

Working Paper 234

The Impact of Life Stages and Career Stages on
Employee Job Performance: A Review

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May 2005

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Performance: A Review**

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Abstract

A career is a life-long process, that includes the preparation for, and choice of an occupation. One's present job is just one of a sequence of work experiences encompassed by a career. It has often been seen that employees who occupy similar positions in an organizations may have completely different interests, goals and job expectations. Research in sociology, clinical psychology and vocational psychology suggests that people go through life stages and career stages that affect their job attitudes, work perceptions and performance.

This paper attempts to study and compare six different career stage models, proposed by Levinson et al. (1978) Erickson (1968), Super (1957), Schein (1978), Ference et al. (1977) and Dalton et al. (1977). The paper examines career stage from an organizational point of view and tries to match it with different job performance. It shows that at each career stage individuals have certain characteristics and concerns that have an impact on their job related characteristics. It describes how a career stage influences job attitudes, job satisfaction, corporate culture perceptions and job performance of an employee. The paper talks about the possible concerns that an organization could face given that a bulk of its employees are in one career stage, rather than spread out across the spectrum of various career stages. A strategic career stage analysis can help organizations understand their employees' better and device appropriate methods of motivating, selecting and retaining their employees.

Introduction:

Microsoft executive (Director of business development) quits the rat race and joins the fight against illiteracy (December 2002)¹

Reebok's Chief Marketing Officer Muktesh Pant quits to start Yoga business (2004)²

£50,000-a-year director for the charity Childline, Justin Irwin who quit to play darts says I'll be world champion (April 2005)³

In an era when many countries and people are facing employment issues, it is intriguing to read headlines given above where people who would be considered as having very successful careers choose to give up their current successful careers and embark on alternative and uncertain careers. It is always intriguing to a person who has not made it to find out what made these throw away their careers and start on a new career. This is especially intriguing in today's 'knowledge or information age' where an employee is considered to be one of the most precious assets of an organization, and organizations are continuously waging the war for talent (a phrase popularized by McKinsey consultants). Organizations are challenged to attract and retain only the best talent with the winning companies having the best and the brightest talent driving their performance forward.

Other headlines like the ones below point to the importance of retaining talented employees.

Theratech research VP quits, stock drops 11 pct (August 2004)⁴

Oracle Sinks to New Low as Another Executive Quits (April 2002)⁵

Retention of talented employees and their job performance depends on the fit between an employee's objectives and the organization's objectives to match (Levinson, 1970; Schneider et al., 1995). It is often seen that employees who occupy similar positions in an organizations may have completely different goals and job expectations. Their reasons for working are also likely to change over time. How an employee feels about the job and behaves might be influenced by why he or she is pursuing their career and what they want to accomplish through it. Job related attitudes and behavior might change over an employees' career (Cron, 1984).

A career is a life-long process that includes the preparation for and choice of an occupation. One's present job is just one of a sequence of work experiences encompassed by a career. Hall (1976) defines career as 'the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work related experiences and activities over the span of a person's life'. A career is more than the objective sequence of occupational, organizational and job moves made by an individual. The many subjective aspects of a lifetime of work, such as, developing a professional self identity (Schein, 1980), continuing personal growth, meeting

¹ <http://www.fastcompany.com/online/65/wood.html>

² http://www.forbes.com/home_asia/newswire/2004/02/09/rtr1252949.html

³ <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,8543-1555173,00.html>

⁴ <http://www.aegis.com/news/re/2004/RE040829.html>

⁵ <http://www.thestreet.com/tech/ronnaabramson/10020222.html>

personal needs, setting and meeting professional goals and resolving conflicting demands from other areas of one's life (e.g. family, friends, health) are important (Hall, 1976).

Research in sociology, clinical psychology and vocational psychology suggests that life stages, and particularly career stages that an employee goes through affects their job attitudes, work perceptions and performance. At each career stage the concerns, motivations etc., of an employee are different. Managers must understand the career stages of their subordinates and treat them appropriately to help the employees achieve their personal, as well as organizational goals. Managers must also indulge in career development programs that are consistent with the career stages of the individual.

In the rest of the paper, we will review the different models of career stages and their impact on employee performance.

Life Stages and Career Development – The Concepts:

Career and life stage models relate to two aspects of career development, namely career management and career perspective.

Career management is the organization's definition of careers, with attention to the needs and characteristics of the organization. Some of the factors that might affect career management include the size of the organization, organizational rate of growth (or decline), employees' demographic characteristics, volatility of the business, staffing patterns, legal considerations and the knowledge, skills and abilities (or deficiencies) of the organizational members. Corporate human resource planning is mindful of and sensitive to individual matters but always within the context of corporate policy, planning and strategy.

The career perspective considers the features and experiences of the organizational members. A person's career or passage through the organization is emphasized, and career is considered as part of the more general life needs and experiences.

Life Cycles are associated with psychological or social developmental tasks and lifetime activities. A person's life cycle is a series of stages characterized by changing patterns of developmental tasks, career concerns, activities, values and needs that emerge as the person ages and passes through various age ranges (Hall, 1973, Levinson et al., 1978). Although many researchers (Erickson, Super, Miller and Form, Schein and Levinson) agree on the basic concept of life cycles and stages, they differ on the number and length of the stages and the developmental tasks that define them.

Career stages are concerned with the world of work and involve work related behaviors through which the individuals seek to define, clarify or fulfill their psychological make up, needs and values.

Models of Life Stages:

A number of authors have proposed models of life stages and their impact on the individuals and the organization. We will briefly discuss these theories in this section.

Erickson's Life Stage Model

Erick Erickson has developed a life stage approach that lists eight stages (see Table 1). The different life stages, the age at which the individual goes through these life stages and the characteristics of the individual in these different life stages is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Eric Erickson's Life Stage Model

Name	Number	Age	Characteristics
Childhood	1-4	0-15 yrs.	Oral, anal, genital and latency.
Adolescence	5	16-24	Focus on ego identification often with role confusion and inability to establish an occupational identity; search for values and role models and testing of various possibilities (identity or life purpose).
Young adulthood	6	25-39	Features intimacy and involvement as the person is ready to fuse identity with others or to commit to affiliations or institutions, including a work organization. Commitment may involve major personal sacrifices or/and compromises. Personal conflict involves the implied trade-offs between the sense of identity and autonomy (gained in stage 5) with involvement and commitment.
Adulthood	7	40-64	A primary concern with establishing and guiding the next generation. The forms that this concern takes vary, depending on personal competencies and life situation. Possibilities include: creative writing and mentoring and building a business for one's children.
Maturity	8	65 and over	Satisfaction with and acceptance of one's life's pattern and activities.

In the Childhood stage, the growth of a child is characterized by their physical development, development of communication, oral and written skills.

Adolescence stage is a stage of constant search for an identity or a life purpose. The focus of the individual is on ego identification with role confusion and inability to establish an occupational identity.

In the Young Adults stage, people are ready to merge their identity with those of others or institutions. This stage is characterized by intimacy and involvement. People in this stage may find that they have to make major personal sacrifices or compromises. They will find that the commitment that they are ready to make may involve tradeoffs between the sense of identity and autonomy along with involvement and commitment.

In the Adulthood stage, the primary concern is to guide the next generation. Concerns might be mediated based on personal competencies and life situations. People in this stage tend to indulge in mentoring, building businesses for their children, etc.

In the final stage of Maturity, one reaches a situation wherein they are satisfied with and accept the various actions that one has taken through out their life. By this stage, a sense of integrity, satisfaction and acceptance is very strong in the individual.

Stage theorists often characterize stages by developmental tasks. The individual must work through the tasks of one stage to advance into the following stage. However a person may advance in chronological age, but fail to meet the developmental criteria for the life stage advancement. A thirty five year old person may never have resolved the problem of preserving personal identity while making a commitment to a relationship or institution. So there might be a difference between the chronological age of a person and their developmental stage.

From the organizational point of view, individual performance might depend on the fit between the work role of the individual and the developmental stage of the person. Researchers like Super; Schein; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Mckees; Dalton, Thompson and Price have worked in this field and developed models relating to the career stages of an individual. Working on Super's basic model, Cron & Slocum, (1986) have identified four career stages that have a link with the age of an individual. However, the other career stages studies have not found these age groups and career stages to be perfectly correlated. Levinson et al., (1978) have convincingly argued that age ranges are more correctly referred to as 'life stages', of which career and occupation are one component.

Levinson et al., (1978) Life Stage Model

Levinson et al., (1978) in their landmark study have described adult life stages right from the time they leave their families for the first time to the phase of adulthood. The model is divided into six stages and is given in Table 2. It has many similarities with Erickson life stage model discussed above.

The Early Adult Transition stage is associated with departure from the familiar home surroundings to enter college or to start their first job. The dependence of the person shifts from family to peer support.

The Movement into the Adult world, Structure Building phase is concerned with trying to establish individual identity. This phase involves self-examination, movement into adult roles, attempts to establish a secure position and to create occupational and social structures for oneself. Right kind of mentoring and guidance at this stage can help provide a vision and a goal for the person and put them on a career growth path.

In the next stage of Transition, individuals are just getting settled in their careers and life and go through major events in their life like marriage. This is a period of great personal instability and a reexamination of personal and occupational attachments. If we compare this stage with Erickson's life stages model, we find that the characteristics in this stage are very similar to the ones identified by Erickson in his Adolescence stage, wherein individuals are trying to carve out their own identities.

Table 2: Levinson et al., (1978) Life Stage Model

Stage	Name	Approximate age	Highlights
1	Early adult transition	18-22	<p>Leave family. Reduce familial dependence. Peer support critical. Transitional mechanisms come into play, e.g., college, military, first job.</p>
2	Movement into adult world; structure building	23-28	<p>Attempt to establish secure position. Search for self-examination. Tentative commitments to adult roles, responsibilities and relations. Erect occupational and social structures. Mentoring critical. Guides for planning and future actions are provided by one's vision of future possibilities and one's desires.</p>
3	Transition	28-32	<p>Incomplete development or flaws from earlier periods recognized. Rewriting or restructuring to correct shortcomings. Great personal instability with job and marriage changes common. Reexamination of personal and occupational attachments. Major occupational changes are not common.</p>
4	Settling down and further structuring	33-40	<p>Seek deeper relationships and commitments with family, work, organization and other valued group. Desire for greater orderliness and control of factors affecting personal and professional life. Attempts to (further) realize the dreams, visions and idealizations of past periods. Push to achieve career highs, become one's own person. Search for tangible signs of recognition.</p>
5	Transition	38-42	<p>Movement from young to middle adulthood stage. (Re)assessment of accomplishments and shortfalls in terms of ambitions and the future visualized in earlier stages. Confrontation with one's finite life span and realization of aging. Challenge to get in touch with one's self, start on path to self-acceptance in light of realities of accomplishments and shortfalls or inadequacies. Greater focus on the here and now.</p>
6	Initiation, middle adulthood	mid-40s	<p>Crystallizing of individuality. Greater sense of reality about what one possesses and less emphasis on competition or occupational hill climbing. Greater desire to enjoy one's own life and work. Further manifestations of self-acceptance and internal rather than external values. Assumption of mentoring job. Successful combination of attachment and concern for others with potential for improved capabilities (as the need for the latter arises).</p>

In the Settling Down and Further Structuring stage, the individual begins the process of seeking deeper relationships and commitments with family, work, organizations and other groups that they value. They desire a greater control over their personal and professional lives. They push to achieve career highs and constantly search for tangible signs of recognition.

In the Transition period, individuals experience a phase of reassessment where the individual assesses the ambitions and goals they had visualized in an earlier stage. Based on the realities of their accomplishments, shortfalls and inadequacies, they restate their goals and ambitions to try to get in touch with their real self and a sense of self-acceptance. A realization of aging sets in this phase where people are moving from the stage of a young adult to the middle adulthood stage. This stage is linked with that described by Erickson as his Young Adulthood stage, where the individual is settling down, getting more involved and committed in their work.

The last stage of Initiation, middle adulthood described by Levinson et al. (1978) talks about the age group above mid forties. In this stage, an individual has a greater sense of reality about oneself and pays less emphasis on competition or occupational climbing. They have manifestation of self-acceptance and internal (rather than external) values and have a great desire to enjoy their life and work. It is at this stage that they take up mentoring roles. This phase can be compared with the Adulthood and Maturity phases as described by Erickson in his research.

Super's Career Stage Model

Super's career stage model is divided into five stages and is given in Table 3.

In the first stage, Growth stage, emphasis is on development of self-concept through family, school and friendship experience, very much like the Childhood phase described by Erickson.

The next stage, Exploration stage, is a stage of self-exploration where the individual explores his likes, dislikes, vocational interests, role explorations, etc. This stage could be probably best associated with the stage of Adolescence in the Erickson model and Early adult transition in the Levinson et al., (1978) model. The main goal of the individual in this phase is to choose the correct occupation. Concerns in choosing their career might be as follows:

1. Uncertainty owing to time horizon of the decision (whole life decision);
2. Uncertainty regarding congruence of ability and job requirement;
3. Difficulty in decision making because of lack of prior job experience that could guide the individual towards the right career decision;
4. Changing organizational expectations from the person that could create stress later on;
5. Availability of a large number of career choices.

In the Establishment stage, people look to establish themselves firmly in their careers. By this stage, the career paths of people become clearer and persons seek stability to gain a greater sense of personal security. This is the stage of commitment, intimacy and involvement as described by Erickson in his Young adulthood stage and Settling down as described by Levinson et al., (1978).

Table 3: Super Life Stage Model

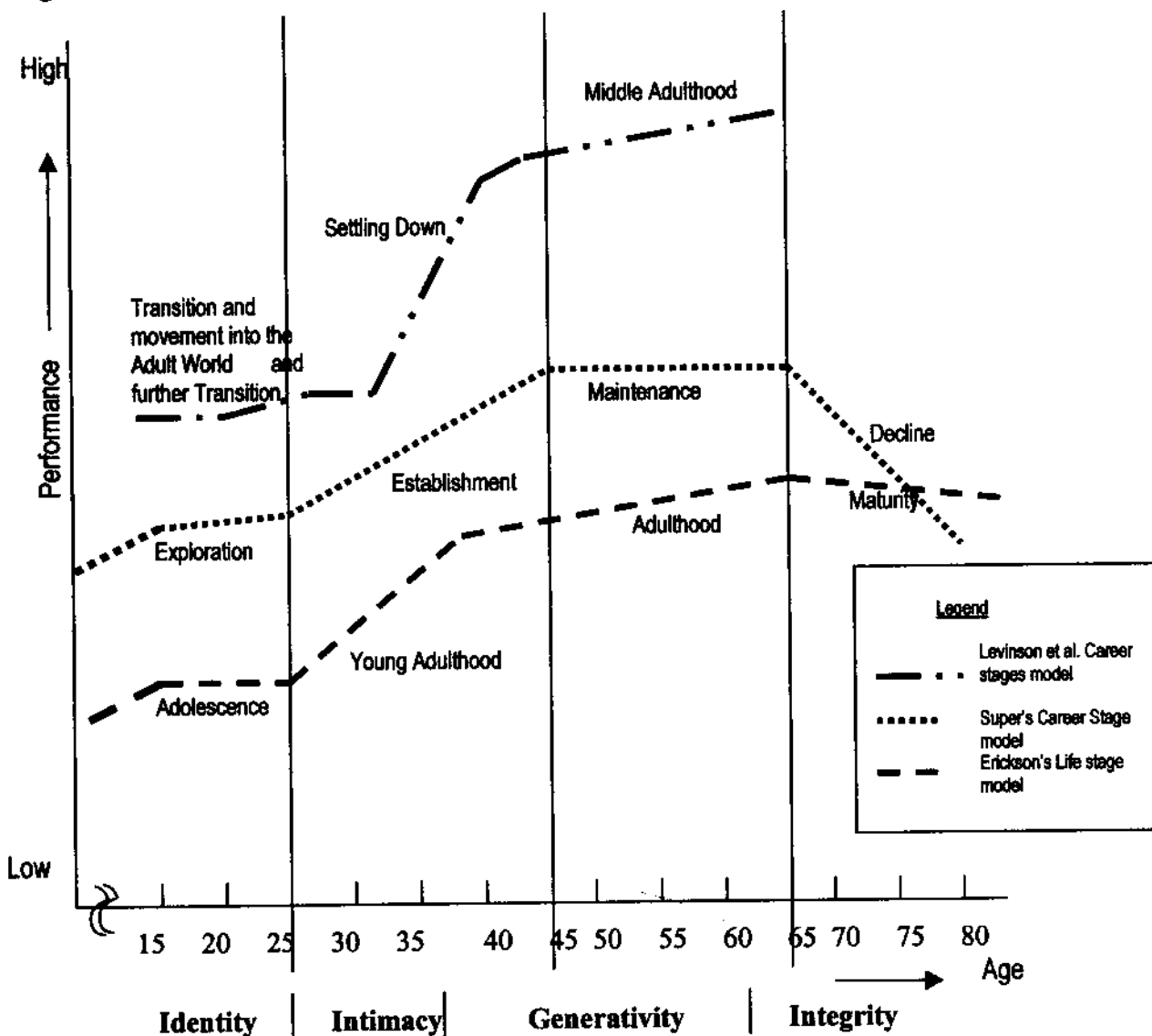
Name	Number	Age	Characteristics
Growth	1	1-14	Emphasis on development of self-concepts through family, school and friendship experiences. Assuming greater importance towards the end of the stage is definition of interests and personal capability through social participation and reality checking.
Exploration	2	15-24	Multiple work-related events feature self-examination and occupational and role explorations. The explorations are given form by school, leisure and part-time work activities. Early in this stage (15-17 years), initial work-related choices are made by sifting through needs, interests, capacities, values and perceived opportunities. By the end of this stage, a beginning full-time job, which will serve as an initial testing ground of a life work, has been located or is focused upon.
Establishment	3	25-44	An effort to establish a permanent place in the work world, with or without early trial and job shifting. Initial choices may not work out and people may change work, employers or occupations. Toward the end of the stage, the career pattern becomes clearer and persons seek stability to gain a greater sense of personal security. For many people in many occupational pursuits, the 50s and early 40s are a highly creative period.
Maintenance	4	45-64	Emphasis on consolidating one's position or situation. There is greater emphasis on continuing along established lines than on breaking new ground.
Decline	5	65 and over	The erosion of physical and mental powers and the conclusion of one's major occupational role. The need to develop new post-work roles becomes a major challenge.

In Maintenance stage, people reassess their achievements. Based on their assessment, they either acceptance their situation or quit their current jobs and move on to others careers. There is an emphasis is on consolidating one's position or situation. This stage compares directly with Erickson's Adulthood stage and Levinson et al.,'s (1978) Transition stage.

In the last stage, defined as the Decline (Disengagement) stage, people become aware of aging, and erosion of their physical and mental powers. They begin to lose interest in their work and start focusing on growth beyond their jobs. The task of motivating people in this stage is very difficult. This phase can be compared to the Maturity stage of Erickson, and to some extent, the Initiation and Middle Adulthood stage of Levinson et al.

A comparison of the three models discussed above is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Comparison between Erickson's, Levinson et al.,'s and Super's Models



The different life stages of the three models have been graphed with age (X-axis) and job performance of the individual (Y-axis). The lines represents different career stage models have been shown at different levels of job performance (Y-axis) for easy readability. This does not imply that a person analyzed under Super's career stage model would have a lower performance than one analyzed under the Levinson career stage model vis-à-vis with Erickson's life stage model.

Career Stages in Organizations

From an organizational perspective, understanding of the life stages has important applications to manage the career stages of an individual. Life stages are important to gain an appreciation of the concerns an individual faces at each of these stages and the kinds of motivational inputs that are needed to facilitate job performance, growth and individual adaptation to the organization.

We will now discuss the various career stage models that have been proposed by organizational researchers and try to relate them to the life stage models discussed above.

Schein's Basic Career Stages in an Organization

Schein (1978) analyzed the effects of information on 'career dynamics' in organizations. His model with the various stages and sub-stages is given in Table 4. Three new career stages, namely service or dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and life stages were added in Schein (1980).

Schein (1978) bases his model on the assumption that some features of an individual's personality, skills and abilities are fixed while others can change to varying degrees. Socialization processes have a greater influence on the pliable factors. Individuals also tend to adapt their situations they encounter in organizations, whether it's a new job, a new department, or a new task, and exhibit new attitudes, values, a new sense of self and generally substantially different behavior patterns in response to new situations.

Schein's (1978) model also considers vertical and lateral career moves and structural boundaries of the organization. A move may affect ones proximity to departments or units valued for mobility purposes. All career ladders do not offer equal chances for promotion. Social and political processes also affect careers (Pfeffer, 1994).

According to Schein (1978) each person's career anchor is his or her self-concept, their self-perceived talents and abilities; basic values, and most importantly, an evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to the career. Career anchors however evolve as the person gains job and life experience and passes through various stage of the career and various life stages. Self-concept serves as an anchor, a foundation of values and motives that the person hold's on to if forced to make a choice. As per this theory, self-concepts of most people revolved around categories that reflect their individual values, motives and needs.

Table 4: Schein's Basic Career Stages in an Organization:

Number	Description	Orientation, Activities and Processes
1	(a) Aspiration (b) Recruitment	Schooling, preparation, formation of initial ideas. Search, recruitment, pre-employment processing, hiring, orientation, initial exposure to rites of entry.
2	Training, indoctrination	Informal and formal training, indoctrination, exposure to socialization processes with varying degrees of acceptance by peers and other members. To the extent the person is accepted, he or she gains organizational status and encounters further rites of passage.
3	First regular assignment (new organization member) Substages (varying degree in subsequent assignments) (a) Job learning and performance adequacy (b1) Performance sophistication and efficiency (b2) Preparation for mobility or promotion (building critical knowledge, skills and abilities) (c) Performance peak, leveling (d) Potential for change and obsolescence (e) Redirection (possible)	Functional/departmental assignment with responsibility Indoctrination into subunit's standards for personal conduct, behaviors and procedures; acceptance or rejection of person by immediate work group, associates and other business contacts. Degree of socializing and informal learning affected by acceptance of peers and associates. Self-test of knowledge, skills and abilities relative to job needs. Seeking visibility and recognition of accomplishments. Response to organization as business and social unit and identification with people, unit or enterprise. Recognition of job as test of one's need for personal growth and judgment of extent to which this can be attained through assignment or organization.
4	Subsequent assignment(s) and substages	Potential to further legitimize status and position, achieve full acceptance. Various processes of step 3 repeated.
If person remains in the organization		
5	Granting or tenure Seen as permanent member or senior citizen.	Passage into other organization status groups.
6	Focus on retirement Elder statesman/senior citizen	Consider pre- and post-organization life alternatives after exit, mate's plans, economic needs and status and location desires and realities.
7	Commitment to retirement Member without portfolio	Exit preparations, exit rites, preparations for post-company living.

*Based on Schein, E.H. (1978). *Career dynamics matching individual and organizational careers*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

The various anchors that Schein (1978) outlines are as follows:

1. **Autonomy/ independence**
2. **Security/ stability**
3. **Technical-functional competence**
4. **General Management competence**
5. **Entrepreneurial Creativity**
6. **Service or dedication to a cause**
7. **Pure Challenge and**
8. **Life Stages**

Schein (1978) found that a broad range of people having different career anchors existed in all types of occupations, there was no bias towards a particular career anchor in any occupation. However, with the changes in the environment, like reduced job security, increase in competition, wider range of career options, changing lifestyles etc. there were significant changes in the content and structure of career stages (Schein, 1996). The most significant changes came about in people who had their career anchor as stability and security. From job security as their main comforting factor they have been forced to lay emphasis on self-reliance and self-management. They need to constantly update their own skills and make themselves marketable, even if they lose a job in one organization, there by retaining their sense of security by ensuring that the control is internal and not external.

From a managerial perspective, when an individual is faced with different anxiety provoking situation, their reaction would be different based on their career anchors, and so the incentives offered to these employees to ensure superior performance, also needs to be different. If these concerns are not dealt with in an appropriate manner, management would find themselves losing good employees either to other organizations or the employee would move on to the disengagement stage or plateau. Such employees would have low productivity and would be a drain on the organization's resources. A rising number of disengaged or plateau employees would result in a reduction in organizational effectiveness.

Ference et al. (1977) Managerial Careers

Ference et al. (1977) classified employees as stars, solid citizens, deadwood and comers based on their current potential and likelihood of future promotion. Their classification is given in Table 5.

Table 5: A Model of Managerial Careers Ference et al. (1977)

Current Performance	Likelihood of Future Promotions	
	Low	High
High	Solid Citizens (Organizationally or Personally Plateaued)	Stars (Non Plateaued)
Low	Deadwood (Ineffectively Plateaued)	Comers (Non Plateaued)

Solid Citizens are individuals whose performance is satisfactory, but whom the organization feels have little chance for promotions due to organizational or personal reasons. These employees have in one sense plateaued, but they have still not reached a disengagement

phase. This phase could best be linked with employees in the Maintenance stage in Super's Career Stage Model.

Stars not only have above average current job performance, but they are on a growth stage and also have potential for future advancement. These are committed, hard working, successful employees on a fast career track. Their success has not made them complacent and they are still on the growth path. These characteristics are analogous to the Establishment career stage as described by Super.

Deadwoods are individuals whose performance is below expectations and who also have limited possibilities for advancement in the organization. Employees in this category are likely to leave their organization fearing career stagnation. They feel that their positions gave them limited opportunity to engage in projects visible to top management and their services were least marketable to other organizations. Employees in these stages can be easily linked with those in the disengagement stage as described by Super.

Comers are individuals who have been identified by the organization as having a high potential for advancement, but their present performance is below their potential. Research has shown that individual's who are undecided about what they want to do have lower performance than employees who are committed to their jobs. Comers can be described as those who have yet to get their calling. They are still in the process of self-exploration. They are still trying to find which career is best suited to them. The characteristics described in this phase, can be easily identified with that described by Super for those in the Exploration stage.

Carnazza, et al., (1981) found that plateaued managers were able to maintain high performance standards when they were assigned challenging, satisfying, and clearly defined jobs that were perceived as important to the company. However, the less effective performers among plateaued managers tended to believe that promotions were based on reputation, personality and educational background. One of the most interesting findings of the study was that promotion aspirations did not differentiate between plateaued and non-plateaued managers with both categories seeing promotion aspirations as an important influence on their performance. It is intriguing why some individuals remain high performers while others don't?

Four Stages of Professional Careers: Dalton, Thompson and Price (1977)

Dalton, Thompson and Price (1977) did a detailed empirical study to find out what makes some employees successful while others were not. After many failed attempts, they were able to unearth a clear pattern only when they began to look at the effects of time.

They found that people who were classified as high performers early in their careers performed different functions than people who were classified as high performers at mid-career. Employees' went through four distinct stages in their career. Each stage differed from others in the tasks an individual is expected to perform, in the types of relationships they engage in, and in the psychological adjustments they must make. Individuals who moved successfully through these stages received high performance ratings, while those who could not navigate these stages successfully and remained in the earlier stages were likely to be rated lower. They have defined the four stages as Apprentice, Self-dependent, Mentor and Senior Management. Their model is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Dalton et al., (1977) Four-Stage Model

Stage	Name	Characteristics	Critical Activities
I	Apprenticeship	<p>Close supervision</p> <p>Work assignments parts of larger projects</p> <p>Acceptance of direction</p> <p>Exercise of initiative/creativity within well-defined area</p> <p>Learning by observation</p>	<p>Adjustment to dependence</p> <p>Self-discipline for detail</p> <p>Show initiative potential</p> <p>Develop good relationship with mentor</p>
II	Self-dependence	<p>Assume responsibility for definable portion of project</p> <p>Relative independence</p> <p>Results identified with person</p> <p>Develop credibility, reputation</p> <p>Responsibility for management of one's own time and outcomes</p> <p>Technical depth in assignments</p>	<p>Demonstrate capacity for professional work and increase visibility</p> <p>Avoid over-specialization</p> <p>Develop relations with peers</p> <p>Rely less on mentor, supervisor</p> <p>Achieve competency: technical first, then administrative</p>
III	Mentor	<p>Affect others' careers and development</p> <p>Broaden technical skills</p> <p>Deal more with external environment</p> <p>Roles may include: Informal mentor; Idea person/small group leader; supervisor/manager</p>	<p>Achieve self-confidence</p> <p>Achieve ability to be unthreatened by success</p> <p>Accept responsibility for others</p> <p>Develop ability to cope with change and conflict</p> <p>Demonstrate ability to produce over long period</p> <p>Administrative duties may equal or exceed technical</p>
IV	Senior Management	<p>Assume significant organizational responsibility and direction</p> <p>Achieve orientation to external and internal environment</p> <p>Sponsor and develop promising employees</p> <p>Roles may include: Idea innovator; Internal entrepreneur; upper level manager</p>	<p>Outside contacts</p> <p>Delegation to subordinates</p> <p>Proactive rather than reactive</p> <p>Ability to cope with change</p> <p>Ability to use power</p>

In the Apprenticeship stage, the individual is new to the organization. They deal with routine tasks and are not fully aware of their competencies. Though the tasks might be boring, they need to learn to perform their roles competently, to identify the elements of the work that are critical and the activities that require the greatest attention. They must learn to get things done through formal and informal channels of communication and also learn from the experiences of other people. If they are not able to handle their tasks, they may acquire a reputation for mediocre performance. This is the stage where an employee needs a good mentor who can guide them through their roles, in learning the ropes of the organization, and also open up new pathways for career development for them.

By the second stage of Self-development, the individual should have acquired a reputation as a technically competent person who can work independently to produce significant results. At this stage a person is expected to hone his professional skills to a higher level. One way they can achieve this competence is to develop an area of specialization that will enable the individual to develop a sense of competence, increase their self-esteem, and enhance their visibility in the organization. However, the inherent risk of specializing is the possibility that the person is left without a job if their specialty area is phased out. Although being a subordinate, the individual establishes their identity in the organization. People move away from depending completely on their mentors to take the right decisions, begin to make their own judgments and decisions, and develop a greater confidence in themselves. Peer relationships take on a greater importance at this stage. It is important for individuals to be able to learn to be a competent professional before they are pushed into management roles. Otherwise, they individual will find themselves being uncomfortable and incompetent in handling managerial roles, and their performance would suffer.

By the time they reach the Mentor stage, individuals have already established a reputation for themselves based on their performance, results and achievements in the previous stage. In this stage, they begin to take responsibilities for influencing, guiding, directing and developing other people. They have generally been found to play three roles, one of an informal mentor, an idea man and a manager. They are usually the people who play a critical role in helping others move through Stage I. Psychologically too individuals in this stage exhibit growth. By stage two, they have achieved a sense of confidence in themselves. They now need to be able to build the confidence of juniors. They must be psychologically ready to take responsibility for someone else's output. Individuals in this stage often start pulling away from technical work and should be willing to let go and allow their apprentices to become independent and/or take on new mentors. This is also a stage where people get satisfaction by being involved socially in the organization. They get recognition from their peers, satisfaction from helping their juniors, and organizational rewards both in terms of money and status.

Some people find stage three with its combination of counseling, technical proximity and recognition and rewards, viable and satisfying until retirement. Others find that they are stagnating and hard-pressed to keep up with younger competitors. Many people end their careers at this stage but some people move on to the fourth stage.

People who advance to the Sponsor stage (Stage IV) have gained credibility by their demonstrated ability to read the environment accurately and respond appropriately. The key characteristic of the Sponsor stage is the influence people had in defining the direction or shaping the future of the organization or some part of it. Since these functions are critical to

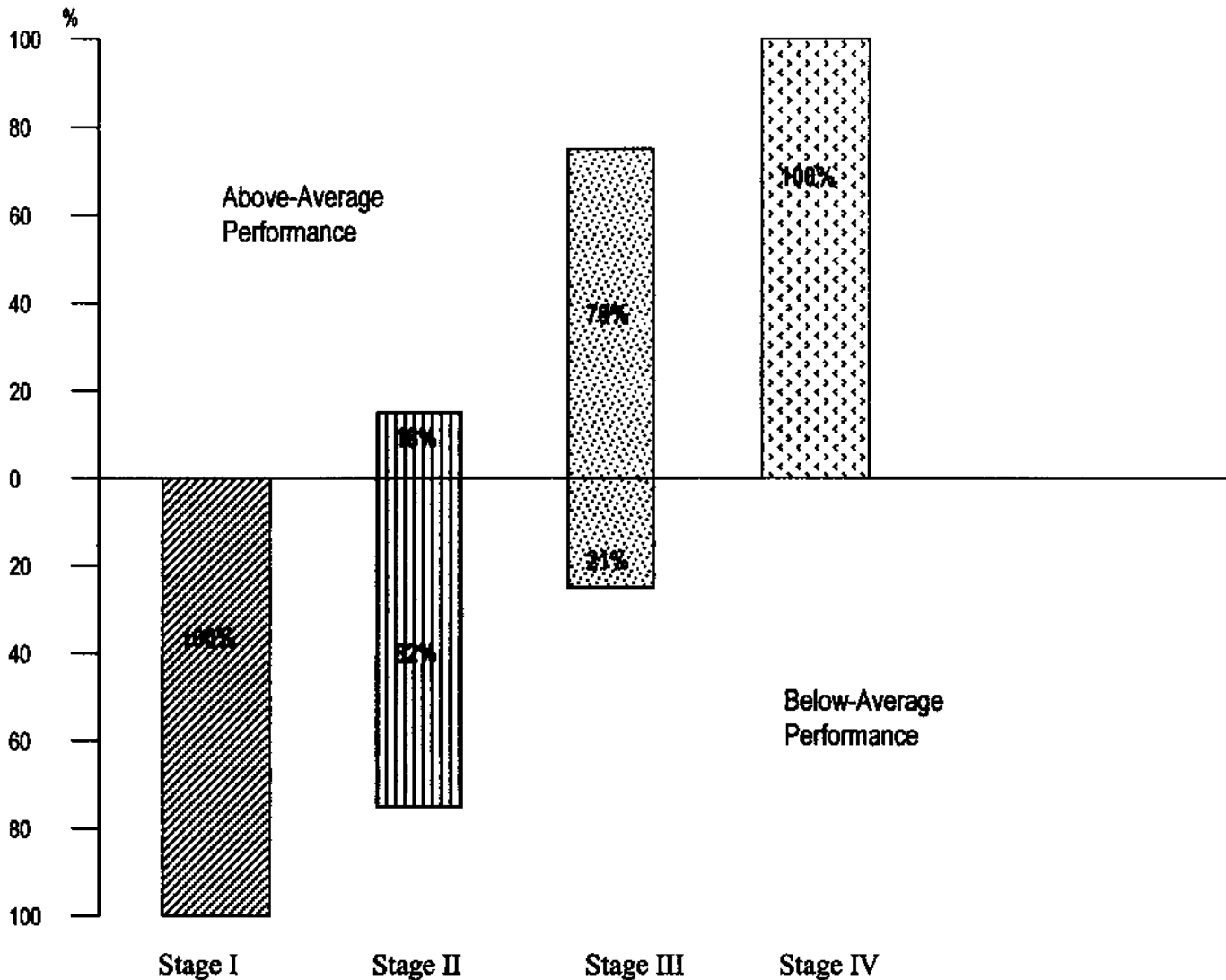
the growth and survival of the organization, those who fulfill them are highly valued, and only those people whose judgment and skills have been proven in the past are trusted to play these roles.

The various roles of people in this stage are formulation of policy and broad programs for the organization, internal entrepreneur or idea innovators, business development, managing key relationships outside the organization through their work on external boards, committees and associations, serving as boundary spanners for the organization by bringing in information about events and trends in the environment and by giving visibility to the organization to help it market its goods, services and people, selection, mentoring and career management of people who show promise and potential of performing Stage IV activities)

People in this stage think in time horizons beyond their lives and think holistically about the organization. They must be comfortable with using power and politics in pushing for programs that they believe in. They must also be able to form alliances and to take strong impartial positions without feeling permanent enmity towards those who differ with him.

In conclusion, Dalton et al., (1977) found that people in all stages make an important contribution to the organization and are necessary for the organizational effectiveness and functioning. However, their research also showed that as people grow older, if they are not able to move along the career stages, they are less likely to be highly valued. They found a very interesting relationship between the stages and job performance of people above the age of 40. People who actually moved up to the fourth stage were the most productive, having a 100% performance level, those in stage III had about 79% performance effectiveness, people in stage II were seen to have a performance level of 18%, where as those in stage I, who were still learning the ropes, were 100% below acceptable standards of performance. Their findings are graphically depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Relationship between stage and performance level for people over the age of 40



Comparison of Dalton et al Four stage model with Super’s career stage model:

If we compare the four-stage model as described by Dalton, et al., (1977) and that suggested by Super (1977), we find many similarities in the stages.

Super (1977) defines the exploration stage as the stage at which the employee enters and starts exploring the organization. Dalton et al., (1977) label this stage as the apprenticeship phase where the resolves his feelings of unrest, understand the nuances of his job through his mentor. The mentor also helps guide him and hone the skills and abilities he needs to develop in his career. Through the hand holding and guidance of the mentor, employees by the end of this stage are able to get a better sense of the kind of occupations they value, and make a decision as to their chosen occupation. These were some of the major concerns that Super (1977) had pointed out in his career stage model.

In the establishment stage, the employee’s primary goal is to achieve success, visibility and growth in his career (Super, 1977). Dalton et al., (1977) refer to similar issues in their self-dependent stage, where the employee hones his professional skills and move on to a higher level. Both models talk about narrowing down of options, focusing energies in a narrow area

of competence, development of competence, self-esteem and visibility of the individual, and recognition by the organization and promotion through the career ladder.

In Super's (1977) maintenance stage, the person reaches a stable position in the organization. Even though the person might have immense opportunities of growth, but they might stagnate due to personal or organizational factors. In Ference et al.'s (1977) model, these individuals are the 'Solid Citizens' who have effectively plateaued in their careers in the organization. These individuals are at peace with themselves, they have realized that there are few opportunities for rising in the organizational ladder and withdrawn from the rat race. It is difficult to motivate these individuals to work harder even though they are seen as high performers with a solid experience and a long list of achievements to their credit.

Dalton et al.'s (1977) also finds that employees in the third stage of their careers are high performers, and it is actually this stage wherein people begin to show a high job performance (almost 79%) unlike those in the earlier stages. This has also been collaborated by Cron and Slocum (1986), in their test of Super's career stage model on job involvement and job performance of employees in different stages.

But there is a slight difference in the way Dalton et al., (1977) and Super (1977) look at people in this stage. Dalton et al., (1977) suggests that people in this stage still have a lot to contribute to the organization, not only in terms of their own roles, but also as mentors to those who are just joining the organization. The people at this stage are seen to be the idea managers. They have a high level of visibility in the organization and are rewarded both in terms of money and position. People in this stage either realize that they have plateaued and leave, or move on to lead the organization towards further growth by moving on to the fourth stage of sponsorship. In Super's (1977) career stage model people from their third stage move on to the next stage of decline. An employee nearing his retirement, or one who has disengaged from his job, shows low job performance, and a greater interest towards activities of personal growth and retirement plans.

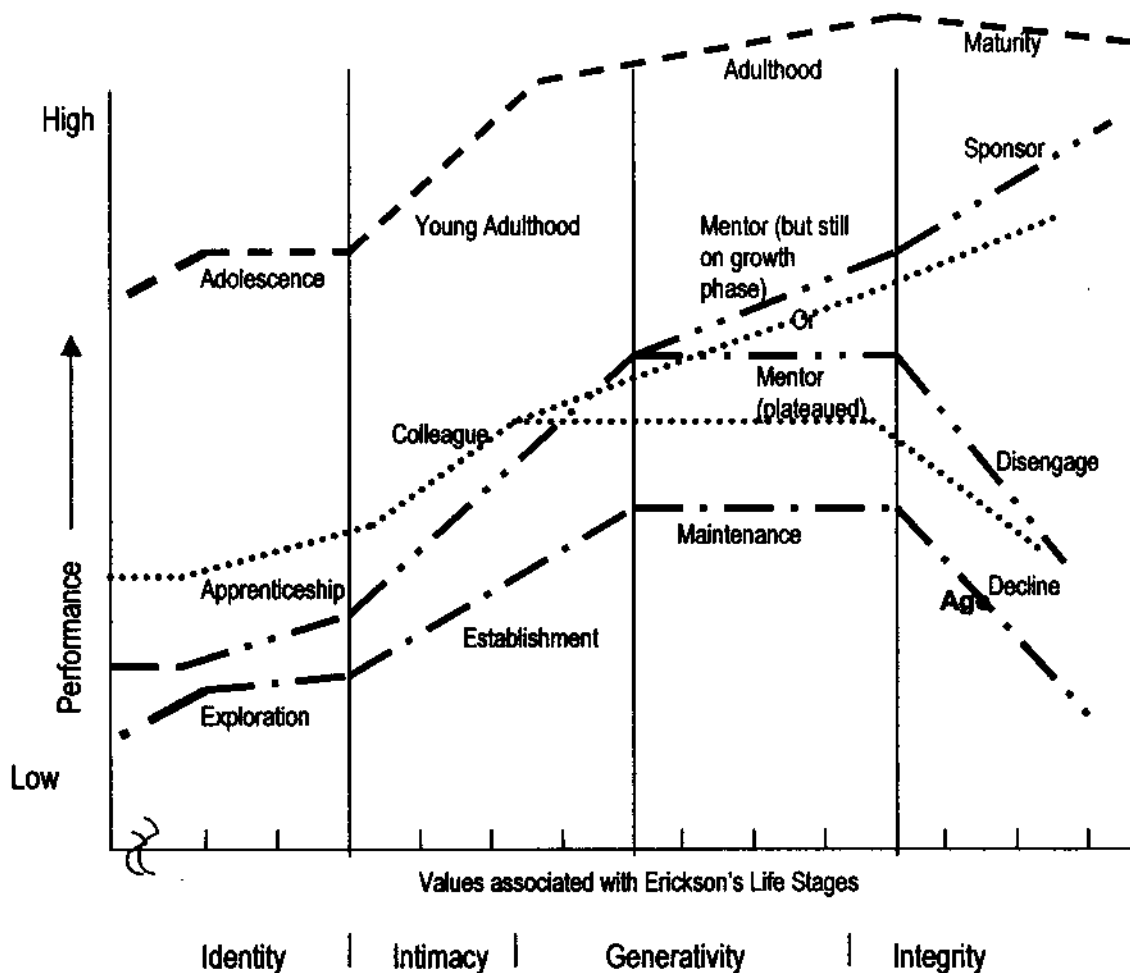
Whereas Super (1977) has classified his career stage model based on age, Dalton et al., (1977) consider that age classifications can be pretty ambiguous. In their research they have found that people belonging to different age groups can be stuck at different stages of their career path, for e.g., a twenty five year old and a forty five year old could both be stuck in the apprenticeship stage of their careers, even though their job performances may differ significantly.

The other significant difference between the two models is the focus on how an employee can add to organizational growth. Dalton et al. (1977) have focused on how an employee can be selected and guided through the right kind of mentoring, guidance and conditioning various career stages resulting in a successful employee, who not only grows as an individual, but also gives back to the organization when the time comes for the person to do so.

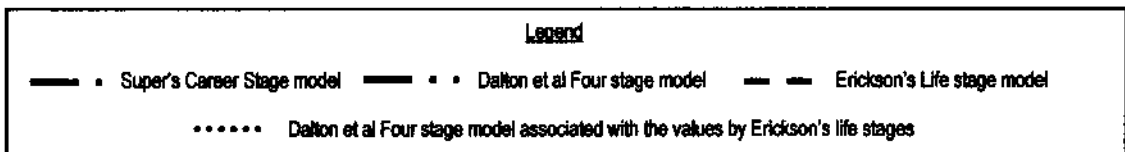
Figure 3 compares Super's (1977) and Dalton et al. (1977) career stage model. The emphasis is on highlighting the similarities between the first two stages and the dissimilarities in stage three and four of these two models. The Y axis represents performance levels. On the X axis, we have taken the values associated with Erickson's life stage model. The pictorial comparison also shows the comparison of Erickson's life stages model with a Dalton et al., (1977) model with the common factor of comparison being the values associated with them. One can see the difference in the generative stage found by Erickson (Adulthood), and that

found by Dalton et al., (1977) (Mentorship). The same is the case with the maturity and mentorship phases.

Figure 3: Comparison of Dalton et al (1977) and Super (1977) Models



Pictorial Comparison between Super's Career stage model and the Four stage career model of Dalton et al.



Career Stages and Job performance:

After the detailed review of the major life stage and career stage models, in this section we analyze the affects of these models on factors like job performance, job involvement, etc. Dalton et al., (1977) have already defined the performance parameters and ways in which organizations can nurture high performing employees.

Cron and Slocum (1986) conducted an empirical research on the affect of various career stages (adapted from Super's model) on factors like job attitudes, job satisfaction, corporate culture perception and job performance. They tried to understand the various concerns and

characteristics of people in the exploratory, establishment, maintenance and disengagement stage. Their results are discussed below.

Exploration Stage: Age group (20 to 40, average around 28)

Goals: To choose the correct occupation

Reasons for concern:

1. Uncertainty owing to time horizon of the decision (whole life decision);
2. Uncertainty regarding congruence of ability and job requirement;
3. Difficulty in decision making due of lack of prior job experience that could guide the individual towards the right career decision;
4. Changing organizational expectations form the person that could create stress later on;
5. Availability of a large number of career choices.

Findings:

Job Attitudes: People in this stage had more negative attitudes than those in other stages. They do not feel successful. They found their job challenging, but did not psychologically identify with the job.

Job Satisfaction: People in this stage were the least satisfied when compared to all other stages. They were dissatisfied in their relationship with their supervisors, with their pay and promotions. The low level of involvement, lack of good relation with supervisors, not much hope of growth, and the constant dilemma of whether they are doing the right thing by choosing the concerned occupation, led to a very deep dissatisfaction of the employees with their job. The only positive aspect was that they got along well with their co-workers. Overall, we can see that these employees are greatly dissatisfied with their job.

Corporate Culture: These people had a very negative perception about their bosses, and aspects of their job, over which their bosses have considerable influence. They did not feel that their supervisors were being open and supportive and they did not feel the pressure to produce. They felt that they had very little power to make significant decisions. Basically, unless the person resolves the issue of what career path they want to pursue, the persons perception about the job are likely to be negative regardless of the objective reality.

Performance: The effect of the negative attitudes and perceptions of people in this phase was evident in their poor performance on all parameters of performance measurement, be it sales volume, market penetration or relevant knowledge.

Establishment Stage: Age group (20 to 50, average around 33)

Goals: Achieve success in their career

Reasons for concern:

1. Need for work-life balance;
2. Uncertainty whether increased performance will result in career advancement and whether the increased time that they are putting into their jobs will be appreciated and recognized;
3. The employee's career progression is dependent on the organization's business strategy, which in turn affects the person's attitudes, job behavior, etc.

Findings:

Job Attitudes: The employee has finalized their occupation by this stage and their focus is on achieving success in their job. Their job involvement and job challenge is very high but they did not feel successful psychologically. Since they are always trying to grow faster, there is always a constant tension within them and hence they do not experience high positive feelings.

Job Satisfaction: People in this stage of growth were found to be highly involved with their jobs, they got along very well with their supervisors and their co-workers, they had an urge to grow fast and achieve success in their career, and their need for recognition was much higher. Although they were dissatisfied with their promotions, this level of dissatisfaction was less than that experienced by people in other career stages. Like everyone else, they were also dissatisfied with their pay, but overall they had a positive experience and were satisfied with their job.

Corporate Culture: People in this stage feel that their supervisor's style was conducive to their growth, they were suitably rewarded, the pressures of their job was high and they had the liberty of making decisions that were critical to them. However, they felt that they should have a higher level of visibility than they currently did.

Performance: People in this stage had a substantial improvement in their performance as measured by sales, market penetration and relevant knowledge.

Maintenance Stage: Age group (30 to 65, average around 42)

Goals: Maintenance of individual achievements.

Characteristics:

1. People will not strive for higher levels of promotion within the same occupation;
2. People will accept their jobs and continue, even if they don't like their jobs;
3. Dwindling job opportunities due to age and technical obsolescence;
4. Some people cope with diminished job growth expectations while others embark on new careers.

Findings:

Job Attitudes: Employees had come to terms with their jobs. They had considerable experience and were able to judge the congruence between their abilities and the role expectations better. They reconciled to the fact that they might not move up the career ladder. They were more comfortable in their jobs and there was no longer a constant struggle to achieve. They were more positive about their work and felt personally successful. Their job involvement and feelings of job challenge were also high. The feeling of success was the highest in this category of people.

Job Satisfaction: Other than a greater dissatisfaction with lack of promotions (since people in this career stage have reconciled to the fact that they will not get to move up the ladder) people in this career stage were no different from those in the establishment stage as far as their job satisfaction was concerned.

Corporate Culture: People in this stage feel that their supervisor's style was conducive but their general satisfaction with the culture seems to have reduced marginally with respect to what people in the establishment stage feel. Their perception about their level of visibility increased substantially.

Performance: People in this stage of the career, seem to be able to deliver the best performance for the company. Their performance on all three counts of sales volume, market penetration and knowledge was high.

Disengagement Stage: Age group (40 to 65, average around 55)

Concern: Coming closer to retirement

Goal: Focus on personal growth, and growth beyond the job.

Characteristics:

1. Psychological withdrawal from their careers;
2. Reduced job performance;
3. Greater focus on non-work related activities to foster personal growth.

Findings:

Job Attitudes: People began to view their jobs as being less important and started focusing on factors that would lead to personal growth. Their level of job involvement decreased, but it was still not as low as that of people in their exploratory stage of career. They felt a reduction in job challenge. The people felt successful even though psychologically they sensed a reduction in their importance. The feeling of success experienced was higher than that experienced by people at the exploratory or establishment stage.

Job Satisfaction: People in this stage got along well with their supervisors and co-workers. They were dissatisfied with their promotions and pay, but there was an overall satisfaction with their jobs. Their levels of job satisfaction were marginally lower than that of people in the maintenance stage, but higher than for those in the exploratory stage.

Corporate Culture: People in this stage did not find the corporate culture very conducive. There was a significant reduction in their perceptions of visibility, performance rewards and supervisors style. They experienced a marginal reduction in their authority to make decisions. They also felt a reduction in the pressure on the job.

Performance: The levels of performance of workers in this stage reduced substantially from those in the maintenance stage, but were still higher than the performance levels of people in the exploratory stage.

Conclusions

As can be seen from the above review, there is a significant change in the goals and concerns of people at different stages. If the management is successfully able to identify and address these differences, they can elicit a higher performance from the employees in the organization. Employees could become high performers with the right kind of guidance and mentoring. Some of the strategies that could be adopted are as follows:

Recruitment and Selection

Research has shown that those who have made up their minds about their careers have a higher performance than those who are undecided. Employees in the exploratory stage are the worst performers mainly because they are undecided about their career.

Recruiters, at the entry-level, could try to ascertain if the candidate is truly interested in the career rather than just searching for an opportunity to enter the organization. Recruiters should provide a realistic job preview and clarify the expectations of the organization from the newcomers, changes in job responsibilities, experiences and performance over time, growth opportunities, expected timing of promotions, earnings potential over the long run, etc. (Wanous, 1975). This would avoid conflicts and confusions later on.

Motivating Employees:

Once an employee is certain about his career, managers/supervisors should mentor the employees and discuss their career goals and aspirations, how they can achieve it, short term business objectives, etc. Only this mentoring, guiding and opening up of new opportunities can help achieve the true potential of the employee. This is most critical for inexperienced employees at the entry level.

This mentoring activity can also prove to be a true motivator for people in their maintenance or mentorship stages. Such people already have many achievements to their credit and they might be stagnating due to organizational or personal reasons. Motivating people becomes a great challenge at this stage. Activities like mentorship and openness to their ideas can prove as true motivators for people in this stage. To generate excitement among this group, management can take recourse to various strategies like retraining programs, symbolic rewards, internal competitions, outside counseling and therapy, and even threats like firing or pressure for early retirement.

Strategic employee career stage analysis:

It is important for the organization to take an inventory of the career stages of their most important or critical employees and relate that to their job satisfaction, job challenge, and job performance. The models discussed above would suggest that if most of them belong to the exploratory stage:

1. They are likely to be low lower performers;
2. The organization may face a high employee turnover rate.

In such a situation, the organization would need to redress this imbalance through various mechanism discussed above. Some of the issues that might need to be addressed are:

1. Staffing and selection practices;
2. Indoctrination and orientation programs;
3. Compensation programs.

If most of the people are in the disengagement stage, some of the causes of concern could be that:

1. Management is not paying enough attention to workers at the maintenance stage. These workers who could be the highest performers are getting disillusioned and moving to the disengagement stage long before their retirement age.
2. This would lead to low performance and a negative attitude.

If most of the people are in the establishment stage, the organization may be laying more emphasis on the short-term goals in order to achieve quick growth at the expense of future or long-term growth. The growth needs (job expectations, promotions) of this category of people are very high. If they are unable to satisfy their needs, they would get disillusioned, and the organization may face a high turnover of good employees. This would become a serious problem especially if there are a large number of people in this stage, which might cause a reduction in possibilities for promotion.

Life stages and career stages in the Future: A Research Agenda

Most of the life stage and career theories were conceptualized in the 1970's when the world of organizations was very different. The last 20 years have seen a radical change in the design and functioning of organizations that have major implications for the careers, career stages and career models. Some of the factors that are might contribute to the way we think about careers are discussed below.

Globalization – In the earlier decades, globalization had meant the flow of technology and finances with labor being mostly localized within political boundaries. In the last 15 years, technology, money and labor have all become globalized and the flows are not only from the first world or developed countries to the third world or developing countries but also in the other direction. The reversal of flows have happened not only in new industries like ICT, BPO, and biotechnology, but also in some of the more mature industries like pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and textiles. Some of the reasons for this reversal are related to demographics and shifting markets, costs, and greater capability building in third world countries.

The above phenomenon has a number of implications for career management both at the company level and at the individual level depending on the HR policies a company might follow. From an organization point of view, career management is both at a country level and at a global level. The country of origin of the organization also determines the kinds of career opportunities that might be available to the people from different countries. An important research question that needs to be systematically studied is how does country of origin of an organization impact the careers of people who do not belong to the “mother” country, what impact does this have on the performance of the organization, and what are the mediating and moderating factors that might impact HR practices and organizational performance.

It is not very clear how individuals should define careers in the above scenario. Clearly the organizations value not only multi-functional and multi-domain exposure but also cross cultural exposure, and cross cultural exposure not only in countries that might be culturally congruent, but also cross cultural exposure in countries with very incongruent cultures. Do they focus on vertical movements in the organization in one country or should they strive for horizontal movement across many countries in the same organization.

New models of organizing and organizations – The new models of organization encompass words such as flat, networked, and virtual organization. Even if we disregard the hype surrounding some of this terminology one shift in organizations is towards a network model of organizing where standardized, routine, easily measurable, and non-strategic tasks are outsourced (Aron & Singh, 2002). From a career point of view, this changes the career ceilings of the organization from a high ceiling to a low ceiling career (Thompson, 1967). From an organization point of view, there are very positions available in the organization due

to limitations of its structure and task. From an individual's point of view, the career of the person might be dependent on the type of organization they have joined and the amount of mobility that might be possible in later years.

Related to the above, a second shift in organizations is towards a flatter structure, flexible roles and responsibilities, teamwork, empowerment and pushing down of decisions to the lower levels in the organization, and a greater opportunity to interact and collaborate with external stakeholders. This might be a positive development both from an organizational and individual point of view. While an organization might not be able to provide an employee with vertical career mobility, it might be able to offer the employee possibilities of learning new skills, flexibility in changing the tasks and roles that they perform, choice of taking on greater responsibility, and choice of taking on various roles (leader, member, facilitator) in a team based organization. Depending on the geographical scope of operation of an organization, it might also be possible to transfer employees across countries to give them exposure to different cultures. This type of organizing might not be able to offer the employees vertical mobility that might be critical as status symbol in many cultures, but it definitely offers the employee a large degree of horizontal mobility and an enriching career and life option. An important empirical question relates to the cross-cultural differences in the acceptability of such career options.

Related to the second point is the third important shift in the international economy and the business world, namely, the shift from agriculture to manufacturing to service industry, and especially the shift to knowledge work and knowledge workers. The difference, we believe, is not that the work in the agricultural and manufacturing was less knowledge intensive, it had (and has) an element of physical labor that is greater when compared with today's service jobs, where people primarily sit behind a table and manipulate symbols on a computer, in a comfortable air-conditioned environment. A greater challenge in "knowledge work" and with "knowledge workers" is the complexity of balancing the careers of people with technical and managerial skills. This is a domain where both technical and managerial skills are critical to delivery of products services that meet the customer requirements, though the exact mix of these two skills might not be clear. Even though organizations have experimented with dual career ladders, these mechanism need to tailored to the life and career stages of the employees'. However, here again there is a greater scope for providing the horizontal careers discussed in point two above. The success of these strategies needs to be empirically tested and verified.

We have reviewed the various life and career stage models in this paper. We believe that some of these models need to be further elaborated and verified given the shifts that have happened in organizations and the way they are organized. Countries like USA have been very successful in being able to constantly reorganize and shift the skill sets of their citizens. However, the same process faces a challenge in other countries where such reorganization is not socially (and in turn politically) acceptable and people are more attuned to a expecting a normal old-fashioned career. We believe that the career models need to be updated in light of the above changes.

Notes:

Tables 1 to 4 and 6 are from:

Burack, E., H. 1984. The Sphink'x Riddle: Life and Career Cycles Training and Development Journal, (April); pp. 52-61

Table 5 is from:

Ference, T. P., Stoner, J. & Warren, E. K. (1977) Managing the career plateau, *Academy of Management*, Vol. 2 October, p. 602-612.

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