

# CAREER – LIFE-LONG SELF-IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

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## Abstract

The paper deals with career as a life-long process which leads to an individual's self-improvement. The aim of the paper is to characterise career on the basis of selected opinions of domestic and foreign authors of the process of career implementation, which represents a particular career path chosen by an individual or which is a matter of random influences. We approach to the concept of career in the context of factors operating at individual stages of career as well as in various periods of human life. We indicate features of career development, types of career and approaches to the issue of career path. In a separate chapter, we pay attention to job mobility as part of career development and to concepts which denote various kinds of movement of career (promotion, relocation and leaving a workplace). The paper is a partial result of the second stage of the research carried out under the research project *KEGA 006EU-4/2013* – “Methods and principles applied in the preparation of structure and content of the subject disciplines supporting the development of economics knowledge and business skills in students of non-economic study programmes of the second cycle of higher education”. The starting-point of philosophy of our research is an assumption of the role of education in an employee's career. In the empirical part of the paper, we summarise findings resulting from the questionnaire research. The output of research carried out so far is the model of career in terms of career movements in this paper.

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**Keywords:** Career, career model, career path, education, promotion, unemployment

## Introduction

The rise and enlargement of the European Union has brought free movement of citizens in some occupations/professions, the removal of administrative or political barriers, opening, joining and unifying labour markets, and an increase in movement of human resources on the European

continent. Job and geographical mobility are multidimensional phenomena, currently influencing all aspects of social development and constitute an important part of economic growth and employment. Both society and citizens are interested and involved in life-long employment. Professional career path of individuals is characteristic of the course of career; its dynamics and direction vary, successful periods may alternate with the stagnating ones during separate career stages. There are a host of factors determining or influencing this process, including personal traits of individuals, opportunities for access to educational activities, vitality and motivation of individuals, as well as conditions on the labour market.

Career stands for man's professional life path; it is a pathway through some job, the dynamics of its operation or progression varies: it may proceed fast or slowly. In modern theory of management career models serve for strengthening employee motivation. Career management is one of the areas with which human resource management deals in organisations.

The process of career development is connected with an individual's self-improvement. It consists of two parts, namely: the first one an individual's effort in itself in finding one's own life path, called career planning. Career planning is an active approach to fulfilling one's resolutions, work ambitions; based on the evaluation of own abilities and potential. Once an individual has realised their inclinations to some area of activities or jobs; the next thing they need to consider is if they meet the requirements, i.e. qualification, talent, abilities, but also motivation to perform the job, as these are conditions of successful performance. The second part is referred to as career management, i.e. an organisation's effort, which in accordance with its objectives, visions, and mission enables employees to develop their own potential.

The aim of the paper is to characterise career from the aspect of ideas presented by selected domestic (Slovak) and foreign authors on the process of career implementation, which stands for a particular career path, chosen by an individual or which is the result of random influences. On the basis of empirical approach, we focus on the characteristics of the most frequent career models, which represent interests, needs, aims, and ambitions of an individual in comparison with their presented abilities and skills for the fulfilment of a given career model. The rate of fulfilment of career path may lead to various satisfaction levels, but also to depression and disillusion, according to the fulfilment of career expectations.

The present paper is in part the result of the second stage of the research carried out under the research project *KEGA 006EU-4/2013* – “Methods and principles applied in the preparation of structure and content of the subject disciplines supporting the development of economics

knowledge and business skills in students of non-economic study programmes of the second cycle of higher education”.

Career, which involves lifelong continual education, rather than just advancement from function to function, and acquiring experiences based on the performance of work activities, may be carried out as an intensive process suitable for high-performing and ambitious individuals, which is both physically and psychically demanding; alternatively, it may come in the form of a slower and reliable career, which guarantees basic self-realisation and material objectives.

### **Career and Career Movement**

In the first chapter we approach to career as a movement leading to an individual's self-improvement. The aim of career is also gaining and maintaining a particular job position in a competitive labour market, and in this way, achieve self-realisation.

### **Understanding the Core Concept**

In human life, career is one of the most important targets, affecting our activities. It is an idea of one's own future from work, material and psychic aspects. Career may be understood as a sequence of employments/jobs, and positions performed by an individual in the course one's life. It is a structured series of events in man's professional life, when an individual advance, remains or steps down in job position hierarchy, when exchanging one work activity for another one in employment structure; when one acquires and assesses their work experience and creates one's professional reputation – image (Sonntag – Stegmaier, 2007, p. 49). Career is a “development” succession of acquiring work experience for a particular period of time; at the same time it is a lifelong sequence of role experience in an individual's work history known as a subjective career, which reflects man's changing aspirations, satisfaction, self-perception, and other attitudes to work and life. An important role in this succession is performed by performance, experience, education, needs of a business, and to some extent, also by coincidence.

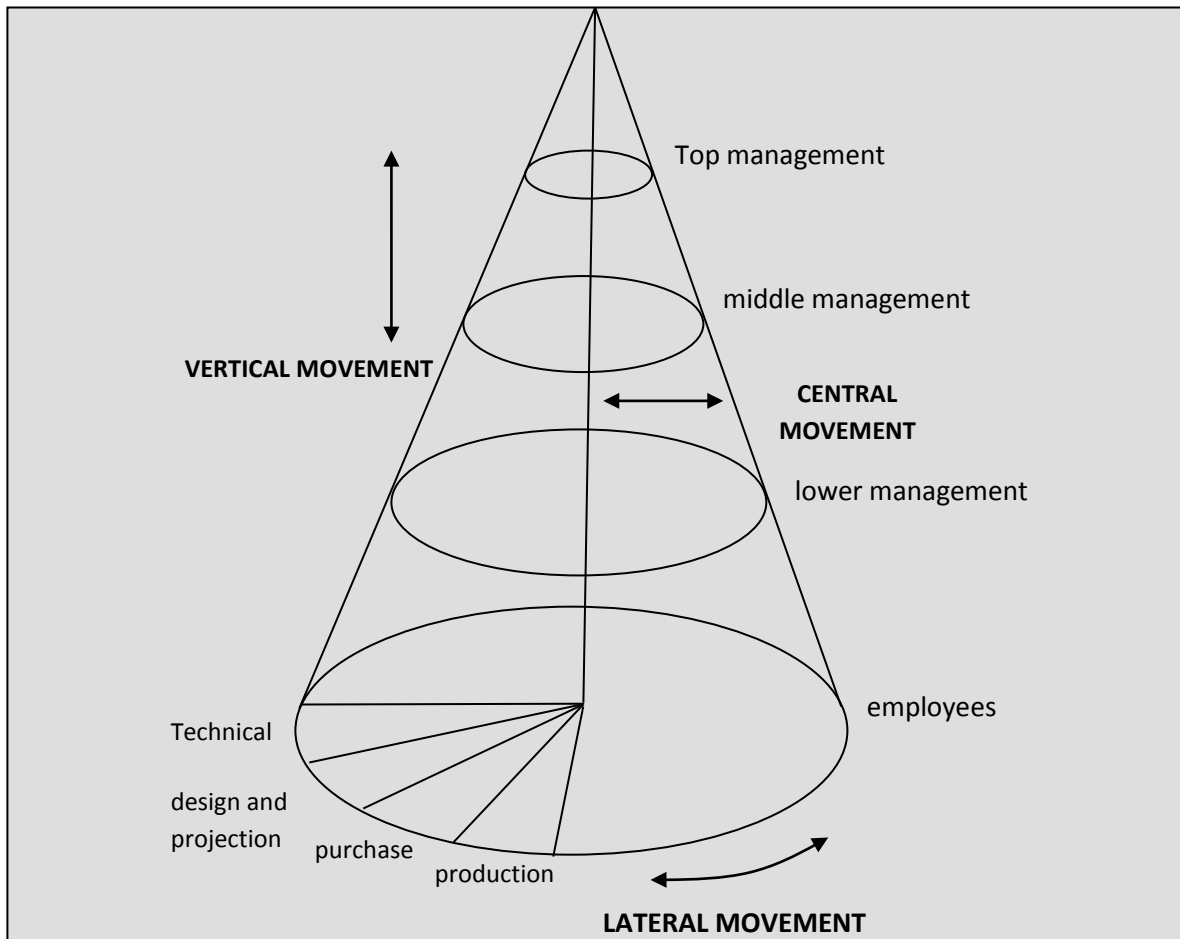
F. Bělohávek defines career as a life pathway mainly the professional one, in which one acquires new experience and fulfils their personal potential (Bělohávek, 1994, p. 11). This concept of career is broader: covering the preparation for one's occupation and development of qualifications as a lifelong process and it does not include only the course of work positions. Bedrnová and Nový (2004, p. 372) characterise an individual's job career as a course of their job positions from the entry in employment until its conclusion – as a rule by retiring.

Career does not involve only an upward mobility; an individual may remain in the same position, and develop existing skills and acquire new skills, knowledge and extend their qualifications. Neither can we neglect the analyses of causes of career decline and subsequent solutions. Armstrong (1999, p. 577) writes that career can be done in various ways: in an ascending manner via promoting or by means of enhancing or enriching one's positions, or even by a better utilisation of one's skills and abilities. There are various figurative names that reflect the nature of career paths – to a triangle, ladder, travelling, monkey paradise, and roller coaster (Bělohávek, 1994). It means that human career can be perceived as an incessant movement. The study of career requires the mapping and classification of these shifts referred to as career movement. Career movement was analysed in the past, and the two different approaches in the monitoring of career movement and its evaluations have remained inspirational to date. For this reason, we present their brief description. Edgar H. Schein (Schein, 1971, p. 401 – 426) monitored changes in the course of managers' career and identified three basic dimensions of an outward form of career, and derived from them three types of career movement:

- Hierarchical dimension – vertical movement (e.g. promotion);
- Functional or technical dimension (professional dimension) – lateral movement (e.g. requalification; movement between various professional areas, e.g. the second career);
- Radial dimension (central dimension) – central movement of career (e.g. from specialised management to general management).

Schein constructs a model of the system of functions in an organisation as a cone. The peak of cone is occupied by director or chairperson and top management; under the peak there are lower levels; the cone base is made up from rank-and-file employees. The cone may be cut into several segments. Each segment denotes some professional area – marketing, design and projection, production, manufacturing, pricing, research and development, personnel, etc.

Fig. 1 Career Movement



Source: Schanz 1993, p. 403.

Most people in an enterprise move according to a hierarchical dimension during their careers. It means that they proceed from a lower position to higher positions, towards the peak of the cone while promotion occurs usually several times before an employee reaches the target level. The decline to a lower position tends to be exceptional. There are organisations that have not available large space for hierarchical advancement – from the lowest position to the highest one there are only or a few levels (e.g. universities). On the other hand, in other organisations there may be a considerable distance between the lowest and highest positions and one often passes through changes in position during their career (army).

At the same time, people move according to functional or technical scope. These are transitions between various professional areas (from the finance department to marketing department, from an engine workshop to a

wheel of a special means of transport). A typical example of this kind of movement is the change connected with requalification. Another time we can speak about the second career, i.e. a new career in a new profession or area of activity. This is a horizontal movement along the perimeter of the cone, a horizontal lateral movement and it may be connected with the vertical movement.

The last dimension is connected with less distinct movement, with that from the cone surface to the centre or vice versa. In this way, there arise centrifugal and centripetal transitions. These are transitions specialised at the edge of general management at the centre of the cone. So that, for example, the head of production division, who guarantees on a general level all professional areas, being the head of an independent organisation unit, passes to a specialist position on the same hierarchical level, e.g. to that of technical director in the enterprise. We can speak about horizontal central movement.

Schein describes also another possibility of a successful career, namely approaching to the power centre (horizontal-radial or centripetal career), which may, but need not be connected with hierarchical advancement. Success is measured by affiliation to leading positions, to professional or other group, and the rate of possibility of influence on decision making (Schanz, 1993, p. 403).

E. E. Jennings tried to describe the development of career in quantitative terms. He developed a system for this purpose, which he termed as mobilography (Gigalová, 2007). Mobilography evaluates the so far career movement of managers, while separate movements are attributed some mobility rate:

T – technical position – any non-managerial function/position (accountant, mechanical operator);

U – promotion – advancement to a position/function with greater authority, responsibility or task complexity;

L – laterality – the movement between functions on the same level of authority or responsibility, but between various professional areas;

S – remaining in the same function/ position without being promoted or demoted;

D – demotion (degradation) – relocation to a position with lower authority, responsibility or task complexity;

X – departure – manager leaves an enterprise.

Jennings depicts individual shifts during a manager's career and attributes them numerical values. The system of quantification is not simple – while at the beginning points for lateral shifts are added up, because new experience and skills are acquired, later points for another lateral shift are deduced as this shift denotes an individual's inability to achieve a higher post in a given area. Also remaining in the same position is at first, i.e. when this

means a thorough acquisition of some area of work, evaluated as favourable. A repeated remaining is, however, the proof that an employee does not meet the requirements for a higher position and the rating is negative.

While Schein's model of organisation movements is a neutral one, it does not evaluate career achievement under any criteria and tolerates also the horizontal career, the older Jennings's model is based on a single criterion of hierarchical advancement and develops his rating on this criterion. Any other shift than the vertical level shift upwards is not considered genuine. Jennings's approach to career evaluation is one-sided.

The starting-point of career changes is the division of labour and the system of organisational arrangement in an organisation. The organisation's size and orientation of its decisive activities influence also a particular type of organisation structure. Options of vertical or horizontal career movement are influenced by a high organisation structure on the one hand, and flat organisational structure on the other hand. Many people associate their career advancement with a leading position at the middle management position at least. In numerous cases, this results in serious problems, namely in small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as in organisations with flat organisational structure, where ambitions of individuals cannot be satisfied in this sense. For the employees who cannot be promoted the so called the second career plan should be available as an alternative based on enhancement of professional competence. The system of possible career changes expresses the dynamics of career.

Career is considered a personal affair, expressing an individual's attitude, their experience and personal growth. It expresses an employee's attitude, opinions, experience, and personal growth (Schanz, 1993, p. 400). Nowadays, the concept of *protean career*, i. e. a career the course of which varies according to changing interests, skills, and priorities, but also under the influence of external conditions, e.g. changes in work environment, work organisation, and in content of work activities. Individuals take a greater part in organising and planning their career, while taking over greater responsibility. The aim is success accompanied with pride in work results and achievements in one's life. Hall (1976) defined protean career as new orientation in which a person takes over the management of this process. Its integrating elements in life are a persons' own career choices and search for self-fulfilment.

### **Job Mobility as Part of Career Development**

This chapter considers one aspect of career movement, namely labour mobility. The focus is on the explanation of job mobility and its related concepts, i. e. promotion, relocation and leaving a workplace as forms of job mobility.

## **Job Mobility and Career**

Labour mobility is a mobility of persons within a geographically limited territory or in one's job. Accordingly, it may be further subdivided into job and geographical mobility. The present paper deals with job mobility. Job mobility refers to the possibilities (conditions, barriers, constraints, simplicity, and obstacles) of passing from one type of employment to another one. A large mobility of human resources between jobs (job mobility) and the mobility within countries (geographical mobility) significantly contribute to economic and social growth, by supporting a higher level of employment and leading to continuous development.

Job mobility refers to all changes in work positions or employee roles, which occurred in connection with change in place of employment or occupation. We need to differentiate between the change in place of employment and the change in occupation, since the change in place of work often does not coincide with the change in occupation and vice versa. There are subjective and objective aspects of job mobility. While the objective one includes scientific and technical, social and economic conditions, the subjective aspect is a process of switching over of employee's interests and is connected with the formal act of acceptance of decision about the change in employment or place of work. Another aspect to be considered in job mobility is that of personality character, according to which mobility appears to be a stable property of personality, e.g. readiness and pre-requisite for changing one's activities. The content of this kind of mobility also includes the choice of occupation and in connection with this also issues of social origin and status acquired by an individual and characteristic of their living plans and career ambitions. Job mobility in a closer meaning reflects the individual's ability to perform various kinds of work activities and job titles, or within a given business and industry, in which one is employed or in another one. Job mobility process is going on both inside and between professions or occupations. Significant changes occur in job structure: old professions are changing, new ones appear, or some professional typical of only some branches or industries appear also in other branches or industries.

Job mobility is a movement of human resources characteristic of change in occupation, workplace, job positions, functions, and roles. These changes occur within one employer entity or one organisation that is a legal entity, or outside the organisation, i.e. in connection with the transition to some other organization. In terms of its manifestations (forms), there are two types of job mobility: internal and external job mobility.

External mobility results in fluctuation; this well-known and frequent concept is used to denote only the part of the total labour mobility, which is connected with the change of an employer and re-allocation of human resources between organizations that are legal subjects.



Internal mobility of employees means the deployment of employees within an organisation. Its most frequent manifestations are: promotion, relocation to another job, which may imply the decline or fall in the job or workplace (Priglová, 2005).

### **Promotion and Relocation**

This subchapter deals with promotion and relocation to another workplace, to some other job position, and leaving one's workplace.

The classic or original meaning of the term *promotion* is an advancement of an employee in company hierarchy. It means shifting to a higher work position, which is ascribed a greater importance, status and in connection with these, usually also higher salaries and remuneration or more attractive benefits, and a greater rate of responsibility. In practice, there are several typical kinds of promotion (Kariéra bez hraníc: Druhy povýšení):

- Performance-based promotion or merit-based promotion: abilities and success of an employee in a given position, while the content of job (job description) does not change; instead it passes from the first level to the second one within the same job.
- Promotion by years of service: this is connected with lifelong employment, at present; instead other rules of advancement are applied. Age and years of service are not considered a strong argument; there is a prevailing need to prove what one is able to do and willing to work for the success of the entity in which one is employed.
- Promotion after the rule “in the right place, at the right time”: it is necessary to continuously look for opportunities and on the basis of thorough information foresee developmental trends and be ready for changes.
- Promotion after the rule “let's eliminate the problem”, it is a situation when the problem of employee dissatisfaction is resolved by exchanging a boss.
- Promotion by simplifying the organization structure: an entity, in an effort to improve its internal processes decides to simplify its organization structure. It means the flattening of the organization structure and each role in it will have a higher share in of responsibility in the organization's final results. This results, in turn, in the rise in the importance of positions in terms of scope and responsibility for work. Promotion for personal/subjective or wrong reasons: it is a phenomenon that can be encountered in all kinds of business irrespective of their size, or whether it is a private or state-owned or public sector, manufacturing business or a service organization.

## **Relocation to another job**

In order to fully utilise its human resources, businesses sometimes relocate employees to another work, or possibly to some other workplace. This kind of decision can be made e.g., to develop an employee's abilities and skills, change work tasks, innovate technical equipment, or on the other hand, reduce employee dissatisfaction with the job performed so far, serious personal problems, inadequate development of an employee, or possibly, it may be connected with the employee inability to do the so far work; other reasons include e.g. organisational changes and the like. Some businesses systematically support employee mobility between workplaces, as they consider it an efficient method of developing their employees' potential.

An opposite result, which is also part of relocation to another job, is demotion, which may be initiated by a superior or employees themselves.

Retirement is a type of job mobility influenced by a determined age limit for the claim to retirement, in accordance with social policy of the Slovak Republic.

When evaluating job mobility we can record the following *career movements* in various directions: hierarchical dimension on the basis of vertical movements; professional dimension, also referred to as lateral movement between professional areas on the same level; hierarchical or professional dimension implemented on the basis of diagonal movements.

While career advancement is connected with the acquisition of status valuable job positions, responsibility and incomes, the lateral movement is characteristic of the rise in qualifications, increasing knowledge, skills in several areas. The professional dimension in career opens opportunities for developing experience and knowledge by taking over new activities and project work. When evaluating career it is vertical movements upwards that are seen as more valuable, while acquiring knowledge, skills, aptitudes by means of qualification or re-qualification education is often only a secondary temporal solution in the expectation of that vertical movement.

Vertical career movements are a combination of opportunities, ambitions, and needs of an individual and their ability to respond and act in a given situation. The opportunity for advance in career is usually linked to the existence of adequate job positions and at the same time, to an existence of people willing to fill in lower free job positions. Ambitions result on the one hand from internal desires of an individual but also result from expectations of "others", i.e. family, friends, acquaintances, peers, etc. According to other authors, it is in particular the school system that plays a significant role in shaping ambitions, in particular through continual evaluation. Career advancement of an individual is often connected also with the rise in social status and with the extinction of some social relationships with the original social environment, and with a particular degree of social

isolation. (Plávková, 2008). The professional vertical mobility denotes job movement of individuals in vertical classification in organisations connected with the changes in job positions, which occurred in connection with the changes in the performance of new activities and functions. A change in one's job content is more expected by people with higher and university education, who anticipate career rises for which they are deliberately preparing in the course of their lives, and which are often connected with changes in social status.

### **Career Development and Types of Career Paths**

Career is not only the case of upward mobility – as mentioned before; an individual can remain in the same place and develop existing skills and acquire new ones, and extend their qualifications. Neither should we neglect analyses of causes of career advancement and their subsequent solutions.

When evaluating career movements under our conditions, we can focus on three basic lines of career development: professional career path, managerial career path, and project career path.

Professional career path is based on the building up of the second tier hierarchy with specific titles, tasks, degrees, and statutory symbols. It develops on the basis of a permanent educational process within formal, non-formal and informal education. Advancement in professional career is primarily carried out on the basis of demonstrated professional competences. Development of professional career is suitable for highly qualified specialists, for whom there are no free managerial positions; those who are interested in permanent development of their expertise and but not in taking over managerial positions, or possibly lack adequate competences for doing so. For an organisation, a group of employees developing their professional career are of the same importance as those who perform managerial career. These are often key employees in organisations, performing creative, systemic, and scientific and innovating tasks. Significant in terms of securing an overall competitiveness of a business are also administrative management positions, positions in product or customer care, customer service, etc., they complete an all-round character of professional task performance.

Managerial career path represents a vertical ascent in organisation's hierarchy and often is referred to as leading, line, and managing path. Hierarchy in a business is described characteristic of an organisation scheme is the basis for determining, movement path profile. Leading positions bring a rise in obligations and responsibility, the pressure on knowledge, specific skills, and abilities, connected with rising incomes and an individual's rising social position. Managerial career is suitable for individuals who enjoy achieving results by means of coordinated activity of individuals and teams, or possibly several units/divisions. They manage to fulfil the organisation's

objectives by the performance of their managerial functions and managerial activities.

Ability to use power effectively and with responsibility or authority, is one of manager's key properties. Power is the ability to imposing one's will to others, and authority is the right to guide other people's activities. Authority is an officially confirmed privilege resulting from functional position, which enables to perform decisions on the basis of one's own deliberation and influence and regulate activities of subordinates.

In order to change a traditional hierarchical structure of businesses to flat organisation structures systems of management are being simplified, which results in decreasing the number of management levels. This trend leads to the decrease in career movements in vertical hierarchy; the result is a smaller number of possible vertical shifts accompanied with the rise in authorities. An alternative option is project management, where each project has its management, which enables several employees to provide authority and responsibility for the results achieved in the work on the project.

Project career path – its basis is a project, in which cooperate employees of the same or differing fields of business/departments of business or organisation units. An employee can be involved in various projects at the same time and carries out also tasks connected with their job position outside the project work. Work on project is connected with taking over several project functions, which have their own hierarchy next to managerial function. In this way, employees can gain a higher power and responsibility without advancing vertically in the company hierarchy. It is often referred to as horizontal career. Project work is often connected with the need for acquiring professional knowledge, abilities, and social skills. Achievements in managing projects are often a condition for taking over managerial positions. This line of career path is increasingly popular and is becoming an important career option.

Driving career paths are described by Tyson and Jackson (1997) in their work "Organizational Behaviour" as follows:

1. Transient – a permanent type of work or area of work activity is not defined. This concerns employees with lower qualification level, when an employee is not very particular about developing experience and so their career has no unanimous aim.
2. Permanent state/condition – in this type of path one remains in one job position for a lifetime (doctor, lawyer, and the like) and sees the development of career in self-improvement rather than in rising to higher job positions/titles.
3. Linear – at the beginning of work life, an individual chooses a given field and then designs plans and implements them to achieve their career movement upwards.

4. Spiral – one develops in a given field or area for a given period of time, and then passes into related or new field within some cyclical movement. This type of career enables to gain new experience and obtain a broader view of an organisation (Tyson, Jackson, 1997, p. 121).

Basic driver ideas have been further worked out and supplemented with theoretical and practical experience; in professional literature there are described four types of career:

1. The expert career type requires quality knowledge, skills and commitment to work. An individual chooses a profession for a lifetime and the aim is to be professionally competent and recognised expert. Employees are interested in new approaches, technologies, are improving and moving the limits of their field upwards. Their career movement are in-depth oriented. In a changing world the expert position gives them the feeling of safety and security regarding his job, because without them the workplace would not reach the results comparable with those achieved with them (as employees). The main motive of career development is “to be a guarantee of a high expertise in one’s profession”.

2. The linear career type is typical of dependent work and for individuals who do not want to do business on their own, and prefer achieving higher positions and remuneration (salary) within a selected organisation. Their career is always oriented one step higher in the system of career positions in an organisation/institution. The condition is to find an employer who has a ladder of positions and salary classes, where the career advancement, its dimensions and competences are defined.

3. The spiral career type requires professional knowledge, experience, their improvement, courage, and creativity. An individual builds up their career in a series of employments, while each of them may last from five to ten years. If they remained in one business in a given position for a longer time, even though they are very at their work, they would not get to higher positions, as in bigger businesses top positions are filled with new people. After some lapse of time, they leave for another workplace, usually better paid and with a greater rate of influence, while the direction of career movement remains unchanged in the same field.

4. The transient/temporary career type, when people experience the need for doing something new; they value high their freedom and wish to decide about their themselves by themselves; prefer diverse and short-term jobs. These people prefer flexibility and adjust to new opportunities. They often change their employment, employers, gain

experience, and are able to perform various activities. Their motive of career development is the need to be an independent and avoid stereotypes. Career of transient type consists of one to four-year intervals in various and diverse and often unrelated work activities (Lepeňová, Hargašová, 2012, p. 9).

In view of uncertainty and instability on the labour market repeated the changing one's employment, employers, directing one's career movement into various areas will be found by most individuals a necessity. In the future people will have to change their employers several times in the course of their lives and also change their qualifications and acquire a new employment. These developments are connected with the diversity of career movements, which are brought about by the dynamics and changeability of the labour market, definitely a greater variability in career types can be expected in the future.

### **Empirical Research: Analysis, Models and Discussion**

In the research carried out under the project mentioned before, we focused on career of persons who were employed at the time when the research was under way. However, it does not mean that respondents have had no experience with unemployment. In their replies, respondents provided us valuable information, on the basis of which we summarize types of career in the conclusion, while these summarizing characteristics contain also the types of career in which individuals are unable to maintain life-long employment during their working life.

An individual starts planning their career by choosing a particular field of study within formal education. Decision-making process on career choice is stage-wise and takes place in during several periods of human life, in which the level of personality maturity, attitudes, and acknowledged values are reflected. The needs and ambitions depend on the setting which forms people from their early childhood, from knowledge and experience acquired, as well as from model life schemes. A substantial influence on the development of career is exerted by the possibility of choosing the kind of formal education, its completed level, a smooth transition from school to the world of work, and conditions for further career development, which are connected with the possibilities of further professional education and conditions in employer entities. These basic moments in career development have been underpinned by our research, the starting-point of which was the ideas of the choice of formal education. The research on the career preparation and career development with focus on preferences of specific career paths was carried out by means of the questionnaire method. In view of the extensive scope of the research carried out, only some selected results can be presented in the present paper.

Respondents were human resources ranging from apprentice education up to higher education (of all the three levels) performing professional and managerial jobs in selected divisions of section M – Technical, scientific and technical activities and sections J – Information and communication of the Statistic Classification of Economic Activities SK NACE Rev. 2 pursuant to by-law 306/2007 Coll. Respondents were chosen by random selection; their representation from sections M and J was proportionate in the number of 150 respondents. The research sample was made up from 300 respondents, whose opinions were considered to be one statistical file.

The research was carried out with human resources from three size types of businesses; the criterion was the number of employees:

1. Small business up to 49 employees;
2. Medium-sized business up to 249 employees;
3. Large business over 250 employees.

A proportionate number of respondents in terms of business size have not been monitored, respondents' opinions were of the same value regardless the type of business in which they are employed. (The reason is that in the sections concerned the number of small-sized and medium-sized businesses prevailed.)

*Within J section, respondents were from the following six divisions:*

58 – Publishing activities

59 – Production of films, video recordings and TV programmes, preparation and disclosure of sound records

60 – Activities for radio and television broadcasting

61 – Telecommunications

62 – Computer programming, counselling and related services

63 – Information services

*Within M section, respondents were from the following four divisions:*

69 – Legal and accounting activities

71 – Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis

72 – Scientific research and development

73 – Advertising and market research

Profiles of work activities reflect structure of respondents' education, and the level of completed education. Table 1 compares respondents' ideas, i.e. their expectations and wishes concerning completed formal education and the reality, i.e. what they have achieved in reality.

Tab. 1 Ambitions and ideas of formal education and the highest education actually completed in %

Schools Formal education	Apprentice schools	Secondary vocational school completed with school-leaving exam	Follow-up study*	Tertiary-education Level 1	Tertiary-education Level 2	Tertiary-education Level 3
Idea	10	32	0	11.4	39.3	7.3
Reality	9.3	2.7	3.6	29.7	41	13.7

Note: General education school is not included, as there was no respondent with this kind of education. Source: own processing on the basis of research results

Completed education by the total number of 300 respondents:

Apprentice school	28
Secondary vocational school completed with school-leaving examination (equivalent to GCE)	8
Follow-up education	11
Tertiary education, Level 1.	89
Tertiary education, Level 2.	123
Tertiary education, Level 3.	41

\*Follow-up study is designed for graduates from three-year apprentice schools and enables them to obtain “maturita“ (equivalent to GCSE), i.e. achieve a complete secondary vocational education.

Tab. 2 Ideas of respondents about basic abilities required for completing a particular level of education

Schools Abilities and skills	Apprentice schools	Secondary vocational school completed with GCE	Follow-up study	Tertiary education Level 1	Tertiary education Level 2	Tertiary education Level 3
Kinetic	213	106	78	2	0	0
Sensory	289	276	268	285	294	287
Intellectual:						
- numerical	42	87	88	154	253	249
verbal understanding	98	101	97	179	271	212
abilities to identify similarities and differences	1	38	32	78	216	296
- perception speed	19	47	43	89	179	265
flexibility of reasoning	12	65	68	97	196	276
deductive reasoning	18	51	49	84	199	269
long-term visual memory	13	160	189	101	219	294
- spatial and area imagination	15	39	42	35	121	74

Note: Assessment was made on the scale of 1-6; the table gives numbers of respondents who assigned the highest rating to individual abilities. Source: own processing of replies in questionnaires



The total set of respondents evaluated on the scale 1 – 6, on the basis of their opinions and requirements concerning students' education. Each respondent could assign the scoring from 1 to 6 to movement, sensory and separate components of intellect abilities. Tab. 2 is a survey of respondent opinions, where individual types of abilities were assigned the highest rating, i.e. 6. The rest of respondents assigned a lower rating than 6 to required abilities. The rating in the interval of 1 – 5 is not indicated in the survey.

The rating of requirements for completing particular levels of formal education mirrors the structure of fields of study in separate types of school suitable for being employable in J and M sections concerned and with a special emphasis on the divisions monitored. Kinetic abilities are the most important in apprentice education and in secondary vocational schools completed with *maturita* (equivalent to GCSE). The importance of sensory skills is rated very high by respondents in all types of schools of formal education. As for the importance of intellectual properties, there are great differences in the requirements for apprentice education, secondary vocational and follow-up education, and separate levels of tertiary education. Demands on the development of intellectual properties in tertiary education distinctly influence divisions 62 – Computer programming, counselling, and related services and 63 – Information services in section J and divisions 71 – Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis and 72 – Scientific research and development of section M. Consequently, also the respondents from other divisions rated the requirements on intellectual abilities very high. In other divisions there are employed also graduates from apprentice schools or secondary vocational schools completed with the equivalent to GCSE (in Slovak “*maturita*”), where the requirements placed at level 6 were considerably lower.

Intuitive or conscious expectations of an individual about the development of one's own life-long career may be referred to as the career model, which is the result of career planning. This model is based on the analysis of own personality dispositions and focuses on their development; this way the model assumes the shape of structural model, where the structure is made up of individual personality elements. In general, modelling is understood as a reproduction of characteristic features and characters of a particular object by means of another object, which serves as a pattern of practical applicability. Not every individual has a clear idea of their career; career often develops by chance according to possibilities available and random opportunities. On the basis of career development, however, we can characterise basic career models in the course of years in individual occupations/professions.

The following are some of the important career models:

- A. Advancement career model

The starting-point is that the present workplace is considered temporary and is a kind of “changing station” to a higher job position, for which an individual has to have a required knowledge, skills, and aptitudes. This approach to career represents principal life philosophy for many people and requires the development of their volition and motivation properties, so that they may gradually gain competences for the performance of higher and higher positions. A criterion applied in the promotion process that claims that individuals are promoted as long as they meet corresponding competences.

B. Expert career model

This model represents the acquisition of job position, which corresponds to interests and talent of an individual. It represents a professional work performance while the interest is oriented to developing knowledge and skills in a given field and individuals avoid the kind of working activities that could lead to their promotion.

C. “Work only” career model

This model may represent a long-term orientation or only one stage in career development. The approach is based on the idea that work is a primary source of income. Harmony of work and talent, or overlapping with interests and needs of an individual is of secondary importance. This kind of career model is pursued by those who need to secure a particular income volume, or those who have no clear career motivation but need some adequate income and also space for out-of-work activities.

D. Independent career model

This model is preferred by individuals who expect a high rate of freedom. It means they refuse to have their work structured too much by their superiors, they do not want to be controlled, or just fulfil their work duties, but they want to influence their job themselves. For this type of career suitable conditions are created by the change in the concept and arrangement of employee relations. Many employers apply outsourcing in some work activities by recruiting external suppliers of activities that used to be performed only by internal employees.

E. Multi-career orientation model

This career model is suitable for individuals who are interested in several career areas and conditions of self-actualisation enables them diversity in working life. This orientation has an advantage which rests in the decrease in risk of loss of job, numerous experience, contacts, which are acquired in the performance of one job, can be used also in

another job, i.e. multi-career orientation offers a possible synergic effect. However, there are some constraints involved: as long as one is involved in several activities at the same time, they cannot spend so much time to all of them as people who deal with only one of these activities. This way they decrease their own competitiveness in comparison with those who are involved in one activity only. It is necessary to choose a suitable strategy and eliminate disadvantages.

These career models contain various requirements on volition and social skills. Respondents gave their opinions of the need for individual volition properties and social skills; each respondent could choose only one property or skill from each group. Volition properties considered in the research include ambitiousness, consistency, determination, independence, creativity, or initiative. Social skills listed in the table below are: ability to influence, ability to communicate, leadership ability, cooperation ability, team-working ability, and ability to establish rapport.

Tab. 3 characterises the mode, i.e. the highest frequency from the given properties and skills, which are, according to respondents, important for the implementation of A, B, C, D, and E models.

Tab. 3 Modes of volition and social skills in separate models

Career models Personality traits and social skills	A Advancement career	B Expert career model	C "Work only" career model	D Independent career model	E Multi-career orientation model
Personality traits					
Ambition	238				
Consistency					
Determination					
Independence				253	
Creativity		217			
Initiative approach			196		241
Social skills					
Ability to influence	211				
Ability to communicate					
Leadership ability				128	
Cooperation ability		159			
Team-working ability			84		
Ability to establish rapport					176

Mode is a value of statistical character of the highest quantity.

Source: own processing of questionnaire survey

Table 3 shows respondent opinions of the importance of six volition personality traits and six skills. It is interesting to observe that two volition personality traits (consistency and determination) and one social skill (ability to communicate) were not assigned any importance by respondents. On the other hand, ambition, independence, creativity, and initiative approach had the highest rating, and the highest scoring skills were ability of influencing other people and the ability to establish rapport.

In the case of ascending career (A model) the modes of volition properties are ambitiousness; likewise determination received high scoring. In the case of expert career (B) the most frequent choice was creativity, followed by initiative approach and independence. Initiative approach was a volition trait, which received a mode in C and E models. The personality trait “independence” scores highest in model D.

In the case of an advancement career (A model) the ability to influence reached the highest rating. When evaluating model B, in the rating of social skills the mode was the ability to cooperate, but the quantity 141 was achieved also in the case of the team working ability. In the case of model C respondents’ opinions were approximately divided in all the options of social skills, while the mode was the team-working ability. The mode of model D was characteristic of leadership skills, but high quantities were recorded also in the case of the ability to communicate and the ability to establish rapport. In multi-career orientation the mode is the ability to establish rapport.

Table 3 shows what volition features and social skills are considered by respondents to be the most important for the implementation of specific career models.

Expectations affect individuals’ assessment of own success in job positions and performance of each job roles, which, in turn, influence also the overall satisfaction with the course of career. This was also reflected in our research carried out, e.g. individuals who occupied more prestigious job positions and achieved also some success in career were dissatisfied, while those who, e.g. completed apprentice school without *maturita* (school-leaving examination equivalent to app. GCE) were not interested in developing their education, and did not do so. Instead, these respondents maintained their jobs, although not prestigious ones, but ones that enabled them survival, were satisfied with their career. They were satisfied not to be unemployed. We can state that from the total of 300 respondents who answered the question 103 respondents were satisfied with their career: they said they did not see their career only as a source of livelihood, but as a source of self-realisation which satisfied their interests and needs and corresponded to their talents.

The selection of career model by an individual is influenced by an individual's attitudes, traditions, family customs, and the need for the inclusion in some stratum and remaining in that stratum. Primary job position is derived from the status of parents, who influence the process of development and in most cases take part in significant decisions during the stage of preparation for career, which, in turn, influences job position and other career orientation. Career models represent basic trends in lifelong career development in the most general connections, which reflect respondents' ideas of the course of lifelong career, which is the basic motivation factor stimulating job mobility supplemented with required education activities.

### **Conclusion: Course of Career and Characteristics Based on Respondents' Opinions**

Basic models of career were applied in the research in order to simplify the implementation of research, as well as to present respondents' career expectations. At the same time, we were aware of the need for dealing with the requirements of career plans and intentions connected with a career model. Individuals' initial basic preferences and expectations are projected via opportunities and conditions on the labour market into the implementation of specific definable types of career (path).

The selection of education and its completion are the first stage of career development. Unfortunately, this is often a random choice made on the basis of ideas and wishes of one's parents, relatives, and other acquaintances. Seldom is it connected to conditions and chances of being employable within a given time horizon, after graduation in a given field of study. Moreover, also some kind of professional counselling education is missing; a specialist would be able to estimate their chances of employability and future development on the basis of the applicant's internal dispositions. On the basis of interrogation on the course of career movements, several career paths have been detected; these career paths are characteristic of achievements or constraints in one's career:

- Linear career path – at the beginning of their productive life individuals choose some field and gradually based on their efforts and skills carry out their career plans, while the measure of their fulfilment depends on results of work. Each individual aims at career advancement, which may be achieved in the same institution or it may be connected to transition from one business/organisation for another one. There may be numerous reasons for doing so, e.g. removing stereotype experienced by an employee in their old environment; creating inadequate conditions for their career development by the organisation concerned, or non-performance of some required

performance criteria; not observing work discipline, difficult relationships with co-workers and management, or a host of other reasons.

- Spiral career path – an individual develop in a given area for some time and then passes to related or new field within some cyclical movement. This movement is connected with work enrichment and gaining new experience, which may take place in one or several organisations.

- Hierarchical career path – employees gain knowledge, skills connected with the performance of several activities, acquires social skills, is able to be at the head of fulfilment of tasks, has clear visions and desire to turn them in to reality. They can act as heads of team, and motivate their team to fulfil the tasks needed. In accordance with the hierarchic structure of an organisation, these people take an opportunity and fill in executive positions.

- Unchanged career path – an employee remains in the same job position, or fulfils the same job title for a long time of their working life. Development options are connected with the issues of self-improvement.

- Flexible career path – is typical of individuals who pass from one job for another one at random while they have no ambitions to build their career. They neither have they a defined type or field of work. The fact that they do not wish to develop their knowledge and skills or have no clear aim in career may result in their absence of interest or from a replacement solution the aim of which to do some job no matter which. Frequently, this type of career is pursued by employees with lower qualifications, who change jobs in order to earn more, or those who have problems with observing work discipline and fulfilment of performance. They often leave their jobs under pressure of circumstances and also on their own will.

- Descending career path – is connected with economic and social changes, which influenced the labour market, which caused some categories of people become secondary human resources. These are people whose present situation distinctly contrasts with their preceding stable or even preferred job positions. This kind of condition is accompanied with disappointment, disillusion, and diffidence, or rise of psychic disorders manifested by depression, disinterest or low-assertive behaviour.

A descending career is often connected with a temporary or long-term unemployment. Human resources that were unemployed during the research, but have had experience with previous unemployment, have not been included in the research. The research in these problems was

only marginal; however, on the basis of information and sources of respondents we can characterise types of human resource career, where the career was in some way intervened by unemployment.

- **Interrupted course of career** – is the case of individuals who lost employment and became unemployed. This phenomenon is connected with that the individual when doing some job does not at the same time follow the possibilities of being employed in another employer entity or in a related field. Search for new job is connected with the period of unemployment following the termination of employment. Usually this kind of person finds a job that is professionally comparable with the preceding one and the person's place in a given social stratum remains unchanged.

- **Repeatedly interrupted course of career** – unemployment is caused by inapplicable qualification in view of changing dynamic requirements on the performance of work activities in the national economy. This is often caused by low flexibility and adaptability of human resources to adjust to new conditions. The loss of employment is often followed by either a longer lasting unemployment or taking an employment of a lower qualification or income level, connected with a lower social status.

- **On-going uninterrupted unemployment** – some period of employment is followed by unemployment lasting several years and is evaluated as long-term unemployment or the stage of preparation for career continues with unemployment. In both cases it is a serious social, economic, as well as psychological problem.

Long-term unemployment may also occur in the case of persons who used to hold significant job positions and met the qualification required for the position. However, as a result of developments in required competences for the performance of these people are no longer able to adjust to the changes and perhaps re-qualify for the performance of other job positions. Although they do re-qualify, they are unable to find employment. The other serious problem may be a decline in individual performance, caused by various factors, which is an obstacle to their re-employment.

A specific problem is the unemployment of graduates from various types of schools: after completing their studies students increase the ranks of the unemployed; sometimes they take up study at another type of school in a different field of study, and still fail to find employment. This situation is caused by the disharmony between the needs of the national economy for particular occupations/professions and the numbers of graduates from particular fields of study. There is a surplus of higher education graduates (in some fields of study), and there is an urgent shortage on the labour market of manual workers, who completed particular apprentice or secondary

vocational schools. Our research confirms that on the basis of respondents' experience specific abilities and skills are needed in various types of job positions.

The characteristic of career presented in the paper can hardly be considered as a complete one; all the career paths presented in the paper are the result of research carried out and opinions of respondents in two sections and in selected divisions of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities SK NACE Rev. 2. Within the group analysed they represent the most frequent kinds of career (actually pursued) that are applicable also in the characteristic of careers in other sections of the national economy of the Slovak Republic. The knowledge gained from empirical research is applicable not only in designing educational activities for specific educational target groups, but also for the implementation of counselling services, and these services might ensure clients' lifelong employability but definitely would at least decrease unemployment of certain groups of persons.

Career may be defined as a lifelong self-development process in profession, which enables an individual to be competitive on the labour market. The aim of career is to gain and maintain a particular job position in a competitive environment of the labour market. The starting-point of the career is gaining the qualification required on the labour market and its permanent development and increasing in connection with conditions of development.

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