm a director and principal consultant
 Researcher: Ok, thank you. What year was this business established?
 Interviewee: 1997 (23 years)
 Researcher: Wow That's really long. So how many employees do you have so far?

		<p>1.10.5 Invest in permanent and on-job training for casual staff</p> <p>1.10.6 Professional qualifications, courses and skills</p> <p>1.10.7 Training required by law</p>	<p>1.10.6a Financial support for professional qualification</p> <p>1.10.6b Good management and leadership style</p> <p>1.10.6c Soft skills</p>
<p>2. Career Path (Personality Trait and nature of Job)</p>	<p>2.1 Opportunities in a geographical location and in an organisation</p> <p>2.2 Personality trait or attitude</p>	<p>2.2.1 Ambitious</p> <p>2.2.2 Non-ambitious</p>	<p>2.2.1a Choice of organisation</p> <p>2.2.2a Specialists</p> <p>2.2.2b Work-life balance</p>

<p>3. Challenges faced by MSMEs in North East England</p>	<p>3.1 Challenges of new technology and changing markets 3.2 Inability of staff to keep up with work description and growth 3.3 Inability to measure productivity and keep track of time 3.4 Inability to recruit the right set of people and trained staff 3.5 Insufficient business or revenue 3.6 Insufficient opportunities for career progression 3.7 Not engaging in the kind of work staff are willing to do 3.8 Lack of database 3.9 Retention of good staff 3.10 Training and product knowledge</p>	<p>3.4.1 Lack of experienced and skilled staff in a geographical area</p>	
	<p>4.1 Absence of a formalised career management structure</p>		

4. Challenges Preventing the Adoption of Career Management Practices	4.2 Availability of staff and expertise 4.3 Insufficient finance 4.4 Level of qualification or experience needed for a job 4.5 Not placing importance on career management 4.6 Size of the organisation 4.7 Insufficient time 4.8 Unrealistic expectations of staff	4.3.1 Cost of backfilling 4.7.1 Balancing training against service to clients	
5. Efficiency of Career Management Framework			
6. Employee Motivation	6.1 Annual pay rise 6.2 Appraisals and performance reviews 6.3 Attractive work environment or location 6.4 Deadlines 6.5 Desire to help people 6.6 Employee engagement 6.7 Empowerment 6.8 Feedback, communication and team meetings 6.9 Employees feeling supported 6.10 Grow our own (employees)	6.10.1 Invest in staff	

	<p>6.11 Opportunities for job promotion or clear career path</p> <p>6.12 Positive organisational culture</p> <p>6.13 Recognition, reward and reassurance</p> <p>6.14 Setting strategic objectives and goals</p> <p>6.15 Specialists and self-motivated</p> <p>6.16 Transparency with pay structure and goals</p>	<p>6.14.1 Line managers</p> <p>6.14.1.1 Work plan</p>	<p>6.10.1a Trained and well-equipped staff</p>
<p>7. Employee Productivity</p>	<p>7.1 Achieving business KPI's</p> <p>7.2 Communication</p> <p>7.3 Efficiency and meeting targets</p> <p>7.4 High quality customer service</p> <p>7.5 Increase in income generation and lower cost</p> <p>7.6 Time management</p> <p>7.7 Investing in artificial intelligence (AI)</p> <p>7.8 Meeting the standards and requirements of health and safety bodies</p> <p>7.9 Number of people helped to overcome a disorder</p>	<p>7.6.1 Project management tools</p>	

	<p>7.10 Organisation culture measure</p> <p>7.11 Keeping up with training materials</p> <p>7.12 Research, innovation and strategy</p> <p>7.13 Increase in number of clients brought</p> <p>7.14 Positive feedback from clients or customer satisfaction</p>		
8. Employee Retention	<p>8.1 Being transparent and clear with progression opportunities</p> <p>8.2 Career development</p> <p>8.3 Competitive salaries</p> <p>8.4 Employee engagement</p> <p>8.5 Employees feeling valued</p> <p>8.6 Flexible working</p> <p>8.7 Good management</p> <p>8.8 Happy in a job/job satisfaction</p> <p>8.9 Invest in staff</p> <p>8.10 Organisation culture</p>		
9. Human Resource Practice	<p>9.1 External Human Resource</p> <p>9.2 HR policies</p>	<p>9.1.1 HR subscription service</p> <p>9.2.1 Accreditation and compliance with Government regulations</p>	

	<p>9.3 Investing in well-being of staff</p> <p>9.4 Performance development review</p>	<p>9.2.2 Promotion of equality and diversity in workplace</p> <p>9.3.1 Buddy systems</p> <p>9.3.2 Social activities</p>	
10. Learning and Development	<p>10.1 Building confidence</p> <p>10.2 Exhibitions</p> <p>10.3 Line mangers</p> <p>10.4 Personal development plans</p> <p>10.5 Peer learning and informal transfer of knowledge</p> <p>10.6 Performance development reviews</p> <p>10.7 Performance management</p> <p>10.8 Upskill and take on more leadership roles</p>	<p>10.5.1 Job shadowing</p> <p>10.6.1 Annual reviews</p> <p>10.6.2 Bi-annual (every 6 months)</p>	
11. No Career Management Framework	Small company or business		
12. Opportunity for Career Progression	<p>12.1 Career map or skills matrix</p> <p>12.2 Creating opportunities for innovation in business</p> <p>12.3 Full knowledge and understanding of individual role</p>	<p>12.1.1 Guidance or independence</p> <p>12.2.1 Self career progression</p>	

	<p>12.4 Good performance and capability</p> <p>12.5 Growth/expansion and need of business</p> <p>12.6 Interest in business and product knowledge</p> <p>12.7 Internal job application</p> <p>12.8 Internal job promotion</p> <p>12.9 Network and people you know</p> <p>12.10 Personal development plan</p> <p>12.11 Qualification and skills</p> <p>12.12 Type of organisation</p> <p>12.13 Vacancies within the organisation</p>	<p>12.13.1 Exit of employees from the organisation</p> <p>12.13.2 Retirement</p>	
13. Organisational Culture			
14. Productivity in Workplace	<p>14.1 Absence</p> <p>14.2 Artificial intelligence (AI)</p> <p>14.3 Attractive working environment</p> <p>14.4 Autonomy or independence</p> <p>14.5 Bonuses</p> <p>14.6 Business growth</p>		

	<p>14.7 Constant training 14.8 Cross and external skills 14.9 Decent salaries and pension scheme 14.10 Direction and strategy 14.11 Efficient business process and operations 14.12 Employee engagement 14.13 Employees seeing their own worth 14.14 Feel valued 14.15 Flexibility in working hours and holidays 14.16 Genuine interest in staff and happy for their progress 14.17 Good supportive team and having a form of personal relationship 14.18 Investing in business consultancy</p> <p>14.19 Job satisfaction and recognition</p>	<p>14.12.1 Doing something new</p> <p>14.14.1 Treating people with care and respect</p> <p>14.18.1 Clear direction and idea of business goals</p> <p>14.19.1 Employee well-being and happy with a job</p>	
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	<p>14.20 More accurate way to track time 14.21 Motivation</p> <p>14.22 Motivation to provide clients' good service 14.23 On-job training 14.24 Opportunity for development and career progression 14.25 Organisational culture and positive working environment 14.26 Organisational performance 14.27 Planning and scheduling 14.28 Remote working 14.29 Right and available work tools or equipment 14.30 Right management or leadership 14.31 Not micromanaging employees</p>	<p>14.21.1 Interest in type of work being done</p> <p>14.23.1 Product knowledge 14.24.1 Career progression</p> <p>14.28.1 Ease of use of technology</p> <p>14.30.1 Accountability of managers to other people 14.30.2 Encouraging people to exit the organisation 14.30.3 Good management and leadership style</p>	<p>14.30.3a Patience and tolerance</p>
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	<p>14.32 Skills, experience and ability</p> <p>14.33 Specialism</p> <p>14.34 Staff retention</p> <p>14.35 Low staff turnover</p>	<p>14.32.1 Hiring of skilled and experienced staff</p> <p>14.32.2 Trained and well-equipped staff</p>	14.30.3b Reading books and developing oneself
15. Staff Turnover	<p>15.1 Feeling there are no career progression</p> <p>15.2 Lack of employee engagement</p>		
16. Talent Management	16.1 Career planning	<p>16.1.1 Individual career planning</p> <p>16.1.2 Joint effort (organisational)</p>	16.1.1a Boundaryless career
17. Vacancy, Recruitment and Selection Process	<p>17.1 Internship Scheme</p> <p>17.2 Probation period</p>	17.1.1 Talent identification	
18. Business Plan			