

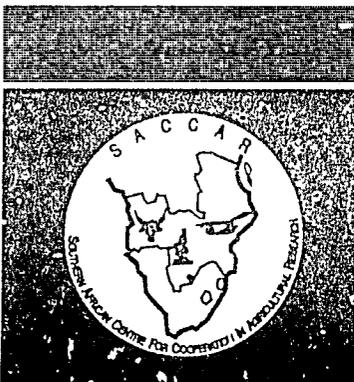
PN-ABG-872  
6-1-18

PREPARING SERVICES

*Human Resource Management No. 5*

# Careers and Career Development

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October 1990



Southern African Centre For Cooperation In Agricultural Research

***ISNAR***

International Service for National Agricultural Research

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**Citation:**

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Marcotte, P. 1990. Careers and Career Development. ISNAR Training Series — Human Resource Management No. 5. The Hague: ISNAR.

**CABI Descriptors:**

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Agricultural Research; Management; Managers; Personnel Management; Research Workers; Scientists

**AGROVOC Descriptors:**

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Research; Management; Managers; Scientists

# CAREERS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Paul Marcotte

Careers and the development of careers must be observed from two perspectives, the individual and the organizational. Both have needs, expectations, and goals, and the success of each is dependent upon the other and upon the synthesis of the two. The purpose of this paper is to define both these perspectives and identify the linkage points, thereby indicating how this interdependence can be fostered.

First, there are a number of ways to define "career."

- A career can be seen as a sequence of promotions or lateral transfers to more responsible jobs or to better locations within or across a work-related hierarchy during a person's work years.

- A career can refer to occupations that provide a clear pattern of systematic advancement, such as a career ladder or career path.
- A career can be a person's job history, i.e., a series of positions held over an individual's entire work life (Cascio and Awad 1981: 273-274).

Career development, on the other hand, is the recognition that employing organizations as well as individuals have career needs. Thus, from the perspective of career development, the essence of career planning is the interaction of the individual and the organization over time. It is the successful matching of individual and organizational needs and requirements that fulfills individual and organizational desires. This perspective is illustrated in figure 1.

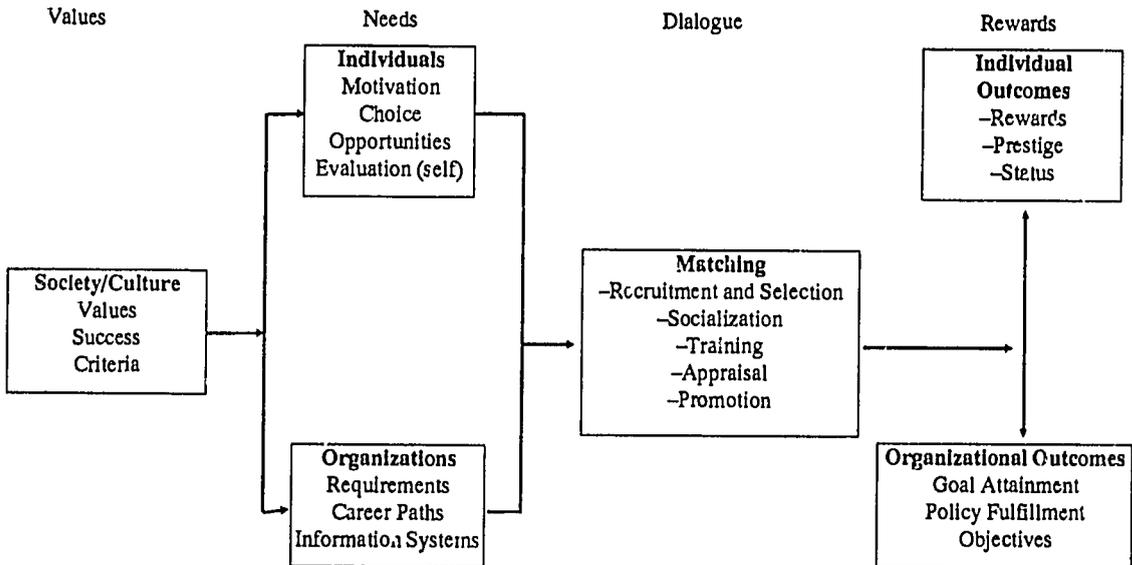


Figure 1. Career Development

## The Individual Perspective

As can be seen in figure 1, the individual has certain needs which must be fulfilled for the career development process to be successful. These are motivation, choice, opportunities, and self-evaluation.

With respect to motivation, individuals are generally attracted to certain kinds of jobs because of personal interest, skills, and vocational training. At the beginning of their careers, individuals are generally self-motivated. Once an individual has settled into a position, there are theories on how the individual can be motivated that have been popular over the years. The principal ones are "universal," "environmental," and "composite" theories. An example of the universal type is the Maslow theory that contends that each individual has a set of needs that are in a predetermined hierarchical order. An example of the environmental model is Herzberg's two-factor theory that contends that factors in the environment contribute to behavior. The third type, the "composite" theory, as advanced in Vroom's Expectancy Model, is a combination of the previous two and describes how individuals develop preferences and make choices.

With respect to individual choice, there are two major theories. The first is an interdisciplinary concept that maintains that career choice is a compromise by an individual between preferred and expected occupations based on job availability. It also has an organizational basis, which maintains that the organization compromises between the ideal and available worker for its occupational vacancies. The second career-choice theory is typology theory. An example of this is Holland's theory which assumes that in-

dividuals search for environments that allow them to exercise their skills in keeping with their values and acceptable roles. Holland assumes that career choice is a combination of heredity and environmental forces. An individual develops a "typology" and then seeks environments that are consistent with that orientation.

With respect to opportunities, the individual must be able to identify career paths to follow. In these paths, it must be clear what skill levels are required, how much experience is necessary, and where the path ultimately leads. Without this knowledge, individuals can not determine whether their long-term needs and goals will be attained.

Finally, with respect to self-evaluation, individuals must be able to determine the progress they are making along their chosen career path. This information is essential to assure that they are as motivated and productive as possible, thus assuring that the organization's needs and goals are likely to be realized.

It must also be understood that the particular needs of the individual may change over time. Thus, it is important to document the various stages of life and careers. Generally, these stages are described in table 1. It should be noted that while these stages and concerns are based on empirical studies, not all individuals will experience them. However, there are typical concerns that are experienced by different age groups during the various stages of their careers.

**Table 1. Career Stages of Managers**

Age group	Career stage	Career concerns
15-22	<i>Exploration</i>	Finding the right career Getting the appropriate education
22-30	Early career: <i>Trial</i>	Getting the first job Adjusting to daily work routine and supervisors
30-38	Early career: <i>Establishment</i>	Choosing specialty and deciding on level of commitment Transfers and promotions Broadening perspective of occupation and organization
38-45	Middle career: <i>Growth</i>	Establishing professional or organizational identity Choosing between alternative career paths (e.g., technical vs. managerial)
45-55	Middle career: <i>Maintenance</i>	Being an independent contributor to the organization Taking on more areas of responsibility
55-62	Later career: <i>Plateau</i>	Training and developing subordinates Shaping the future direction of the organization Dealing with threats to position from younger, more aggressive employees
62-70	Later career: <i>Decline</i>	Planning for retirement Developing one's replacement Dealing with a reduced work load and less power

SOURCE: Arnold and Feldman (1986:548).

Clearly not all individuals experience these needs or stages. In fact, in developing countries in general, and particularly in agricultural research, these may be quite different. The essential questions for defining individual needs are as follows:

- How are individuals motivated to become agricultural scientists?
- What choices did they consider?
- What continues to motivate scientists once they are in agricultural research organizations?
- What opportunities are available for advancement?
- How do individuals make choices about career paths?
- How can agricultural scientists evaluate their progress in their chosen career?

### Career Planning Cycle for the Individual

In order to successfully function and advance in a career, there are a number of activities that must occur on a continuous basis. This process of planning a career is known as career path planning. For the individual it consists of establishing objectives, designing strategies, evaluating actual versus planned progress, and taking corrective action when necessary. This cycle is illustrated in figure 2. The major steps of the cycle are

- 1) *Know the Career Structure* – In order to understand the career structure (and how to proceed up through the structure), the individual must be able to ascertain levels of responsibility, have knowledge of training and experience requirements for various positions, and be aware of alternative paths.
- 2) *Establish Long-Term Career Goals* – In order to achieve a long-term career goal, a series of lower-level or intermediate goals should be set.

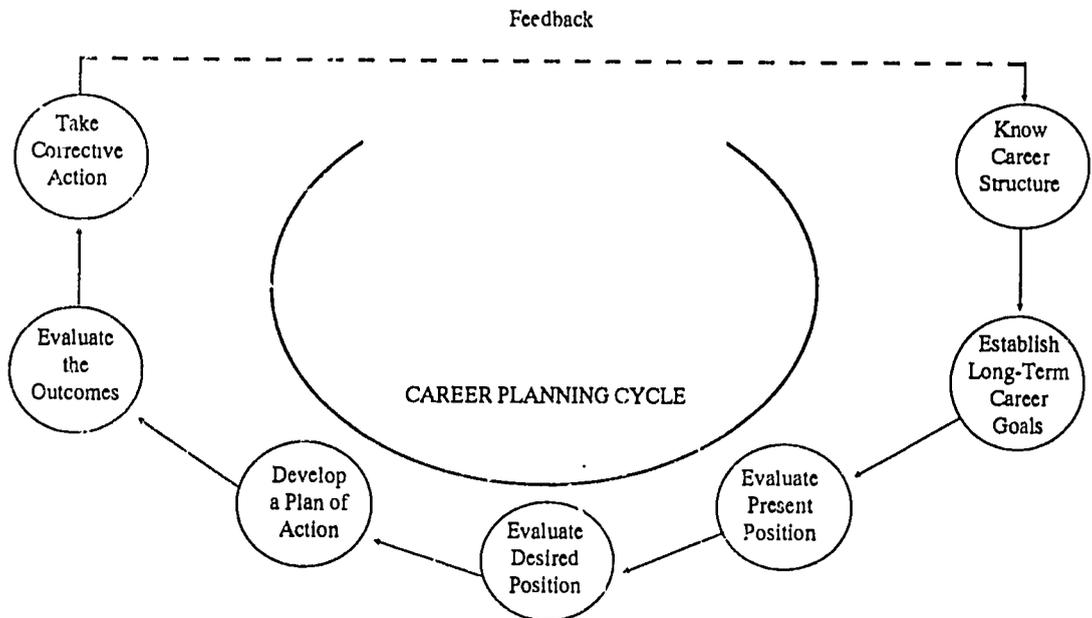


Figure 2. Career Planning Cycle

SOURCE: Cassio and Awad (1981: 287).

3) *Evaluate Present Position* -- Individuals should determine where they currently stand with respect to long-term goals. They will need to evaluate level of responsibility, experience, and skills.

4) *Evaluate Desired Position* – Identify the training, skills, and requirements of the desired position.

### Mini Case 1 – The Individual

Upon completion of a BSc in Biology from the National University, Robert was assigned to the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) by the Civil Service Commission (CSC). He had not studied agriculture at all at the university. In fact, he had pursued biological science in the hope of going to medical school some day.

His first assignment in NARI was at a remote research station. The station is a very small one and there are fewer than 10 people on the staff. Many of the scientists are like Robert in that they have little experience in agriculture and had not requested work at NARI—they had been assigned to NARI and the research station by the CSC.

- What kind of motivation problems would you expect Robert and his peers to have?
- How could these be alleviated?
- What problems would Robert encounter in following a “career planning cycle”?
- What implications would there be for the organization?

- 5) *Develop a Plan of Action* – Develop a plan of action that will lead to obtaining the desired position.
- 6) *Evaluate the Outcomes* – Periodically conduct a review of the plan versus the present situation. This will provide information for corrective action if the plan is not on course.
- 7) *Take Corrective Action* – Deviations from the plan require corrective action. This may mean reviewing earlier steps in the planning cycle for continued viability and/or relevance.

The first of these, performance review, provides the opportunity to assess whether or not organizational needs are being met by the individual. At the same time, the individual can make plans for feedback and corrective action. The second type, testing, provides the opportunity to assess individual needs, particularly for those who may be having difficulty in their present job. The third type, workshops, are designed to help employees assess their career goals and plan their futures.

It is essential that these counseling programs insure the development of realistic aspirations. This helps make sure that individuals obtain the skills and experience required for them to perform their jobs successfully.

## The Organizational Perspective

Career development from the organizational perspective requires the organization to develop plans and programs to facilitate individual careers and thus assure that the organization fulfills its potential and attains its goals. Areas for which this is necessary include career counseling, career pathing, and career information systems.

### Career Counseling

Career counseling programs assist in matching organizational requirements to individual needs. As such, they vary according to individual and organizational needs. Ideally, from the organizational perspective, there are at least three types of career counseling programs: performance review, testing, and workshops for identification and development of career goals.

### Career Pathing

The second area is career pathing. Career pathing is the logical sequencing of personnel that allows for employees to use their present skills to full capacity, identifies skills for subsequent levels, and clearly spells out the paths to be followed for promotion and advancement towards individual (and thus, organizational) goals. The organization must clearly define this process so that employees understand the progression from one job to another.

There are a number of organizational advantages for designing career paths. Some of these are as follows (Sayles and Strauss 1981: 154):

- It creates challenge and thus employee growth
- It replenishes qualified employees

Important considerations for designing career ladders are their length and breadth. The length of the career ladder is important in that fewer people will reach the peak and because of this, more people will lose motivation as they perceive their positions to be dead ends. Likewise, the breadth of the career ladder is important because it allows for lateral transfer, diverse exposure, and thus more qualified and motivated employees. The essential questions about career paths are as follows:

- How many career paths does your organization have?
- How many steps are required before an employee reaches the top of the ladder?
- Is it possible to cross over from one ladder to another?
- What kind of training is provided for those selected to cross over?
- Is the information about the ladders, steps, and opportunities available to all personnel?

- It is an important source of motivation
- It allows for appraisal based on performance rather than potential

Institutions may have one or more types of career or promotion ladders. In the first type, all employees are expected to begin at the bottom and work their way up. This is relatively rare and probably nonexistent in organizations that require sophisticated, technical training, such as that required by agricultural research organizations.

A second type is a two-career ladder system. An example of this type for agricultural research would be a technical ladder, which successively moves unskilled laborers to

skilled categories, and a professional ladder, which requires advanced scientific credentials and moves employees from junior to senior scientist levels. A third type would be a caste system, in which upward mobility within strict categories is maintained but no crossover is allowed.

The third area of career development from the organizational perspective is career information systems. By design, career information systems provide complete, accurate information about opportunities in the organization. Quite simply, this requires that jobs be posted so that all interested personnel can obtain information. A complete job announcement includes qualifications, and skills required, experience desired or required, where and when to apply, and salary and benefits.

### Mini Case 2 – The Organizational Perspective

Akeem has been a commodity leader for eight years. He is an excellent scientist, and the direction he has given his team has provided them with clear objectives. Their success as a team is evidenced in the adoption rates of the varieties that they have produced.

The success of Akeem and the team has meant that Akeem has increasingly been absent because he has been invited to speak at seminars and workshops and he has acted as a consultant to governments and other external organizations. It is apparent that Akeem will move up to be the director of agricultural research as soon as the present director retires.

Akeem has appointed one of his younger, brighter scientists to direct the commodity projects when he must be absent. This man has been chosen because he has recently graduated and is more aware of some of the current techniques being used in the experiments. Thus, there is greater assurance, according to Akeem, that the experiments will be successful.

From the organizational perspective, there are a number of questions that must be raised based on this scenario. For example:

- What match has been made between organizational needs and individual career aspirations?
- Are the skills exhibited by these individuals at one level what the organization needs at a higher level?
- What kind of counseling or testing should occur?
- What is likely to occur with the other commodity group scientists?