Chapter – 6

Case Studies on Career Advancement

This chapter briefly describes one case each from the categories of superior, above average, average, below average, and poor respondents in terms of rate of advancement (ROA). Each case illustrates a representative model from its category.

6.1. Case 1: Ms. Jessica

Ms. Jessica (a fictitious name) is an Advisory Assistant in an educational consultancy firm during the last 3 years. Her rate of advancement (ROA) score is 122, the lowest in ROA score distribution. Salary is not a fixed amount and she claims that she is in the middle position in the organisational hierarchy. She is very much satisfied with her work-life and fairly satisfied with her non-work life.

She completed the MBA programme from School of Management Studies in July 1979 with specialisation in Marketing. After taking B.Sc. degree in Chemistry in 1977, she joined MBA in 1977 at the age of 21 years. She did not go for any additional course and training after her MBA. Her first job after completion of MBA programme was that of a Research Assistant in a government service agency. She got married in 1981. She discontinued her job after her marriage in 1981. Her husband is an engineer by profession. She had her first child in 1983, and did not work till 1986. In 1987, she joined as a Manager in a small international concern in Bangalore, and she left the job in 1988 due to second pregnancy. From 1988 to 2001 she took the role of a full-time housewife only. In the year 2002 she joined as “Advisory Assistant” in a consultancy firm where the compensation is given according to the work done. This is her third job. Her prime job here is students’ counseling. She still continues in this job though the nature of work is seasonal.

She hails from a middle-income family, and her father is a graduate and mother is a matriculate. Father was an engineer and mother is a housewife.

She got her first job within 6 months of completion of her MBA course. She stated that she was very much satisfied with her work-life and fairly satisfied with her non-work life.
She told that her ambition and need for an interesting job were factors that attracted her to the B-School. What she gained from the B-School, according to her, were the self-confidence, launch pad for jobs and social recognition.

She did not gain much, according to her, acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of specific technique for solving problems, and development of positive attitude towards life and people, but gained, to a great extent, self-confidence, launch pad for jobs, and social recognition/respect from her MBA degree.

She relates ‘status’ as a measure of success in life, and gives least importance to ‘money’ as a measure of success in life. She says that she never compromises family aspect for her career advancement. This is evident from her career chronicle. She never had a mentor to guide her in her career. Also she never used personal support services to facilitate her career.

She prefers to be out of the business world in near future and would like to become an entrepreneur of some sort in the education field.

Regarding her feedback on management education, she said that the real strengths of the MBA programme which she attended were importance given to personal/personality development, case studies, teaching methods, practical exposure and relevant information. Her only criticism against MBAs is “too much emphasis to success in economic terms”.  

She thinks that the two-year MBA programme is not too long and says that the executive experience is a must for MBA admission. According to her, a trimester system with focus on short-term internship in companies will make the MBA programme more useful.

From this case it is evident that this person is more family-oriented with less preference for professional ambition, career advancement, and economic progress. No wonder that her ROA is very low and she is not unhappy with the present position as ‘Advisory Assistant’/‘Students Counselor’. 
6.2. Case 2: Mr. Prem

Mr. Prem (a fictitious name) is currently a Senior Divisional Manager in a large public sector general insurance company, which employs more than 17,000 persons. The ROA score for him is 333 (below average). This position is a middle level in the organisational hierarchy, which has the total levels of 8, and his level is fifth from chairman/M.D. He has more than 40 subordinates directly under him. His monthly total compensation is Rs.30,000. He joined in this organisation in 1981 within 3 months of completing his MBA in 1980 with specialisation in marketing at the age of 23. He joined for MBA in 1978 after passing B.Sc(Physics) from University of Kerala. He has not added any academic qualification after his MBA.

He says his MBA degree gave him access to more jobs and companies, though there was no campus recruitment for his batch. He is from a middle-income family hailing from Trivandrum. Father and mother are under-graduates and both were working as managers at the time of his MBA study. He got married in 1985 to a professional with Ph.D. qualification. The year of birth of the first child was 1988 and that of the second was 1990.

He was in the top 10% of the class throughout his academic performance from SSLC to MBA. He actively participated in the Quiz team during his MBA. He is in contact with all his classmates who are around Trivandrum. He is in touch with the Alumni Association of the school. But, it rarely helped his career advancement, he says.

He is fairly satisfied with his work-life and non-work life. He relates success to opportunity to use the skills and abilities, and according to him, money is the least aspect to be related with success. He says that he had a good mentor who helped his career advancement. He never compromised his family aspect for his career advancement. According to him, promotion processes, tall hierarchies and office bureaucracy were the major problems in his career advancement.

Having done well in the school and the need for an interesting job were his attractions to the B-School. He said that his MBA degree gave him advantages like acquisition of knowledge, skill development, self-confidence, and development of positive attitude.
towards life and people. He expects personal growth, professional ambition, and intrinsic nature of work as important aspects from a job.

Regarding his feedback about the structure of the MBA programme, he says that the two-year duration is not too long period, the semester model is the most suited, and executive experience is not a must for MBA admission.

About his future plans, he says he will carry on in the same career, and would like to be an entrepreneur of some type in future.

It can be concluded from this case that nevertheless he has high professional ambition and need for personal growth. It appears that the complicated promotion processes, tall hierarchies and office bureaucracy were the obstacles in his career advancement. Adding up to this, it is being a public sector organisation the promotion is solely on the basis of seniority, and no weightage to merit (performance and credentials). Furthermore, he is sticking to the same organisation all through his 25 years of career which will not fetch better prospects for career advancement. Another underlying reason is that this person is not relating the success to money earned. Possibly that might be one of the reasons why he is not interested in changing his job for better prospects.

6.3. Case 3: Mr. Hassan

Mr. Hassan (a fictitious name) is presently a senior Manager (HR) in a public sector manufacturing company (State Govt.) which has 900 employees. The ROA score for him is 375 (average). His present position is at the senior level in the organisational hierarchy that has the total levels of 6. There are more than 20 subordinates directly under him. His monthly total compensation is around Rs.32,000. He joined in this organisation in 1986 as Accounts Officer and this was his third job. He completed his MBA in 1975 with specialisation in Finance and HRM at the age of 26 as he had pre-MBA work experience. He is an M.Com graduate (1972) from the University of Kerala. Prior to his joining MBA, he had worked as Clerk in the Kerala state government's health department from 1971-73. He did take an additional qualification in 1992 -- Diploma in Industrial Relations from Kakatiya University.
He obtained his first job in 1978 after the completion of MBA in 1975 as Junior Executive(Manpower) in a small state government service organisation with the gap of more than 12 months following completion of his MBA. He rejoined his pre-MBA job in government immediately after completion of his MBA course and left it in 1978. He had 12 subordinates. Monthly total compensation was Rs.10,000. The problem he faced in his first job was bureaucratic procedures that made him unhappy, and he left this job in 1982 for better prospects.

His second job was as ‘Senior Accountant’ in a state industrial development corporation which is a medium sized organisation. This position is a middle level one. The total number of hierarchical levels was 10. The number of subordinates were 30. Monthly total compensation was Rs.13,000. The problem he faced in his second job was also the bureaucratic procedures, and he again left the job in 1986 for better prospects and joined the present organisation as ‘Accounts Officer’ and currently as ‘Senior Manager(HR)’. In the present job too he is facing the same problem of bureaucratic procedures, as it is also a state PSU.

He too says his MBA degree provided him accesses to more jobs and companies, though there was no campus recruitment for his batch. He is from a middle income family hailing from Kothamangalam. Father and mother were illiterates and were farmer and housewife respectively during his MBA study. He got married in 1977 to a university Lecturer with Ph.D. qualification. The dawn of the first child was in 1978 and the second was in 1982.

He was among the top 50% of the class throughout his academic studies from SSLC to MBA. His contact with his classmates(MBA) is confined to six or seven only. He is in touch with the Alumni Association of the school. But, by no means it facilitated his career advancement, he says.

He is most satisfied with his work-life and non-work life. He relates success to influence and opportunity to use the skills and abilities. On no account he compromised his family aspect for his career advancement. According to him, promotion processes, office bureaucracy, lack of career development programmes, lack of organisational recognition
and unhealthy internal competition among colleagues were the major problems in his career advancement.

According to him, personal growth, professional ambition, recognition and current income are the important aspects in a job. High life ambition and need for career advancement were his pulling factors to the B-Schools. He says that skill development, launch pad for jobs, and social recognition were the returns he gained by MBA degree.

On the subject of feedback about the structure of the MBA programme, he too says that the two-year duration is not too long period, and the semester model is the most suited one, and executive experience is not a must for MBA admission. His specific suggestions for the enrichment of MBA education include that MBA students must be trained in public relations, and the common admission test(CAT) by external agencies must be restructured to have more control by individual B-Schools concerned.

As regards his future plans, he would continue in the same career and would like to be in teaching profession in future. May be this is owing to the influence of his academician-wife.

This case manifests that he achieved only an average career advancement growth despite the fact that he has had professional ambition and need for personal growth. Complicated promotion processes, and office bureaucracy are the stumbling blocks, according to him, in his career advancement. Like the second case, this too being a public sector organisation the promotion is entirely on the basis of seniority, and no weightage to merit(performance and credentials). His additional academic qualifications had gone unnoticed by the seniority based promotion system. Here, a particular mention must be made about him that nonetheless as a son of an illiterate parents, he came up in life in both academic and profession.
6.4. Case 4: Mr. Manu

Mr. Manu (a fictitious name) is currently an Assistant General Manager in a large private sector banking company, which employs more than 6,000 persons. The ROA score for him is 453 (above average). This position is a middle level in the organisational hierarchy which has the total levels of 10. He is in the fifth level from chairman/M.D. He controls more than 20 subordinates directly under him. His monthly total compensation is Rs. 30,000. He joined in this organisation in 1978 at the age of 25 within 6 months of completing his MBA in 1977 with specialisation in marketing. He is a M.Sc (Physics) graduate from University of Kerala passed in 1975. He has not acquired any additional degree or training after his MBA.

He is from a lower income family hailing from Kochi. Father and mother are matriculates and were businessman and housewife respectively during his MBA study. He got married in 1985 to an undergraduate and she is a housewife. The first child was born in 1986 and the second was in 1993.

He was among the top 10% of the class in SSLC and MBA, top 20% in U.G, and and top 50% in PDC. He is in contact with 50% of his class-mates. He is in touch with the Alumni Association of the school. But, in no way it was of assistance to his career advancement, he says.

He is fairly satisfied with his work-life and non-work life. He relates success to status and interesting job, and gives least importance to influence as an aspect of success. He says he had delayed the marriage and family and gave virtually all-family duties to the spouse to facilitate his career advancement. He never had a mentor to guide his career advancement. According to him, promotion processes, tall hierarchies, family background, and tough economy were the major problems in his career advancement. To him, professional ambition and recognition are the important aspects in a job. High ambition, need for an interesting job and need for power and status rewards were his attractions to the B-School. He says that acquisition of knowledge, skill development, self-confidence and a broader view of the organisation and society were the advantages he gained by MBA degree.
"Two-year duration is not too long period", "the semester model is the most suited", and "executive experience is not a must for MBA admission" were his feedback about the structure of the MBA programme. Guest lectures by practicing managers and professors from other reputed B-Schools and more computer operational knowledge for MBA students were his strong specific suggestions for the enhancement of effectiveness of MBA education in the country.

He says that the 'theoretical exposure' was the very much strength of the MBA programme when he was a student, but the programme did not give any practical exposure. He does not agree with the criticism that MBAs don't have interpersonal and leadership skills. At the same time, he agrees that MBAs are too arrogant and self-centered with too much focus on success in economic terms.

Regarding his future plans, he says he would continue in the same career and no other plans for future.

It is obvious from this case that he is professionally very ambitious, has high need for an interesting job, power and status. In addition to this, the advantages he gained through his MBA degree (acquisition of knowledge, skill development, and self-confidence, and a broader view of the organization and society) were also might have directly helped his career growth. His job is free from the barriers like ethnic/regional considerations, spouse employment and family problems. Initially he had delayed the marriage and family and gave all the family duties to his non-working spouse with focus on his career advancement. That also might have a positive impact on his good career advancement. In banking industry, transfer and promotion are generally interconnected. Since he had no family problems and has a non-working wife, promotion accompanied by transfer is not an issue at all. So, predictably he has achieved an above average career advancement with fairly satisfied work-life and non-work life.
6.5. Case 5: Ms. Reshma

Ms. Reshma (a fictitious name) is now a Senior Manager (Retail Sales) in a large public sector oil company which employs more than 35,000 people. The ROA score for her is 620 (superior). Her position is a senior level in the organisational hierarchy which has the total levels of 12. She is in the sixth level from chairman/M.D. Her monthly total compensation is Rs. 50,000. She joined in this organisation in 1987 as her second job after MBA. Her first job was as ‘Management Trainee’ in a public sector fertilizer company. She got this first job within 12 months of completing her MBA in 1984. She was there in her first job only for 3 months and left it to join the present organisation. She completed her MBA at the age of 23. She is a B.A (Economics) graduate from University of Kerala (1982). She has not taken any additional degree or training after her MBA.

She was born in a middle income family based in Thiruvananthapuram. Father is a post-graduate and mother is a PDC holder and were accounting professional and housewife respectively during her MBA study. She married her MBA class-mate in 1987. Their only child was born in 1991.

In terms of academic performance, she was one among the top 10% of the class in SSLC, PDC and in U.G. and top 50% of the class in MBA. She was interested in sports and extra-curricular activities during her MBA. She is now member in AIMA and HRD Network. She is in contact with 75% of her classmates. She is in touch with the Alumni Association of the school. But, it was of never help for her career advancement, she says.

She is very much satisfied with her work-life and non-work life. She relates opportunity to use the skills and abilities and interesting job as measures of success in life, and gives least importance to status and influence as aspects of success. She says she had delayed the marriage and family and gave virtually all-family duties to the spouse as strategies for her career advancement. She had a good mentor for her career advancement. She says that she never liberally used personal support services to facilitate her career advancement. There were absolutely no major problems in her career advancement, she says authentically.
According to her, intrinsic nature of work, autonomy, current and future income are the important aspects in a job. And the least important aspects are power and recognition.

High ambition and interesting job were her reasons to join the B-School. She proudly says that acquisition of knowledge, self-confidence, social recognition/respect, and a strong network of colleagues and friends were the advantages she gained by MBA degree.

Like most of the above cases, she too says that the two-year duration is not too long period for MBA programme and the semester model is the most suited. But she says that executive experience is a must for MBA admission. Her specific suggestions for the enhancement of effectiveness of MBA education include on-the-job training in every semester and evaluation based on specific analysis and problem solving tools/experience of MBA students.

She articulates that the extra-curricular activities, theoretical exposure, case studies, personal/personality development were very much the strengths of the MBA programme when she was a student, but she complained that the programme gave only a less extent the practical exposure, relevant information, and application skills.

She is not in agreement with the criticism that MBAs don't have interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and team skills. However, she is in favour to some extent that MBAs are too arrogant and self-centered with too much emphasis on success in economic terms.

Concerning her future plans, she states that she will not continue in the same career and plans for a higher job in the government administration.

It is observed from this case that she is a woman of high ambition and dedicated to an interesting job. It is apparent that she has self-confidence, social recognition/respect, and a strong network of colleagues and friends which are essential for a successful career. A notable thing in her profile is that she has a good mentor for her career advancement. She did the extraordinary things of delaying the marriage and family and gave virtually all-family duties to her working spouse as strategies for her career advancement. These strategies have really worked for her resulting superior career
advancement. She is very much fulfilled in both work-life as well as in non-work life. She can truly be acknowledged as a career strategist.

6.6. Summary of and comments on the case studies

Table no.6.1 below gives the summary of all the above five case studies.

Table No. 6.1
Summary of and comments on the case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Levles of career advancement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case-1 Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ROA Score</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age as on Dec’05</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>U.G</td>
<td>B.sc (Chem.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MBA performance</td>
<td>Top 20% of the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Additional degree</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Parents’ economic status at the time of MBA study</td>
<td>Middle income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Parents’ educational status at the time of MBA study</td>
<td>Father undergraduate, and mother SSLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents’ occupational status at the time of MBA study</td>
<td>Father an Engineer, and mother House-</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spouse employment</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MBA specialisation</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gap between completion of MBA and offer of first job</td>
<td>Less than six months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present Designation</td>
<td>Advisory Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salary(Present job)</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hierarchical Level</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size of the firm</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Job shifts (Change of organisation)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job specialisation</td>
<td>Students’ Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of Work-life satisfaction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of non-work-life satisfaction</td>
<td>Fairly satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case studies above give very interesting insights. The highest ROA scorer (i.e. superior in career advancement) is the lowest in age. This shows that the age is nothing to
do with career advancement. Of the five cases, there are three male and two females. Both the lowest and highest scorers are females. It suggests that sex does not impact career advancement. Regarding their undergraduation, three are with science background and two are with arts background. The superior ROA scorer is a B.A (Economics) graduate, the above average ROA scorer is a B.Sc.(Physics) graduate and the lowest ROA scorer is a B.Sc.(Chemistry) graduate. This shows that the undergraduation degree of MBAs may not influence their career advancement.

Their academic performance in MBA shows that there is no relationship between academic achievement and career advancement. For example, here the lowest ROA scorer was top 10% of the class, but the highest ROA scorer was top 50% of the class in terms of academic performance.

The summary table of case studies show that the parents' economic, educational and occupational statuses also do not influence career advancement. The above average scorer is from the lower income family with SSLC qualified non-working parents, whereas the lowest ROA scorer is from middle income family with father as an Engineer and mother as house-wife.

Number of job shifts (change of organisations) also don't influence career advancement. The person who changed two jobs got the lowest ROA score, the person who never changed the organisation got above average ROA score and the person who got the superior ROA score changed just one organisation. The work-life and non-work-life satisfactions and career advancement have no relationship at all. Both the lowest and superior ROA scorers are very much satisfied with work-life. Similarly, the person with lowest ROA score and the person with above average ROA score are fairly satisfied with their non-work-life satisfaction.

The above descriptions are only trends and not a scientific generalisations, as the data were not subjected to rigorous methodological analysis for valid conclusions and
generalisations. No statistical analyses are possible with just five cases. However, some trends can be observed from these cases. These observations of trends from the case studies indirectly support the major findings of the study based on in-depth data analysis for valid conclusions and generalisations as given under chapter-5.