

## CONSTRUCTING LIFE: OLD TROUBLES, NEW CHALLENGES FOR PSYCHOLOGY

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### Abstract

This article is focused on the study object of the developmental psychology and career management field, within the context of organizations, and it is analyzed on an historical perspective. The second part revolves around the scientific tools that seek to match the individuals' needs with the organizations'. In the third part, the principles of life construction paradigm are considered.

**Key words:** psychology of life construction

### Introduction

The *object* of study of the Careers Psychology in organizational contexts is the relation between the individual and the organization where he works, and the commitment between the organizational strategy and the aspirations of each actor that is involved in the organization. Its *objective* is solving the troubles that can arise in this relation.

This psychology field uses a set of models, methods and techniques intentionally conceived and developed, essentially during the last century, to identify, discuss and solve problems arisen from the relation between individuals and organizations. Such scientific devices try to adapt to the needs of individuals and organizations themselves: the creation and use of methods and techniques to support individuals development, the search of responses to the need of growth of organizations, and the commitment between the organizational strategy and the aspirations of each actor that makes up the organization – paying particular attention to the *worker* who is considered increasingly as a *coworker* in the organization where he works.

The idea of worker/coworker is at present essential in the field of Developmental Psychology and Career Management, because it isn't about a perspective

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only focused on the worker or on the organization where he works, but in the relation between them, not forgetting the interests of both parties, from the given interaction between them. In fact, the relation between worker/coworker and the organization creates and supports the need to develop and apply new personal promotion systems, that is, new ways of reward and recognition: in many work situations, concepts as “employment for life”, or “possibility of promotions after years of dedicated and loyal work” - where motivations such as self-development or self-responsibility were not valued enough - are increasingly old fashioned concepts. From the idea of *employment*, inherited from the industrial revolution, we turned to *employability*: the context of quick changes in which we live today, increasingly globalizing, requires responses that are related to new skills and mainly in assuming new responsibilities of the worker / coworker (as learning to manage their own career), as well as of the organization (for example, adapting career management systems), in order to find ways of survival and satisfaction. One of these ways – which is a challenge even understood by the top managers and the intermediate leaderships of the organizations – is to consider workers as a plus value, that is, as active co-workers and not longer as employees. This cultural change is a fundamental vector towards expansion, development and stabilization of the organization activity.

In this context, the Career Psychology finds its intervention area in some kind of crossing where the search for both, organizational and individual needs of satisfaction converges. Therefore, it is a clearly multidisciplinary research and intervention field. The difference between *managing paid staff* and *managing human resources*, human capital – in other words, managing knowledge acquisition and skill development of workers who are the responsible of the organization’s wealth production – demands the analysis of personal and situational variables, which reciprocally act and promote the satisfaction to be achieved. And such “steps” also arise from a set of characteristics which identify the organization as a whole.

According to Guest (1987, p. 507), the *staff management* considers the staff matters in terms of costs, while *human resources management* considers it in terms of investment. The bet is on people development and their skills, and considers the plus value of the promotion of self-knowledge and self-development. In this way it can be said that it is about a bet on people – which is the great legacy of the last decade of the XX century.

Therefore, it is about a comprehensive and harmonious management of interactions: the individual (rather the person) with their working environment, that is the organization; and the organization with their workers, who are their coworkers. This becomes a great challenge.

So, responsibility on career development and management is necessarily shared. The notions of personal and organizational participation are decisive elements in the relation between the individual action on their career development and management and the different models of career development that organizations provide to make possible those individual paths. However, not every organization is ready to respond to this different way to handle the professional development (which therefore is personal) of their workers. We can take as an example, those organizations with a traditional profile that the idea of “career” ends in “salary increase” or in “automatic promotion”, traces of industrialization and of Taylorist procedures of “scientific” work management, with disturbing results such as those represented by Charles Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936).

Consequently, the career development and management is here understood as a *construction process* that takes contributions from several fields of *applied psychology*, joining them into an own field, and whose efficiency will be assessed in terms of their capacity to give satisfactory responses to both, individuals and organizations.

### From old problems to new challenges: some history

In organization contexts, the Developmental Psychology and Career Management has existed since 1960s (Hall, 1986, p. xiii), as a specialty with a theoretical frame, a consolidated tradition on research and practice, counting since then with a statute of its own. It is an *interdisciplinary* field that studies individuals and simultaneously a *multidisciplinary* field on the understanding of the organization phenomena.

The Developmental Psychology and Career Management has intended to accompany those changes that have occurred in people management in the organizations context. It traces its origins to the Vocational Psychology, in the early XX century, standing out the pioneer Frank Parsons. This approach was for some time a field that would eventually divide into sub disciplines that created small habitats defined by dichotomies as “research” vs. “practice”, “option” vs. “adjustment”, “guidance” vs. “selection”, “differential vs. developmentalist”, “individual” vs. “organizational” and “education” vs. “industry” (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). These sub disciplinary boundaries, perhaps too severe for the kind of area to which were applied, contributed to separate the psychology that studies professional options and their respective repercussions in the career, of other *psychologies* that traditionally were placed at the service of organizations.

Therefore, a new path was opened towards a new field: development and career management in organizations, included in the more comprehensive field of

Human Resources Psychology, which started to stand out as psychology applied to organizations.

The idea of career arises at the early XX century and links one of the more typical consequences of the industrial revolution and of the social changes of that period: the spread and diversification of occupations. Consequently, this phenomenon led to the need of assisting people to find paid employment, which enables the increase of explanatory models of working behavior and performance, and since 1940s, of professional options. Thus, the working world defined (and still defines) the development of the career concept, contextualized by certain historical conditions and their respective social, political and ethical consequences.

The verified changes, in many aspects really radical, together with the emergence of Vocational Psychology, make us see the career / work world relation in a wider social context that exceeds the psychological evolution of the career concept itself. The career concept has to be seen as a part of the evolution of psychology applied to work, which in turn comes from the evolution of the basic psychology, both from the psychological and experimental points of view.

The emergence of the possibility of professional choice would strongly determine the conceptual context and the Vocational Psychology practices: Frank Parsons, who was interested in how people chose their work life, inspired by progressive ideals and by his fight for democracy and the achievement of efficient governments, considered the vocational option as a way of individual and social effectiveness. (Savickas, 2005, p. 24).

In this context, the first paradigm that would give a new status to Vocational Psychology appeared: the adequacy model person/environment. (Parsons, 1909).

The publication of the monograph *Individuality* by Thorndike (1911) and the appearing of new approaches in Psychology that were not only quantitative strengthened the development of vocational psychology. With Sir Francis Galton and the arrival of the study on individual differences, the study of character was increasingly replaced by the study of personality (Nicholson, 2003). Aptitude tests replaced the intelligence tests, the interests studies were included in personality psychology (Super, 1955), and its operationalization with the Strong's *Vocational Interest Blank*, published in 1927 (Super, 1945), were decisive events to the growth of this psychology field.

Then, starting from Vocational Psychology, some psychological variables whether cognitive or conative acquired significance in job contexts: the importance of vocational behavior and its consequence on the individual career. The pioneer theories of vocational choosing promoted the idea of pyramidal dependence,

prediction and stability in employment. Besides, they led workers to think that promotion is possible throughout work life: a loyal and dedicated worker could hope to keep their job until the end of life, and the organization would give back with job security and stability. Consequently, the idea of job and career stability was established, understanding the last one as a professional career, reducing the career concept to a progressive hierarchical ladder which included the relation of work satisfaction with professional success. As a historical curiosity, it should be noted that one of the first Donald Super' works, eminent and essential theoretical of the developmental psychology and career management, was a study on professional satisfaction (Super, 1939). William Stern (1871-1939) and Hugo Munstterberg (1863-1916) were pioneers in the application of tests methodology to work issues, considering the aptitudes study to predict success in work performance and the "psychological prediction and control" (Stern, 1917, p. 188). In this way the vocational psychology served the purpose of adequacy individual /work in its more limited sense: a controlled selection of workers according to their cognitive, physical and sensory-motor skills, and counseling was limited to covering the positions that required these skills. Therefore, the study of vocational behavior and its characteristics throughout the professional path (the career) was confined to professional options and adjustments to work.

However, two perspectives faced each other: one from the point of view of management practices and the other one, from the perspective of the individual. The first one was controlled by the organization: somehow the singularity was ignored and passivity and lack of identification of the individual with their work were highlighted. In the second one psychological research and intervention were considered. The current of vocational psychology investigated the determining personal characteristics in job satisfaction and tried to promote freedom of chances, based on individual needs, emphasizing in that way the individuality in detriment of the collective. At that time, the notion of career only assumed a possible progress in *escalation*, that is, only the apprentice who became a teacher had the possibility of achieving a social and economic promotion, and thereby becoming the "owner" of a career. However, the concept of the career still did not consider the psychosocial integration of self-concepts and social functions.

The need of humanizing the organization, the development of the psychological science, the impact of John Dewey's pragmatism (1929), the Kurt Lewin's dynamic psychology (1935), the conclusions reached by Hawthorne in 1932, the work at Minnesota University on the first programmatic studies on adjustments and vocational options, the E. Strong's work in the field of interests psychology, the work developed by John Flanagan and his young colleague Donald Super at the

service of the USA Armed Forces during the Second World War are all important historical examples of applied psychology which has influenced and undoubtedly determined new studies frameworks in applied psychology context.

Vocational psychologists took then different fields of intervention, some of them improving selection processes, others leading researches with students about careers options, creating the above mentioned distance between vocational psychology and psychology applied to organizations. In this way we are in front of two faces of the same vocational psychology, on one hand vocational options, on the other the adjustment (Crites, 1969).

USA training to get in the Second World War encouraged vocational psychology considering cognitive and conative evaluations, contributing to the needs of classification, training and selection of the army at that moment, still keeping the career concept equivalent to professional option at a given moment. That is, a career is related to social reality, according to Parsons' thoughts at early XX century. As a result, a career was seen as a process limited by rules and social expectations, established within a social order and which provided elements which allowed individual options, but adjusted to particular models.

Generally, the career is established as all the professional experiences got throughout working life, and preferably in the same professional activity.

It was necessary to wait for peace consolidation and for "maturity" of industrial economy, to reach a new career concept: a development process of self and identity, under personal and situational variables (Super, 1957, 1990), which place individuals in the management of their own life, and thus include the career to the life cycle.

From then, it has started a research and intervention area to specify psychological variables responsible of the efficient performance of individuals in their jobs, which have resulted in new concepts: the interaction between individual needs and their work experiences came from some motivations, which are each, interdependent (Schein, 1965). Among the pioneer studies, we mention those about group dynamic and the deepening on leadership knowledge after Kurt Lewin's works (1935); studies about worker satisfaction (Hoppock, 1935); the impact of motivational theory and the pyramidal representation of needs, by Abraham Maslow (1954); the innovative researches of Chris Argyris (1957), who proposed the need for organizations to create conditions to personal development of each worker; the later studies of Herzberg, Mausner y Snyderman (1959) who demonstrated that, on the contrary of Taylor's thoughts, salary is not the only motivational factor; and the subtle but pioneer change of the relation between individuals and work (Crites, 1969).

The end of the Second World War allowed that the idea of career became more comprehensive and dynamic. In this line of thoughts significant changes occurred: the economist Eli Ginzberg (1909-2002) and his team performed, for first time, a theory on the process of career decision making (1951), which would allow the spreading of new career theories (Osipow, 1968; Osipow and Fitzgerald, 1996).

Hall, with his idea of a multiform career (protean career, Hall, 1976), assigned to individuals the responsibility of performing and changing his own career path: the search for self-valuation based on continuous learning, and the need of individuals to find ways of valuation to achieve success. (Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Hall & Moss, 1998).

This way of understanding the career idea, together with the career idea with resilience (Waterman, Waterman & Collard, 1994) promoted the self-knowledge, the flexibility, the search of information about the work world and the creation of career objectives at long and mid-term, all determining factors for the individual to find satisfactory responses that can adjust to employment capacity.

The labor market world determines new concepts and new ways to handle a career. In fact, the professional career study has moved to the career development, to finally become into the career construction. It is about a paradigmatic change: from vocational psychology, as the study of the career options behavior, towards the study of the relative importance that work has in each one's life, considering the set of variables that act reciprocally (psychologic, socio-economic and cultural contexts).

The career concept and the adopted procedures in organizations are more comprehensive, meaningful and intrinsic. The human resources management model defines the career in its personal aspect, with subjective elements related to work experiences; so it is not limited to a job itself, since it can include jobs in different professions, without necessarily include high-level professions, nor promotions. (Arnold, 1997).

It is obvious that careers can be seen as a sequence of work roles and of experiences in life; however, careers develop in specific social and cultural environments. Therefore, they can also be considered "owned by organizations" (Campbell & Moses, 1986), allowing the organization to get and keep the helpful workers and replace those unhelpful (Baruch, 2004). In this sense the organization can assume a determinant role establishing the career path, providing defined positions and promotion mechanisms – for example, in the project managers career, considering the mentor role (Frame, 2002), which implies a high commitment to learning (Arnold, 1997) -. So, according to Baruch & Rosenstein (1992, p.478), the career can be defined as a development process of experience

and performance in one or more organizations over time. It is about a restrictive approach due to it is related to a professional path and/or the progress that takes place in an organization (we can take as an example the university career, taking into account its more limited sense, which a promotion is reached as academic tests and contests are carried out).

However, career belongs to individuals, and can find basis to define it in the sequence of positions that it takes throughout life, that is, the work roles performed and the acquired experiences. Career is defined as an experience model related to work that takes place throughout life (Greenhaus & Callahan, 1994), including positions, job tasks and besides subjective interpretations of events related to work such as aspirations, expectations, values, needs and feelings (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalh, 2000, p. 9).

Arthur, Hall & Lawrence (1989) suggest that the career concept is not exclusive of any theoretical field, and can be found in psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, economy, political sciences, history and geography, that is in any behavior science, but without an organizational point of view. This fact reveals the need of new approaches and the inclusion of other variables in the career idea, as those who are related to knowledge. The concept of “clever career” (Arthur, Claman & De Fillippi, 1995) means that new abilities are required to open new perspectives.

Contexts get an importance that they had not until now: cultural aspects, the impact of new technologies, the approach of the organization itself as a career system, the new jobs and the evolution of resources management concepts, they are all innovative aspects that interact, completing the career.

### **As a result, career development and management**

The understanding of the organizational context, in its vertical integration aspect and in its horizontal coherence (Baruch, 2004), allows to handle more completely the career development and management, as they are both essential elements. On one hand the *vertical integration* of resources in the strategic organization management uses career practices that allow understanding individual behaviors and satisfy needs and values of each organization member; on the other the *horizontal coherence* that begins in the recruitment process and tries to retain those who are more capable.

How do organizations then understand individual careers? These new concepts recognize that individual careers can develop in different ways. For example, the multiple career concepts (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth & Larson, 1996) almost compel



the individual to assume the responsibility for the decisions taken during the career, which should match with lifestyle preferences that each career model implies.

And from the individual perspective, what about the importance of the career management? It will be better, the more aware the individual is of his self-knowledge and the choice of lifestyle, and the more he can notice his own changes and those from the environment. To create opportunities it will be better if understanding the career idea comprehensively, including every aspects of life and not only those of work life, and also understanding the difference between adaptation and adaptability. The first one is the process of applying abilities in negotiation of events or changes in job demands, while the second one refers on the possibility to maintain the identity while dealing with changes. (Morrison & Hall, 2002). Career development and management is strongly subjective, and needs to understand the nature of careers and to include them in life, the “internal career” according to the Baruch’s definition (2004), which is about perceptions that each one has on their own life development and management.

The accent placed more and more frequently on people derives from the strategic importance of human resources management, whether it is a *shared* (Keenoy, 1990), *strategic* (Miller, 1989), or *social security management* (Le Berre & Castagnos, 2003). Organizations create and develop mechanisms to collect information to reward loyalty, to frame recruitment process, to include co-workers in the organization culture, to develop rewards systems and create personalization and codification strategies (Hansen, Nohria & Tierney, 2000). Those are all elements to promote management systems of flexible careers and adjusted to individual characteristics.

In these terms, the arrival of the professional career came from the expectation to widen the area of the “traditional theory of vocational career” (Inkson & Arthur, 2002, p. 287). The idea is to understand careers in particular, but also the complex patterns of decision making around the core of personal identity, in its intersection with everyday work experiences. With this new understanding, organizations could better manage, and everyone could benefit.

The career management and development, understood as a sub-element of a comprehensive system of human resources until the early 1980s (Gutteridge, 1986), arises from the need for “organizational development”, ambiguously named in this way to suggest that the development of people and of organizations that provides employment, could mutually benefit (French & Bell, 1973).

This aspect could lead to a misunderstanding, if considering that the relationship between employee and employer is permanent. This matter should be considered

on the contrary: that is, the emphasis should be on the promotion of the individual development in the organization strategy, as the career management and the human resources systems are connected by the purpose of search needs satisfaction.

The almost permanent revolution of technologies, the ease to reach information and the social values changes, lead people to reach other ways of satisfaction, as for instance, from creativity or autonomy, and the possibility to develop their careers in the framework of a clear definition of expectations about their development and performance and their possibilities to adapt to challenges. Therefore, there are new demands as rewards systems, not only salary increase. This new post-capitalist society considers that human resources management, in the frame of the relation between individual and organization, is the essential element for the organization to reach management purposes (Drucker, 1993), which must count with scientific tools, such as those that allows the understanding of individual development, that is, the process of the career construction.

### **The organizations answer**

The population move which came from rural zones - where the autonomy work or their loyalty to the landowner was the only source of income - to urban environments, related people with another kind of work, and consequently new kinds of jobs arose. Factory work, taken by the farmers who had moved, demanded and pleasantly accepted, a workforce initially not very specialized, but capable of executing specific and repetitive tasks, which had to be fulfilled in an agreed schedule.

Ironically however, the development of industrialized economy, led by the rationality principles, would take to a new way of loyalty: the concentration of the work market that only accepted professional options, that is, limited tasks, which were changing work into jobs and professions, abandoning options outside that context. Therefore the concept of work market was developed. In other contexts however, traditional concepts of apprentice and teacher were kept.

Positivism, according to Auguste Comte (1798-1857), left as a legacy to psychology pioneers the idea that scientific knowledge could only be quantitative. Consequently the construction of psychological science was based on observation of those phenomena that could be explained and predicted. The predominance of the quantitative, the expansion of industry and technique, as well as the search for general facts and laws, determined in the last years of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX, the construction of the first models in psychology applied to industrial and productive sector. Industrial psychology mainly influenced on the organization productivity and the professional success.

The awareness of human issues within organizations, those resulting from the adaptation man/work, and from work to individual possibilities, caused the emergence of managing working masses, that is, the people who create wealth -first as one of the great tasks of organizations, and then, as one of the great productive, economic, financial and commercial tasks-. Then, those psychologists who assisted with professional options, focused to the importance that the measurable characteristics had as predictors of vocational success. Individual differences psychology assumed a place where the method of skill evaluation was underlying, specifically the professional ones, trying to determine the relation between individual characteristics and the option of a profession (Duarte, 1993, p. 26), and job satisfaction, with the special impact on work motivation.

In this context, the first theoretical model arose in the organizational scope, dealing with the resolution of human issues: the work of the North-American pioneer Frederick Taylor (1856-1915), whose notions were systematized by the so called formal organization theorists, as Henry Fayol (1841-1925) in France; Lyndall Urwik (1891-1983), in England and J.D. Mooney (1884-1957), in United States.

The basis of Taylorist model (Taylor, 1911) was the need of organizing the required tasks to determine the more economical and efficient processes to production, consequently finishing the handwork tradition. This model focused exclusively to organization objectives and was concerned about maximizing performance, consequently caused the imposition of standardized rules to perform tasks, ignoring or giving less importance to social relationships and individuals' needs.

About the relation between individual and their work, Fayol says that Taylorism appreciated – to achieve more efficiency - the work conditions and the administrative process, which depended on a strongly hierarchical and rational structure of the organization (Fayol, 1925).

According to Levy- Leboyer, organization theorists (such as Fayol, Urwik or Mooney), thought that organizations and its efficiency depended on some basic principles as the establishment of a clear hierarchy and direction, which implied a strict authoritarian structure. There was a vertical relation between manager and subordinates and an *exception principle* that advised to separate the everyday problems from those really important; the *control area* puts the boundaries to the tasks of each organization group (Levy-Leboyer, 1974, pp.15-16). This shows that in this historical context, the management methods of individuals tried above all to find the most rational ways to decide in favor of the collective -as to establish clear and undeniable rules in the hierarchy chain-, without taking into account individual needs. After all, it was about a hermetic organization with self-regulation.

In this context, the productive aspect prevailed. Industrial psychology, an expression introduced by Charles Samuel Myers (1873-1946) in 1925, aimed to verify the human characteristics required by each task which decided the workers selection. The economic liberalism, prevailing since the late XIX century and until the end of the First World War, was replaced by an increasing state intervention on economy (as it was the rise of totalitarian governments that promoted the development of the scientific organization of work); and the 1929 great depression in United States strengthened the re-evaluation of the work scientific administration, essentially dogmatic.

Models of the so-called "Industrial State" (Galbraith, 1971), with organizational rules that almost completely forgot the psychological characteristics of individuals, provide the conditions for research, and consequent theorization, on human relations (May, 1933).

The known experiences taken place in the Western Electric Company allowed confirming the supremacy of social over the physiological; it is verified that the relation between physical conditions and productive efficiency may be affected by social conditions, and that these last ones can create motivation in workers. In this manner, human relations current which was the base of organizations psychology, was highlighted (Lévy- Leboyer, 1974; Savickas, 2005) and consequently a new idea of individual – work relation.

Summarizing, human relations theory contributed to improve work conditions, showed the need of considering a set of specific conditions (individual, social, economic and political) for people management and broke away from the reductionist myth of the economic man: the individual is no longer seen only as a productive element, is considered as a part of a work group with interpersonal relationships where each worker is taken into account in its uniqueness.

The organization theory is in a new stage: the open system current. This concept, transferred by economy and originated in biology, was defined by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1971) that placed for the first time in the same level psychological and no psychological variables, so allowing a better understanding and an analysis of relations among different variables: for instance, the relation between the organization structure and the staff satisfaction, restarting the idea of bureaucracy whose key notion was a career system strongly hierarchical (Weber, 1974). This bureaucratic frame allowed a new manner for individual to assume responsibilities according to their characteristics, as well as the possibility of promotions to workers with an adequate potential, assessed according to their work experiences. For the first time the definition of the idea of career included as a prerequisite, a sequence

of related jobs which provides a promotion, in a sequence more or less predictive and leads to prestige (Wilensky, 1961).

But these matters could cause other sort of troubles, such as for example, the distribution of hierarchical levels and their corresponding tasks. The work developed by the *Tavistock Institute* in London during 1950-60, tried to give responses to harmonize the social system, that is, people and their relationships they have with each other, the inter-group competition; their relations with the technical system, with the work conditions, among others. In this way a context of socio-technical reference is created to mention the scheme of variables in which there is reciprocal dependence between the work technical dimension and social one.

The social structure of the organization, studied by R. Likert and his work team in the *Institute for Social Research* in Michigan, identifies four classes of different organization structures (authoritarian, paternalistic, consultative and participatory), and observed that the different kinds of leaderships are conceived from causal variables (relative to personal purposes), *intermediate* (related to the individual education and to the organization environment) and *final* (related to productivity and the results achieved by individuals) (Likert, 1961).

Now, trying to establish a relation between the organizations evolution and the career notion, it is understandable that these studies reinforced the employment image and working stability to those who have developing potential, keeping the dominant idea inherited from the industrial era: a well planned line of production, an almost perfect symbiosis between individual and the organization where he works, worked and will work (Ouchi, 1981), and where strict and standardized career systems prevail.

There is no doubt that organization psychology has evolved, especially since work specificity became more important, as well as the developmental psychology and career management. It is to notice that it is about an evolution influenced by basic psychology, but also according to the development of the organizations themselves, to their multiple purposes, to the fast progress of technology and to the growth of work positions not related to production.

The increasing importance given to people, the decisive aspects in the individual/organization relation, the ideas on human resources management considered as one of the strategies of organizational development, and the modernization of economy carried out mainly from the oil impact in the 1970s, are relevant aspects to contextualize developmental psychology and career management in organizations.

The evolution of the people management role in organizational contexts, the designations adopted by organizations can find some parallelism among periods, economic and social realities and also in the evolution of the work positions themselves: from Staff Administration or Staff Department, positions inherited from Taylorism, towards Human Relations and the Resources Management current, when organizations were considered as open systems and work stress had diminished in later 70s (given that after the collective negotiation of work contracts and social agreements, people management reached a new dimension), until arriving to the Human Potential Development.

At present human resources management is approached from an ethno methodological perspective (Plane, 2003), based on society observation, considering that careers without borders assumes relevance (Arthur, 1994).

Thus we enter in another rationality stage: the people management role widens in its field and is included in the organization strategy dynamically and interactively considering complexity to achieve results related to the organization success. Cowling and Mailer (1981) have already pointed the long term relation between an organization good financial results and an adequate management of human resources; a more recent study finds results which demonstrate the positive relation between the career success and the organizational support. (Thomas, Eby, Sorensen, y Feldman, 2005).

### **Is it about the entrance into a new paradigm?**

Until the emergence of the concept of organization as an open system, the traditional function of the personnel sector in organizations was restrictive and limited, for example, to process salaries, to handle applications. On the other hand, it is known that careers development and management means to include them in a context (Armstrong, 2003; Frame, 2002) through some activities such as: (1) resources planning, that is, establish the policies, purposes and strategies so the organization counts with the people it needs at the right time; (2) get the necessary resources through the promotion of internal and/or external recruitment and selection, establishing strategic and global purposes and considering career plans and adequate salary policies to the staff, design training plans, develop recruitment policies and define strict purposes adjusted to assessment systems; (3) rationalize resources with policies to improve and assess performance (4) increase commitment and satisfaction by means of appropriate salary management and other ways of appreciation, of teamwork stimulation, responsibility and support of laws on health, safety and well-being; and finally (5) encourage the development

of attitudes, skills and specific knowledge, from a need diagnosis, planning and training assessment as well as different career systems.

The era of human potential development determines the ability to create values in organizations. However, this is not possible with only strict reasonable rules; it is not enough to manage well, it is necessary to activate energies and include people, which must be done in two stages: one of strategic management, characterized by planning of resources, jobs and competencies and the other stage of potential development that “tries to link human problems (jobs, qualification, evolution and career development) with organization problems, such as those related to competitiveness. This is the point of view of a change management. This is the point of view of the construction.

Almost a century after Parsons (1909) proposed the founding principles of vocational psychology which was the origin of the developmental psychology and career management, and half a century after Ginzberg and his team (1951) proposed new theories of career psychology; and after Donald Super (1953, 1955, 1957, 1986, 1990) developed and improved the most consistent and solid theory on career development, during the second half of the XX century, new models and theories arrived.

Guichard y Huteau (2001) summarized the diversity of those models: some of them are determinist and influence on the role of early learning or of social condition of education; others focus on the individual as the actor of their own development; others are about projects and professional paths. But these authors consider that currently the investigation core “is not so much about understanding that man can be constructed through his works and his fulfillment, but to wonder why his works can be both, the relativity discovery and the Daachau field plans.” (Guichard y Huteau, p.197)

Indeed, it is about construction needs, which requires psychological raw materials and tools which can help to understand the paths one is going through. It is about discoveries and re-inventions of interventions, looking for demonstrating the consistency of what often appears dissociated. Summarizing, it is about challenging investigation to search conflicts resolution. How? Surely learning and re-learning with history to be able to project towards future: understanding the vocational psychology, placing the careers psychology in their development contexts, and going towards the psychology of life construction. Also surely challenging future and looking for the construction of eclectic models, establishing research-action practices and, consequently, carrying out systematized evaluations.

Some recent works are clear signs of the fact that developmental psychology and career management is changing and that it is alive in its intervention field. The objective of many career models, which have been developed during the late decades of XX century (Herriot, 1992), and which came from the work market transformation and the political, social and economical situations, is to balance individual needs with organizations.

Describe the career development is also contextualizing work systems, the sort of organization where one works (Duarte, 2000), and search the shared responsibility: the organization is responsible for the development of different services in a try to respond to individual needs, and the individuals are responsible for developing and managing their own careers (Duarte, 2004).

Approaches and models presented in the beginning of this millennium have in common this principle: they are focused on the individual / situation. Such is the career management model proposed by Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalh (2000): regarding the individual he emphasizes the importance of pro-activity, getting information to take decisions and family and friends support; regarding the organization, it makes available means and support for employees. Another example is the Gunz model (1989), focused on the distinction between levels of organizational and individual analysis.

Besides, the Schein's model has to be considered. It links organizational activities - strategic planning, human resource planning, evaluation and monitoring of plans, re-planning and re-implementation of new plans - with individual activities - self assessment, careers objectives identification and planning (Schein, 1978, p.191). There is also the Herriot & Pemberton's model, which takes into account four priorities: consider not only the organization, but its involvement in business and in political-social environments; have a cyclical and process nature; consider subjectivity instead of rules in the meaning of career matters; and recognize the interactive nature of individual/organization relation (Baruch, 2004). Currently the Schein's model, with his concept of career anchors, which implies a mix of values, motivations and skills (Schein, 1993), seems to be somehow in danger (Inkson & Arthur, 2002), and its compatibility with the characteristics of some sort of professional activity can only be applied to a limited group of professions. Related to Harriot & Pemberton's model, they consider the career as a continuous sequence, however, another perspective is added: the possibility of contracts re-negotiations (Kotter, 1973; Levinson, Price, Munden, Mandl, & Solley, 1962). This is a normative dimension that refers to the beliefs that the individual has about the explicit and implicit promises on the reciprocal obligations (Savickas, 2004). It can be a new approach at work relations, moving from a work contract to a



psychological one, based on the transaction between organization and individual (Rousseau, 1995). Herriot & Pemberton (1996) adds in their contract model the mutual recognition and the re-negotiation as a point of balance between what the individual offers, and what the organization expects from him. However, perhaps the path consists to propose social contracts instead of psychological ones.

Recent attempts to develop other theories in the field of careers, starting from an innovative approach of the “new science” (Bird, Gunz & Arthur, 2002) and the “answers” to them (Baruch, 2002), but still lacking empirical studies, are examples of the dynamism experienced by the development in this field of applied psychology.

We can conclude, due to the anabiosis of these models, that career development and management is considered a process of continuous construction, which assists in solving problems, frame the take decisions processes in a systematic and realistic manner, and allows combining individual needs with organization needs; finally it is about a permanent learning experience.

That is why, to carry out effective interventions, the professional in this field must count with tools and know their environment; he must promote the development of self-knowledge and knowledge of situational variables that facilitate or inhibit decision-making processes; he also has to assist with the performance of career strategies and he has to “force” the search of information actions, in a bidirectional system which allows regarding the individual, the achievement of realistic plans adapted to changing situations, and regarding the organization, the establishment of career plans according to a previously defined strategy.

Methods and tools used as a support to career development and management are support instruments, but they do not solve every issue by themselves. For instance, to provide the organization with a career information center, where information on contents, functions and evolution possibilities are provided, or to create a career counseling office, or to make the most of the results of an assessment centre to analyze individual potentialities, if combined, they are all important initiatives to assist both, individual and organization in promoting their development.

Psychological evaluation, together with planning and analysis of the career path, and the interventions that confirm its development - as for example training - are important factors in this relation. The individual evaluation of interests, values and other conative behaviors, through psychometric tools combined in a structure which allows the discussion of results for development and adaptation, together with the work carried out in evaluation centers, can be put at the service of the career development, not only because they promote the self-knowledge, but also because they promote changes on attitudes or expectations related to objectives.

So, career management and development also converge in the change from the human potential assessment, from the experiences interpretation, or the results got through the appliance of psychological tools, towards the conceptualization of learning and construction opportunities.

The efficacy of a resources management system which confirms quality is based on two fundamental notions: competence and motivation. Undoubtedly strategy must consider human and social indicators, relating them with production indicators.

When paths of research are renewed, some questions appear: how can be solved the compatibility between “knowledge management”, a generic expression used to name a management related to knowledge (Scarborough, 2003, p. 136) and human potential development? How can be developed new processes to analyze functions? Can a new taxonomy of professions be considered? Which interests and skills can predict from the beginning the job performance? A job change, means keeping the same activity field as occurred in the 70s? (Gottfredson, 2005). These, among other questions, would allow us to open new research paths, because - paraphrasing Antonio Machado, the way is made just walking; research paths to produce comprehensive models. Models which could function as a foldable: its understanding can be adjusted to each one needs, as they are models based on the life project construction; therefore, the construction of life psychology. Then, the need of a paradigmatic change: from the adaptation person/environment towards the adaptation person/new contexts, where work and jobs are one of the means in which they develop. A new reason which identifies the entrance signals that could lead to the success and well being. Is it the life construction psychology? The path seems to be the search of integrator models made in comprehensive *constructos*, which consider psychological and context differences.

Finally, what are theories for? Here they are useful as indicators to understand how people construct their work lives and how work lives will affect their lives. How careers development and management can be thought? Perhaps it is necessary to construct a new paradigm: not the study of how careers develop over time, but rather the study of how people construct their lives through work; the study of the work they are doing, of the jobs they are going through, of the search of satisfaction and personal fulfillment, of the adjustments to social, political and economic realities. Never forgetting that the individual's career is a faithful record of his life, where at every moment it can be contemplated – as Edgar Allan Poe believed that could be done with a writer's papers (which are, let's say, the sheet music of his works) “the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought, at the true purposes seized only at the last moment, at the innumerable glimpses of idea that

arrived not at the maturity of full view, at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable, at the cautious selections and rejections, at the painful erasures and interpolations” (Poe, 1846:163;1980:36-37).

Using metaphors, it can be said that theories can function as a sheet music, or as manuscripts of great literary or scientific works: just as a sheet music shows the whole of a musical composition, or the manuscript records the author’s narrative, each theory tries to record and systematize every rule applicable to the specific field to which it refers. In any case, and to make perfect works, a global vision must be provided: they result from the construction of a new paradigm, from a new manner to order and systematize sounds (music), words (text), the data of an observation (scientific thesis). This is the reason why a perfect work, meaning we consider it complete - whether it is a musical piece, a poem or a scientific thesis - has an internal organization, sustained in the sheet music, in the manuscript or in the theory, being an identifiable unit with meaning, having more possibilities of being enjoyed for much longer.

The famous phrase “La pittura é cosa mentale” attributed to Leonardo Da Vinci can be understood as a discussion between what is original, that is the essential, or copy, that is the appearance. Even with the risk of generalizing the metaphor, it could be said that, as painting - or any other way of art or human creativity, including science – the career of the individual has an artistic dimension. It is a “mental” matter, comes from the way that the individual gets reality and adapts to it, without betraying their essential. The essential lines of their personality and the structure of their personal history are unique – as any work of human spirit (mind taken in the sense of Da Vinci’s phrase). That is, it cannot be reproduced nor copied (as in fact occurs with works of art falsifications or plagiarisms).

Then we can say that new paradigms have to consider individual differences, in opposition of standardization that, in modern times, took mechanization to behaviors, as if all individuals were copies of a lost original.

### **Challenging the future**

What does future require? To develop theories which match with new global society, with flexible organizations and strong competitiveness, but where individualization has its place as well, appreciating psychological approaches to study and understand uniqueness and its meaning in development.

For example, there are theories that begin before the individual starts in an organization, in the construction of life projects. Theories that can be applied to

recruitment and selection methods: the sort of careers that the organization can offer and its corresponding “match” with individual characteristics, the realistic expectations and the organization atmosphere, they are all key elements to design the true possibilities of satisfaction, development and worker mobility in the organization. These are key elements in communication between human resources and individuals, and whose objective is personal development and their involvement in the firm success. Those organizations that aim to retain their workers must provide an organizational management system. The active career trilogy system, a multilevel conceptual contextualization (Baruch, 2004), can help to find the common points between what the organization proposes (at a philosophical and strategic level to the growth and development of the organization, becoming those strategic objectives into operational activities which consider individual matters), and the aspirations, attitudes and actions that the individual aims to develop, being these three levels intrinsically connected each other.

The designation “developmental psychology and career management” may suggest through the word “development” in the expression “career development” more attention on the individual, while the word “management” could be more associated with the organization responsibilities: it is not true. Both concepts converge because, as we have already seen, both, individual and organization share responsibilities in management and development, here considered as processes that intend to achieve common objectives, among which there is job satisfaction, or what is the same, satisfaction in life. So, why use the two words? At first place, due to a historical reality, and second because of the idea of sharing. Regarding the individual, in what refers to the career self-management, understood as a personal development perspective, and in what implies the search of consistency between personal characteristics –which provides personal identity– and the job demands. Regarding the organization, the interactive nature of the relation with individuals grows and changes: it grows because it opens towards other sciences contributions and to other psychologies, specially emphasizing organizational psychology and work psychology; and it changes because the emphasis is no longer exclusively from a developmental point of view, but in a construction perspective.

They will probably be challenges for the next future: to give more importance to the development of individual competencies and new learning; contribute to the study of other psychological dimensions, such as life quality related to the socio cultural environments. Developmental psychology and career management is in its way to (re)integrate research and action, options and adjustments, guidance and selection, differential and developmental studies, individual and organizational studies, educational and industrial studies.

## **Constructing life: old troubles, new challenges for Psychology**

It is eclectic, as Vocational Psychology was in early XX century. It is a psychological specialty, as individual and organization require, as also life understanding requires.

So, psychology assumes its corresponding responsibility: that is to manage the great legacy of the last decade of XX century adding richness, always considering that construction can only be carried out if the individual and organizational voices speak in the same tone, and intending to mutually anticipate in the search of satisfaction.