

Special Section “Work and Health in the Face of Contemporary Metamorphoses”

Methodological approach to plan careers and career paths of people and organizations

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Abstract

What motivations move young people to jobs and organizations? How many workers in today's world of work aspire to organizational retirement, and what types of organizations aspire to it? One research topic that contributes to answering these questions is the study of career development. The literature review reveals a lack of theoretical and practical models that address career development from the combined perspective of individual and institutional relationships. As a result of the comparison, analysis, and systematization of the theoretical sources consulted, a model of multilevel career development stages is presented, which includes the perspective of dialectical analysis of the relationships between individuals and institutions and which critically assimilates the theories of Super (1980) and Schein (1996). The meeting and coincidence points of the work trajectories of individuals and organizations in the career development process are highlighted. Psychological interviews and the assessment and feedback method for potential development can technically contribute to this purpose.

Keywords: career planning, career development, engagement, psychological assessment of developmental potential, human development

ABORDAGEM METODOLÓGICA PARA PLANEJAR CARREIRAS E PERCURSOS PROFISSIONAIS DE PESSOAS E ORGANIZAÇÕES

Resumo

Que motivações levam os jovens a empregos e organizações? Quantos trabalhadores no mundo de trabalho atual aspiram à aposentadoria na organização e que tipo de organizações aspiram a ela? Um tema de investigação que contribui para responder a essas questões é o estudo do desenvolvimento da carreira. A revisão da literatura revela a falta de modelos teóricos e práticos que abordem o desenvolvimento de carreira na perspectiva combinada das relações individuais e institucionais. Após uma revisão bibliográfica, as teorias de Super (1980) e Schein (1996) são selecionadas e assimiladas criticamente por suas contribuições para a compreensão e abordagem do tema a partir de perspectivas individuais e organizacionais, respectivamente. Como resultado da comparação, análise e sistematização das fontes teóricas consultadas, apresenta-se um modelo multinível de fases de desenvolvimento de carreira, que inclui a perspectiva de análise dialética das relações entre indivíduos e instituições e que assimila criticamente as teorias de Super (1980) e Schein (1996). Os pontos de encontro e coincidência das trajetórias de trabalho de indivíduos e de organizações no processo de desenvolvimento de carreira estão localizados. As avaliações psicológicas e o método de avaliação e *feedback* do desenvolvimento potencial podem contribuir tecnicamente para esse objetivo.

Palavras-chave: plano de carreira, planejamento de carreiras, compromisso, avaliação psicológica do potencial de desenvolvimento, desenvolvimento humano

ENFOQUE METODOLÓGICO PARA PLANIFICAR CARRERAS Y TRAYECTORIAS PROFESIONALES DE PERSONAS Y ORGANIZACIONES

Resumen

¿Qué motivaciones mueven a los jóvenes a los puestos de trabajo y las organizaciones? ¿Cuántos trabajadores aspiran en el mundo del trabajo de hoy a jubilarse en la organización, y qué tipo de organizaciones aspiran a ello? Una temática de investigación que contribuye a responder estas preguntas es el estudio del desarrollo de carrera. La revisión bibliográfica da cuenta de carencias en cuanto a modelos teóricos y prácticos que aborden el desarrollo de carrera desde la perspectiva combinada de las relaciones entre individuos y instituciones. Como resultado de la comparación, análisis y sistematización de las fuentes teóricas consultadas, se presenta un modelo de etapas de desarrollo de carrera multinivel que incluye la perspectiva de análisis dialéctico de las relaciones entre individuos e instituciones y que asimila críticamente las teorías de Super (1980) y Schein (1996). Se resaltan los puntos de encuentro y coincidencia de las trayectorias de trabajo de individuos y organizaciones en el proceso de desarrollo de carrera. Las entrevistas psicológicas y el método de evaluación y *feedback* para el desarrollo del potencial pueden técnicamente contribuir a este propósito.

Palabras clave: plan de carrera, trayectoria de carrera, compromiso, evaluación psicológica del desarrollo potencial, desarrollo humano

Nowadays, the development of knowledge and technologies is occurring at an ever-increasing speed, which influences the web of political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental relations that take place at the global level. This complicates the learning, development, and innovation processes that happen at the level of countries and institutions in constructing prosperous and sustainable societies. As a result, the value of human resources and human potential has increased due to their importance for achieving organizational and human goals and objectives (Naciones Unidas, 2016).

For these reasons, the possibilities of human development through work have become the focus of interest of scientists, managers, and administrators in recent years. In this sense, management and development approaches and practices that revolve around occupational health and well-being, training and development, communication, participation, and performance evaluation are needed. All of this is aimed at generating motivation, commitment, and well-being during the performance of the organization's work activity in context.

What motivations move young people to jobs and organizations? How many workers in today's world of work aspire to organizational retirement, and what kind of organizations aspire to it? What motivations underlie people's work trajectories? What kind of organizational strategies and practices foster career development? What can psychology contribute to the future of work and learning?

One of the research topics that contribute to answering these questions is the study of career development, which is nowadays carried out in labor and educational institutions. The present study investigates theoretical and practical models recognized in the scientific literature that approach career development from the perspectives of the individual (Super, 1980) and the perspective of the organization (Schein, 1990), beginning with the stage prior to the person's insertion in the organizational and work environment.

As a result, a theoretical-methodological proposal that applies a multilevel development approach from psychology is offered (Díaz Pérez, 2019). This type of approach to career development contemplates for its analysis the perspectives of both the organization and the people who are part of it in a specific context.

Our study allow us to present a variety of practices that can be performed by the psychology professional, including psychological assessments as a scientific method through which knowledge and relationships between people and organizations are facilitated.

Development

The subject of career development within the work organization has been of interest to scientists in the psychological sciences and organizational and developmental psychology. There are several theories and models on the subject of career development approached from both organizational and individual perspectives.

According to Peiró Silla (2004), the career concept originated in the early 1950s, with the movement of psychology and vocational guidance, whose main exponents are Super, Ginzberg,

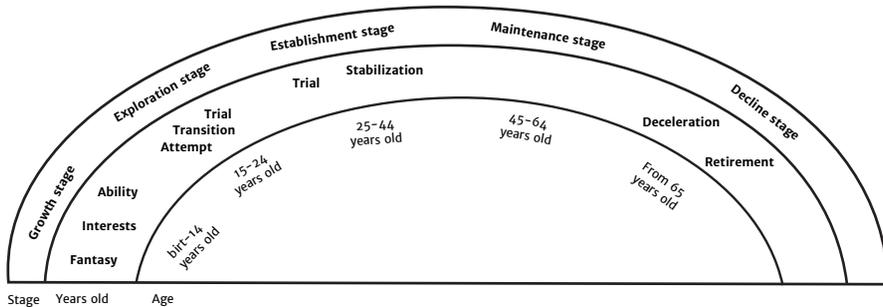
and Crites. This movement is inserted within the humanistic conception, in which career development is part of the person's integral development.

The present study delves into Super's (1980) and Schein and Maanen's (2016) models, finding differences in their concepts of career development and their ways of structuring it in stages. Super's ideas, together with Schein's, contributed to introducing the concept and practices of career development and career planning in psychology and the workplace until today. It is for this reason that both are taken as theoretical references for this proposal.

Donald Super's (1980) model is one of the most traditional in the field of career development, and he has worked in it since the 1950s, linking it with a tradition initiated by Buehler in the 1930s. According to his model, called Life-Career Rainbow, the career is a sequence of positions occupied by a person during the course of their life. The model has two fundamental objectives, and the first one is to teach the concept of career. This includes the notions of life stages, life space, and lifestyle. The second objective is to help young people and adults to analyze their career and project it into the future. The life space is described using nine roles and four main theaters in which people perform. The simultaneous combination of life roles constitutes the lifestyle, and their sequential combination structures the life space and constitutes the life cycle or stages of a person's life. The total structure is the career pattern.

This model also takes into account the decision-making process, which is so important in the life of any person or organization. It considers the decision points of the career pattern and occurs before and at the time of assuming a new role, resigning from an old one, and/or making significant changes in the nature of the role being performed. Personal and situational determinants impact these decision points. The former refer to the individual's genetic constitution, modified by their experiences in the environment: in the womb, at home, and in the community. The latter are situational, geographical, historical, social, and ecological: the economic conditions in which the individual lives from childhood to old age. All of these influence the individual's choices when entering into the labor force and taking on their roles.

On the other hand, Super's (1980) model presents five stages of career development. The theoretical basis lies in the implementation of the career self-concept, which is formed by the individual's needs, values, skills, interests, and aspirations, which is illustrated in Figure 1 (Super & Jordaan, 1973). The synthesis of each stage is presented below:

Figure 1*Donald Super's model of career development*

Note. Super (1980).

In the growth stage, the self-concept is shaped, which is developed through identification with key figures in the family and at school. The exploration stage is of self-examination at school role rehearsals and occupational exploration, as well as in leisure activities and part-time work. Then, in youth, they enter into the labor market or vocational education and try to implement their self-concept until they find a first job and try it out as a potential life's work. In the establishment stage, the individual strives to stay in the job for good, showing commitment and stability, and attempts to make themselves secure in the job. The maintenance stage is characterized by a fundamental concern for maintaining a secure place at work and progressing on the job. In the decline stage, the pace of work decreases until there is a complete cessation of the occupation.

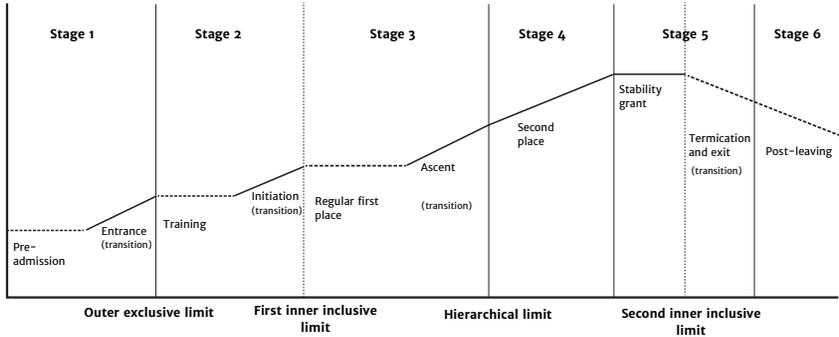
The second model selected is that of Edgar H. Schein. This is one of the contemporary authors who addressed the subject of career development. His theory of career anchors arose in the 1970s from research in which MIT master's students from the Sloan School participated (Schein & Maanen, 2016). The career anchors proposed by Schein (1990, 1996) and Schein and Maanen (2016) are general management competence, functional or technical competence, entrepreneurial creativity, autonomy/independence, security/stability, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. According to the author, a person's self-concept is their career anchor and, once formed, it functions as a stabilizing force. The self-concept is made up of three elements: self-perception of talents and abilities (what one is good at, taking into account successes and failures); core values (what type of organization one wants to work at and what type of work one wants to be associated with, based on needs, motives, and work experiences); and the evolved sense of career-related motives and needs (what we really want from our career and life, supported by reactions to norms and values encountered in work groups and organizations).

In relation to this model's career development stages, there are six moments, which are illustrated in Figure 2. Its key concept is the career anchor, which will be formed and developed in the course of the different stages and will impact the decisions in the psychological processes

of the person and the organization in terms of transactions between the individual and the organization (Peiró Silla, 2004).

Figure 2

Edgar Schein's model of stages of career development



Note. Schein (1996).

First stage: preparation, education, or anticipatory socialization. The second moment is the transition, and its processes are recruitment, initiation into a fraternity, testing, research, selection, or acceptance. Then, the external limit of the organization is passed, and the rites of entrance, installation, and orientation are carried out.

The second stage has two phases: in phase one, training, indoctrination, socialization, testing of the man by the organization, and tentative acceptance into the group are carried out. Subsequently, the first internal inclusive boundary is passed, acceptance as a member and granting status in the organization, rites of passage, and acceptance.

Third stage: initially tested by the man of his ability to function, he is granted status in the organization, and a rite of passage and acceptance is performed. If the individual is accepted, they receive further education and socialization. Then, through training, they are prepared to assume a higher status. It is held preparation, testing, passing the hierarchical boundary, rite of passage, and it may involve passing the functional boundary (rotation).

Fourth stage: complete acceptance and repetition of the processes of the third stage.

Fifth stage: passage of another internal boundary, in which permanent membership and later veteran or senior membership and preparation for exit and exit rites occur.

Sixth stage: granting peripheral status.

Theoretical-conceptual proposal of career development as a multilevel process

As a result of the comparison, analysis, and systematization of the presented theoretical sources, a model of career development stages that includes the perspective of dialectical analysis of relationships between individuals and institutions and critically assimilates the theories of

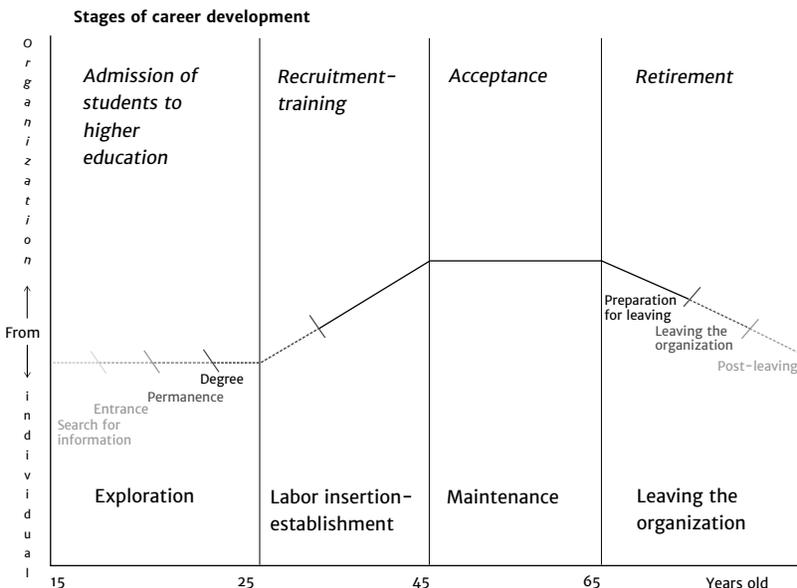
Super (1980), Super and Nevill (1984), and Schein and Maanen (2016), from an organizational development approach based on the evaluation and development of human potential, is proposed (Díaz Pérez, 2020).

Career development is a multilevel process that considers career from the perspectives of both the organization and the individuals and groups. At the level of the organizational project, it is understood as policy, strategy, and career planning; at the level of individuals, it is conceived as a work trajectory that is part of the life project of individuals (Cabrera Lorenzo & Díaz Pérez, 2021).

For individuals, the career is understood as the sequence of roles and functions that are performed associated with a profession, contemplating people’s own reflections on their activities and work practices. Its development begins with the study of the profession, to then go on to perform as a worker in jobs defined by the organization by which they are employed. Likewise, it is understood by the organization as a policy and strategy for developing human talent, which involves planning the career of people within an organization. This is a process of mutual growth and learning, in which knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and personal, group, and organizational competencies are acquired, modified, and increased, considering individual and collective work motivations, as well as the objectives of the organization to which one belongs. Based on these two conceptualizations, the following model of career development stages is proposed, described below and represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Multilevel model of career and path development for stages



The first stage is exploration (15 to 24 years of age). This stage has nine years: the first is called transition and is characterized by the search for information and decision-making about the professions or occupations of preference, taking into account the motivations, abilities, skills, values, and opportunities available. This is followed by the entrance to technical or higher education, in which the person will test and check if the previous elements are satisfied. At this stage, what Super (1980) calls professional self-concept is formed, and Schein (1996) recognizes it as the beginning of the internal career. Adjusting these elements to reality will influence the next substage: permanence. In this stage, the development of theoretical-practical knowledge, skills, and values associated with the future job takes place. This stage ends with the degree, which represents the culmination of student life and social recognition as a professional. With it, the recent graduate begins the search and selection of a job.

The study of this first stage of the career makes it possible to understand, through the identification and definition of the personal and situational determinants present, as well as those needs, values, skills, interests, and aspirations of that stage of life, the reasons why individuals will aspire to certain professions, jobs, and organizations.

From the organizational point of view, the first stage of career development is the admission of students to higher education. At this initial stage, tests are usually administered to measure knowledge and skills of various kinds. These elements are governed by educational policies established at the country level. This stage continues with the training and development of theoretical and practical knowledge, skills, and values associated with the profession, according to the educational and instructional objectives established by each training institution.

The second stage is the labor insertion-establishment (between 25 and 44 years old). At this point, the transition from school to the world of work takes place and the change from the role of the student to that of the worker. An individual's entry into an organization results from a decision-making process on the part of both parties (person and organization). From the individual's perspective, three variables influence this process: the attraction to the organization, the degree of effort made by the individual to join it, and the eventual choice of an organization over alternative job offers.

Once in the organization, the person will test the elements that make up their self-concept (evolved during their time as a student), as well as the theoretical and practical knowledge, skills, and values acquired in relation to their profession. The results of this test may be unsatisfactory, leading to changes before finding the definitive job; or satisfactory, generating efforts aimed at stabilizing in the organization. This would make it possible to explain the motives underlying people's labor trajectories and to outline organizational strategies to retain human talent with tempting, innovative, and sustainable proposals.

From the organizational approach, this stage is called recruitment-training. In this stage, the organization decides who joins or does not join based on the established organizational needs and policies. This is followed by the training of the professional, in which their competencies are tested and developed.

This is followed by the third stage, called maintenance (individual) (between 45 and 64 years old) or acceptance (organization). At this stage, the employee strives to maintain their position in the organization and contributes positively to achieving the organization's objectives. At the same time, they try to satisfy their needs and motivations. This is related to Schein's career anchors, which are developed and accentuated at this stage. For its part, the organization, based on the individual's contributions, will accept them as a permanent member. This will involve further training, education, and socialization of the employee.

At this stage of career development, the individual's self-concept or professional anchor and their correspondence with the objectives of the organization to which they belong will be of vital importance. Thus, an effective career system will be required based on organizational strategies and talent management practices that promote the development of individual and institutional potentialities and conceive it as a process of continuous improvement throughout life.

The fourth and last phase is leaving the organization (generally after age 65). It is made up of three substages, whose names coincide from the individual and organizational perspectives: preparation for leaving (the direct link with the job decreases, succession planning takes place, the handover of the position to the successor begins), leaving the organization (change of role from worker to retiree), and post-leaving (in which a different type of link with the organization can be established, for example, consultant, rehired worker, professor emeritus, counselor).

This period will be positively impacted by the degree of commitment achieved by the individual not only with their work but also with the organization in which they have managed to implement and develop their professional self-concept. This is important for organizations with lifelong employment policies and aspire to internal and external customer loyalty. Throughout the work trajectory, represented in Figure 3 by the intermediate line that symbolizes individual-institutional labor relations, there will be dissimilar transactions in the different stages of the life cycle, which will result in a greater or lesser commitment to the job and the organization.

Organizational human potential development as a model of action for the psychology professional

The model of development of human organizational potential (in the original in Spanish, Desarrollo del Potencial Humano Organizacional – DPH) (Díaz Pérez, 2017) has been used to implement development programs in organizations and institutions of different types. One of its applications has been to contribute to the development of professional careers.

Among the basic concepts of this proposal, there are that of a human being with needs, motivations, and professional and life projects proposed to be carried out in the work organization. Work is understood as a fundamental activity of people and institutions. Institutions are understood as systems of organizations that form a stable part of society, with a legally recognized social purpose of a certain sector of human activity and through which social control is exercised. Organizations are seen as subsystems legitimized by the institution to which they belong, with learning and development needs, and are the bearers of a strategic development

project. At the individual (worker) and group (organization) levels, demands and resources are recognized and taken into account in career development approaches.

The DPH model is considered an integration matrix for professional decision-making. This is because, from its general statement of object, purpose, and methodology, theories, methods, and techniques that best allow to specifically address a problem defined in terms of development are selected and critically assimilated, being addressed through a methodological strategy based on the evaluation for the DPH. This will imply determining in a specific context the zones of proximate development at the organizational level and the people who are its members, based on the identification of strengths, potentialities, and opportunities.

An important element is that development approaches have a holistic and multilevel aspect, which must influence individual and organizational dimensions. In individuals, it should bring about changes in their beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, roles, and values. In the organization, it should positively impact the strategic, structural, and work system dimensions of the organization, as well as on the individual, group, and organizational behavioral levels. The result will be individuals and organizations better prepared to face the challenges that arise from internal relationships and those that emerge from relationships with their environments.

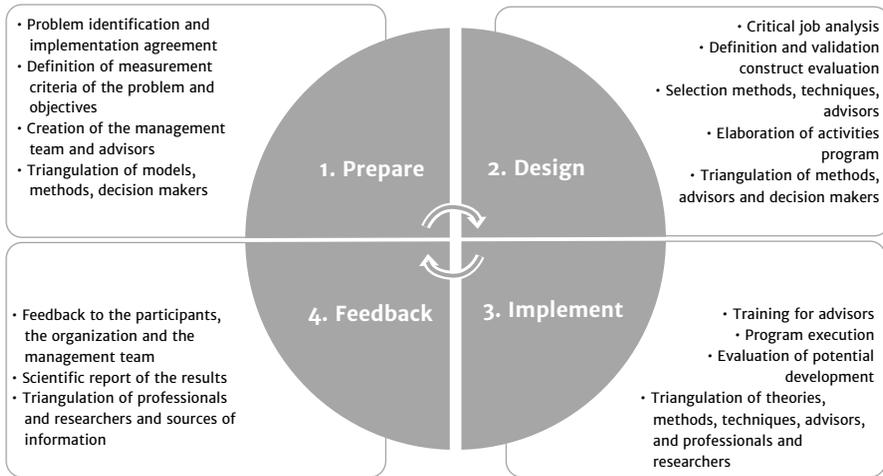
The DPH model emphasizes sustainable organizational development and, therefore, includes criteria for measuring individual and organizational performance (multilevel). The measurement criteria determined by a diagnosis define when a psychological problem, due to its extent and intensity, requires a developmental approach. These measurement parameters can be used to assess the internal and external impacts of the proposed innovative solution. They also identify and establish tailor-made criteria for the design and validation of the proposed development program. An updated explanation of the model, each of its phases, and other possible applications of the proposal can be found in Díaz Pérez (2020).

The preparation phase aims to reduce the natural anxieties and resistance to change by providing a general idea of the action plan to be followed, and the development program is framed. The second phase is the design of the intervention program, and the objective is the construction of a prototype project or development program for piloting and implementation. The third phase is the implementation and its objective is the implementation of the programmed actions through which the proposed innovations begin to be institutionalized. The feedback phase is crucial because it allows the interweaving of each phase. The main objective is to identify meeting points between individual and organizational projects through the realization of psychological evaluation for development.

A recent empirical investigation on this subject follows the four phases and the different steps that make up a procedure for DPH (Díaz Pérez, 2006), whose graph is shown in Figure 4. The investigation bases the value of the method of the psychological evaluation of potential development, used for career development (Cabrera Lorenzo & Díaz Pérez, 2021).

Figure 4

Methodology for evaluation and development of organizational human potential



Note. Díaz Pérez (2006).

The study of work trajectories and career plans occupies academics and scientists from different countries and cultures, concerned with the impacts of technological progress at the global level on the rhythm of human life, culture, history, and the dynamics of work intensification, studying them from the human side and posing learning as a mediator (Paskvan et al., 2016). Associated with this, the phenomena of precariousness at work on a territorial scale and the working conditions and psychosocial risks of workers linked to the education and learning sectors are studied (Andrade & Falcão, 2018). In turn, transformations in work and learning contexts demand new skills from workers, including cognitive flexibility (Martins & Gonçalves, 2022) to deal with changes.

Several questions raised in the ongoing research are whether the existence of congruence or concordance between the organizational project and the personal project – associated with professional careers –, which may result in a different construct or a dimension of organizational commitment (Díaz Pérez, 2019). In this regard, other related questions arise: could the existence of individual goals and projects be mediators of commitment to work and the organization? What would be the associated psychological and social resources that should be enhanced and trained? What mechanisms of integration and relationship are appropriate, and in what contexts can they be facilitated? It is considered that deepening these paths of study on the relationship between career development and organizational and personal commitment can contribute to the global and local debate on the future of work and learning that is taking place in today's world.

Conclusions

The career development process involves the trajectories of individuals and organizations. This process is understood at the organizational level as policy, strategy, and career planning. At the individual level, it is conceived as objectives and strategies that are part of people's life projects. Multiple individual-work-organization transactions will occur during the different stages of the life cycle of these relationships, which will result in a greater or lesser commitment to work and the organization. This dynamic of relationships in the different stages of career development opens up dissimilar demands for the psychology professional.

Identifying and defining the personal and situational determinants present, as well as needs, values, skills, interests, and aspirations, help understand why individuals will aspire to certain professions, jobs, and organizations. The development of organizational strategies to retain human talent with tempting, innovative, and sustainable proposals is another problem that can be addressed by the proposal presented here, considering the motives that underlie people's employment trajectories. This will be possible due to talent management practices that increase knowledge between people and organizations and promote the development of individual and organizational potential, conceiving career development as a continuous improvement throughout life.

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