

## **Abstract for EAWOP small group meeting**

### **Title: A people management leadership program for line managers aimed at stimulating sustainable careers: A pilot intervention study**

Line managers are increasingly expected to translate HRM policies to the workforce, resulting in new leadership responsibilities (Veld, Paauwe and Boselie, 2010; Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk and Looise, 2013). Previous studies suggest that line managers lack the skills and knowledge necessary for successful fulfillment of these new responsibilities (Perry and Kulik, 2008; Crawshaw and Game, 2015). The success of line managers is argued to depend upon line managers' people management abilities (Perry and Kulik, 2008; Knies and Leisink, 2014). This may be of particular concern in professional organizations, like health care, where most line managers have not been trained as managers but are trained as professionals instead.

People management refers to line managers' implementation of HR practices and leadership behaviour oriented at supporting employees (Knies, Leisink and van de Schoot, 2017). Part of this is attention for employees' careers (e.g. Crawshaw and Game, 2015) with the aim to create sustainable careers. The necessity of this has been stressed with the rise of the retirement age, an ageing workforce, and a dynamic and demanding work context (e.g. De Vos and Van der Heijden, 2015). Despite the urgency of sustainable careers, attention for this element of people management has received little attention in practice (Penning de Vries, 2021). This, together with the fact that line managers often lack the expertise for their new leadership responsibilities, emphasize the importance to understand how to enhance their ability to successfully fulfil this role. Some scholars argue that training programs can help in this (Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk and Looise, 2013).

However, the current literature examining leadership programs reveals some limitations. First, research into leadership programs for line managers aimed at enhancing people management skills

lack. Second, leadership programs are often very generally formulated and designed for a broad audience (Aragon and Valle, 2012). This is problematic, as different jobs require different competencies. And third, the few existing leadership programs for line managers that have been examined in the HRM literature solely focus on the outcomes and lack attention for the resources invested (input) and the quality and content of these programs (process) (Sels, 2002). However, the strength of leadership interventions has been shown to depend on the design, delivery and implementation process (Lacerenza *et al.*, 2017). This highlights the importance of systematically developing strong research designs with attention for the process.

Responding to these knowledge gaps, this study addresses the following research question: *What are the needs of line managers of professionals for a people management leadership program aimed at creating sustainable careers, and what are the effects of such a program?*

This question is answered by describing the systematic development of a people management leadership program for line managers aimed at enhancing people management skills in order to create sustainable careers. As systematically developing an intervention study is novel in the field of HRM, we rely on an approach commonly used and widely accepted in health and psychological research called the intervention mapping protocol (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2016).

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