

CHAPTER - II

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Various theories of occupational choice have attempted to answer how people choose occupations and why they select, and eventually enter, different occupations. Thus, different approaches to the study of vocational behaviour have been put forward. A critical evaluation of some of the approaches will bring into focus the theory underlying the present investigation.

Trait and Factor Theory

Based upon the psychology of individual differences and the analysis of occupations, trait and factor theorists of vocational choice emphasize the relationship of an individual's personal characteristics to his selection of an occupation. The logic of this view-point is that because individuals differ in their aptitudes, interests, and personalities and because occupations require varying amounts and kinds of these traits and factors, different individuals choose to enter different occupations. Parsons (1909), an early exponent of this view, explicated a three step process through which a person goes in choosing a vocation; (1) "a clear understanding of (himself), (his) aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations and their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in

different lines of work, and (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts". In short, the individual compares his capabilities and dispositions with those demanded by occupations and selects the one he "matches" best. Since last 20 years this theory has been subjected to critical examination. The critics of this theory contend that occupational groups are too heterogeneous in their duties and tasks to identify the traits and factors which differentiate them. Furthermore, the search for occupational differences obscures the importance of the series of choices which precedes actual entry into an occupation. In other words, given that individuals make numerous decisions about their future occupations before they enter them, what are the trait- and factor correlates of these decisions? Are the correlates different at different age levels, or do they remain the same as the individual grows older? For all its shortcomings, the theory of matching people and jobs made important contributions but as Osipow (1973) noted, this theory has been absorbed into other formulations. The scientific empirical nature of trait and factor approach creates a scientific halo about itself but this very characteristic leads Osipow to remark that "the trait factor approach is almost a non-theory since it is basically empirical in nature."

Psychodynamic Theories of Vocational Choice

Psychodynamic refers to any psychological system that strives for explanation of behaviour in terms of motives or

drives or that describes a psychological process that is changing or is causing change. Each of the theories of vocational choice considered here - psychoanalytic, need and self, can be classified as 'psychodynamic' by these definitions of the term.

(i) Psycho-analytic Theories

According to this view, vocational activity represents a sublimation of biological desires and impulses, that is, individual expresses libido in a socially acceptable manner through vocation. Exponents of this view are Brill (1949), Meadow (1955), Forer (1953) and Bordin, Nachman and Segal (1963). Osipow (1968) comments "The psycho-analytic conceptualization of career choice emphasizes the technique of impulse gratification and anxiety reduction which a field offers, rather than the interests and abilities a career requires". Through the socialization process, the individual learns to satisfy his aggressive and sexual needs in a way which meets the approval of his parents, his friends, his teachers and society at large. The behavioural mechanisms he adopts to cope with life constitute his character and personality, and are the basis for his selection of an occupation. The underlying assumption in most psychoanalytic interpretations of vocational choice is that one's work reflects his personality. Bordin et al (1963) point out that their system applied only to individuals who have a fairly

high degree of freedom in their choices. In other words, they are not constrained in their decision making by external forces e.g. economic, cultural and geographic conditions and limitations and therefore can express their personalities in their career choices.

The role which ego may play in choosing an occupation was first given by Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad & Herma (1951). According to them, the adolescent must have an accurate appraisal of his capabilities, his strengths, his weaknesses so that he can set attainable goals for himself. He must 'reality test' his plans against an objective evaluation of his personal and environmental resources for implementing them. Because vocational plans are generally long range in nature, covering a period of years, it is necessary for the individual to develop a differentiated time perspective, so that he can distinguish between the "right now" and the future in outlining steps which will lead him to his goals. Furthermore, he must follow the 'reality principle' rather than 'the pleasure principal' and postpone the immediate gratification of needs in order to attain his objectives. In short, to make a realistic vocational choice, the individual must be able to bring the future into the psychological present, consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action, commit himself to one of the alternatives, and then control his behaviour sufficiently to implement the alternatives, he selected.

(ii) Need Theories

Whereas psycho-analytic explanations of vocational choice focus upon the defense mechanisms of the individual in the selection of an occupation, 'need theories' of choice give primary attention to the desires and wants which stimulate the individual to prefer one occupation to another. Driven by conscious and unconscious needs, individual seeks a vocation which will permit him to satisfy some of his basic needs.

Probably, the most prominent need theory of vocational choice is the one formulated by Roe (1956, 1957, and in Super & Bachrach 1957) from her studies of the personality development of eminent scientists. In her theory Roe (1957) traces the effects of early psychosocial experiences on the formation of needs and the patterning of psychic energy. The way in which the individual learns to, more or less automatically, satisfy his needs, determines which of his special abilities, interests and attitudes he will follow and develop. Needs which parents fill routinely, as they appear, have little effect upon the factors which determine an individual's vocational behaviour, but needs which they satisfy only minimally or with delay become unconscious motivators and directly influence the individual's preferences for activities, which involve working with things or with people, and which are the basis for vocational choice. Thus, the 'psychological climate' in the family has an influence upon vocational

development. Differences in early family experiences, Roe thought, came to be translated into differing vocational preferences. The specific needs which Roe relates to vocational choice, are those defined by Maslow (1954) in his theory of personality. Maslow has given a hierarchy of needs, the higher order needs only become effective after the lower-order needs have been satisfied. According to Roe, in modern society, most of lower order needs are satisfied, therefore it is the higher order needs which act as motivating for vocational behaviour. In particular, it is the need for self actualization which is of paramount importance. Roe maintains that this need is central in the choice of vocation. Since: "all that a man can be, he must be, if he is to be happy" Roe does not relate specific needs to specific occupations rather, she points out, how any occupation may serve to satisfy needs at a given level.

(iii) Self Theories

The most systematic application of self concept theory to vocational choice came in the career pattern study by Super & associates (1960, 1963).

The self influences vocational choice because as Super has put it, "the choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly his concept of himself, to say definitely" I am this or that kind of person. Throughout his life the individual plays a variety of roles which provide him with an

opportunity to discover who he is and what he wants to be. He finds that he does some things well and gains a sense of satisfaction from them. These successes tend to develop in him a picture of himself as one who writes well or as one who is always on time; and these numerous little specific pictures of aspects of oneself begin to add up, in due course, to a picture of the self (Super 1951).

Tiedman and his associates (Tiedman & Pandit, 1958; O'Hara & Tiedman, 1959; Kibrick & Tiedman, 1961; Tiedman & O'Hara, 1963) have also related the self to vocational choice, but in a different way than Super's, emphasizing the formation of the self in relation to educational experiences more than Super has, conceiving self as the individual's evaluation rather than perception of himself which continually changes as he progresses from one educational or vocational 'position' to another. O'Hara and Tiedman (1959) maintain that

"The process of occupational choice may be characterized as that of developing a vocational identity. The 'Self' is the central concern of identity. The concept of identity and self are intuitively satisfying means of attributing motivation for occupational choice to the person choosing."

Thus, according to Tiedman, self and vocational development interact and affect each other as the individual copes with the problems of pursuing a course of training or deciding upon a career. They have also traced the decision making process through the developmental stages given by

Erikson (1959) such as Basic Trust, Autonomy, initiative, industry and identity formation.

Developmental Theories

Most trait and psychodynamic theories of vocational choice have assumed that choice takes place at a given point in time rather than over a period of time. In contrast, the developmental theorists propose that the decisions involved in the selection of an occupation are made at a number of different points in the individual's life and, that, they constitute a continuous process which starts in childhood and ends in adulthood. This point of view had its origin in the work of Buehler (1929, 1933), Lazarsfeld (1931) and Carter's (1940) work on interest patterns. The theory of Ginzberg et al (1951) is also based on the developmental nature of vocational choice. Their data indicated that vocational choice is a process which spans the entire period of adolescence. Second, this process is largely irreversible - an individual finds it increasingly difficult to change his goals as time passes. Third, the process ends in a compromise between an individual's needs and the realities which impinge upon him. The individual, even in extremely favourable conditions, has to make concessions to the limitations of environmental conditions. Super (1957) another of developmental theorists, gave 10 propositions which reflect his use of trait and factor approach, his

application of self theory and his interpretation of choice as a developmental phenomenon. He places, even more emphasis than Ginzberg upon vocational choice as a process. He introduced the concept of vocational maturity to denote the individual's degree of development from the time of his early fantasy choices to his decisions about retirement from work in old age (Super 1955). As the individual matures vocationally, he passes through a series of life stages. The life stages are based on the stages given by Buehler (1929, 1933) which are growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. According to Super (1957), the adolescent draws upon his experiences in the home, school and world of work to clarify his impressions of self gained in childhood, to increase information about occupations, and to achieve a synthesis of his conceptions of self and work in the expressions of a vocational choice.

Following Ginzberg's and Super's emphasis upon vocational choice as a process which proceeds through several stages, Tiedman (1961; Tiedman & O'Hara 1963) has attempted to clarify and specify what the series of decisions is which an individual makes in the course of his career development. He divides the overall process of vocational decision making into two periods and then continues delineating stages within each period. First, there is a period of anticipation which has four substages, exploration, crystallization, choice and classification, and secondly, there is a period of

implementation and adjustment, which follows the clarification stage of the anticipation period and which encompasses three additional stages namely, induction, reformation, and integration. The succession of these stages represents a progressive realization of the individual's goals as he enters and advances in his chosen position.

In addition to the developmental theories of Ginzberg, Super and Tiedman, there have been formulations and speculations about how vocational choices are made over periods of time. Among these are Dysinger (1950), Beilin (1955) who have made distinctive contributions to the understanding of vocational choice as a process.

A Typological Theory

Advocated by Holland (1959, 1966), this theory is based on the notion that "birds of a feather, flock together". He states it more articulately in the following propositions.

1. Most persons can be categorized as one of six types - Realistic, Intellectual, Social, Conventional, Enterprising and Artistic.
2. There are six kinds of environments: Realistic, Intellectual, Social, Conventional, Enterprising and Artistic.
3. People search for environments and vocations that will permit them to exercise their skills and abilities to

express their attitudes and values to take on agreeable problems and roles, and to avoid disagreeable ones.

4. A person's behaviour can be explained by the interaction of his personality pattern and his environment.

According to Holland, an individual's range of vocational choices, given his personality type, is limited to one or some combination of the six occupational environments. His level of choice is determined by two factors: (1) the level of his intelligence and (2) the level of his self evaluation. The individual selects an occupation in terms of his self knowledge and occupational knowledge which vary in quantity and quality from one environment to another. Holland (1966) introduced the concept of development into his theory by means of the individual's life history, which he defines as a particular pattern of living. According to him, the individual's life history can be traced overtime by identifying the interactions he engages in different environments as he grows up. To the extent that the individual's personality "fits" the environment, his development is considered to be more or less stable. In short, personal stability is the outcome of passing through a series of consistent environments that foster and strengthen one's ability to cope with the world in an integrated way.

A General Developmental Interpretation of Vocational Choice

Super & Bachrach (1957) have formulated a comprehensive theory of vocational choice which draws upon contributions from several areas. This theory places a heavy emphasis upon the developmental nature of work-related decision-making, uses the developmental framework of life-periods or stages to describe the various phases in the selection of an occupation, and to specify the cultural and social, trait and psychodynamic factors which influence the choice process from childhood to late adulthood. Central in Super and Bachrach's formulation is the concept of vocational developmental tasks. At each stage, in the course of vocational development, there are certain tasks which society expects him to accomplish. To the extent individual accomplishes the tasks of earlier stages, he is successful with the tasks of later stages, and normal vocational development is defined as a series of tasks which are successfully performed by the individual at the appropriate time in his development.

The basic assumption which underlies Super and Bachrach's theory is, that vocational development is a special aspect of general development, and that the factors which affect vocational development, change and interact with each other much as vocational behaviour changes and interacts with them. In other words, vocational development is a dynamic process which parallels, influences and is modified by the

emotional, intellectual and social development. Super & Bachrach (1957) write that "biological, psychological, economic and sociological factors combine to affect the individual's career pattern. Now one aspect of behaviour, then another, is pre-eminent throughout the span of development."

The developmental theory of career choice forms the basis of the study which has also been touched upon earlier, in the introduction. The career concepts being studied are based upon the developmental view which recognize the process in which learning and decision making occurs through what has been called "vocalionalization" (Crites 1958, 1969; Herr & Cramer 1972) which encompasses the temporal span of the childhood and adolescent years when the "greening" of the individual vis-a-vis the world of work takes place.

Having briefly reviewed some of the major theories and theoretical formulations, a comparison of some of these theories seems to be in order.

Most of the theories discussed above recognize the concept of stages of development. Although there are differences amongst them in its details and interpretations, the concept is accepted by a number of theorists such as Ginzberg, Super, Tiedman and O'Hara, Havighurst, Bordin, Nachman and Segal, and Forer. Super & Tiedman have a common goal of predicting career pattern, or work history of the

individual. Super uses developmental model to explain development through various life stages where Tiedman uses developmental model to explain decision making in vocational development. Holland seems to find little use for the idea of stages, and in fact, has thus far given little attention to the process of development, but he is concerned with life history or changes in behaviour over time as representing a particular pattern of living or life style. Roe (1956) and Ginzberg (1951) limited themselves to occupational choice which is an aspect of vocational development, both of them have used psychoanalytic formulations.

The thrust of phenomenological view is strong with some theorists. Super builds his theory around the self concept idea, but Tiedman speaks of "self identity". Super drew heavily from developmental psychology, from self concept interpretations of interests by Carter and Bordin, from Allport's (1937) ego psychology. Tiedman made Erikson's life stages as his starting point. Holland, interested in the relationship between personality and environmental types, sees people searching for congenial environments. Surely, this is a phenomenological approach. Need theorists are clearly on the road to phenomenology.

Different career development theorists have also emphasized different correlates of vocational choice in explicating their theories (Bordin, Nachmann & Segal, 1963;

Holland 1973; Roe 1957; Super 1957; Williamson 1939).

The fourth element of commonality in the existing theories is that data used to support these theories have been gathered from restricted groups and the theory, so developed, can not be generalized to all classes and cultures. This criticism applies to early work of Ginzberg and associates (1951) and, to some degree, to Super & Holland. Ginzberg's study was largely cross-sectional whereas Roe's study was based on retrospective data. Though all theories except Roe's have obtained empirical support, Super's theory has aroused a great deal of research and has been a subject of study in many cultures.

As Herr (1970) states

"most theories of vocational development are based upon limited samples of privileged persons. They are addressed to the middle class rather than to those who depart from this classification in either direction. They tend to emphasize continuous, uninterrupted aspects of vocational behaviour which seem possible in a segment of the population whose limits upon choice are minimal, for whom resources, both psychological and economic, are available to facilitate purposeful development. Such criteria do not fit all persons about whom guidance practitioners must be concerned".

The present study will examine whether the developmental theory of career behaviour is adequate in the Indian context. The continuity of vocational choice process, emphasized by Ginzberg (1951), Super (1957),

Crites (1961), and the role of variety of factors affecting this process at various stages of development has formed the theoretical basis of the study.

Guidance workers in India rely heavily on the career concepts developed in the highly developed and advanced societies which may not be applicable here and hence, an attempt is being made in the investigation to study the suitability of such theories (Super, Crites) developed in the west, and to provide information about the process of career decision making and various characteristics in the individual and environment which facilitate or enhance this process. Amongst the propositions which outline Super's theory (1957), proposition six states "that the nature of career pattern is determined by the individual's parental Socio-economic level, mental ability and personality characteristics and by the opportunities to which he is exposed." As indicated earlier, the present investigation also aims to study the relationship of some of the personal-social factors to career maturity. The variables of career maturity being studied have been given by Crites. These are the factors of Career Choice Attitudes and Career Choice Competencies based on the 'Model of Career Maturity' proposed by him (Crites 1961). These dimensions of career maturity have been, in turn, modified from Super's original dimensions of vocational maturity (1953, 1955). The study of career maturity, in terms of career choice process variables (choice

attitudes and choice competencies) in relation to grade, sex, intelligence, social class, vocational aspirations and personality variables, will throw light on the adequacy of theory of Super (1957), and Crites (1961) in the Indian context.

The Concept of Career Maturity

Though this concept has been introduced in the first chapter, a more detailed discussion on the dimensions of career maturity (Crites 1961) will clarify the concepts of career choice attitudes and career choice competencies.

Super (1955) was first to introduce the concept of vocational maturity. According to him, as vocational development proceeds systematically along certain identifiable directions, it should be possible to assess, not only how much of the road individual has covered, but also how fast he is travelling in comparison with others who are embarked on the same journey. Thus, rate and progress along this road might be an indication of an individual's vocational maturity. Thus, the variables of vocational maturity, conceptualized by Super (1955), were defined in two ways; firstly, to compare an individual's vocational maturity with where he is in his development with where a person of his age might be expected to be (VM I) and secondly, to compare his performance with that of others who are in the same stage as he (VM II). Super identified five major dimensions of vocational maturity.

These were: 1. Orientation to vocational choice, 2. Information and planning, 3. Consistency of vocational preferences, 4. Crystallization of traits, 5. Wisdom of vocational preferences.

Crites (1961), later, defined vocational maturity as that construct which "refers to the maturity of an individual's vocational behaviour as indicated by the similarity between his behaviour and that of the oldest individual in his vocational life stage." Crites (1965) further elaborated upon orientation, information and crystallization dimensions of vocational maturity of Super and proposed career choice attitudes and career choice competencies dimensions. A hierarchical model of vocational maturity (Figure-I) was proposed by him which is based on Vernon's (1950) model of Intelligence. At the most specific operational level are the vocational behaviours which mature during adolescence. At the intermediate level, group factors constituted from the interrelationships among the variables. At the highest level is general factor representing common variance among the groups and define overall "degree of vocational development". The model as mentioned earlier, was derived from Super's (1955) original dimensions of career maturity, with certain amendments and modifications. The consistency of career choices and realism of career choices groups are much the same as they were first proposed. The career choice competencies and attitudes were formulated

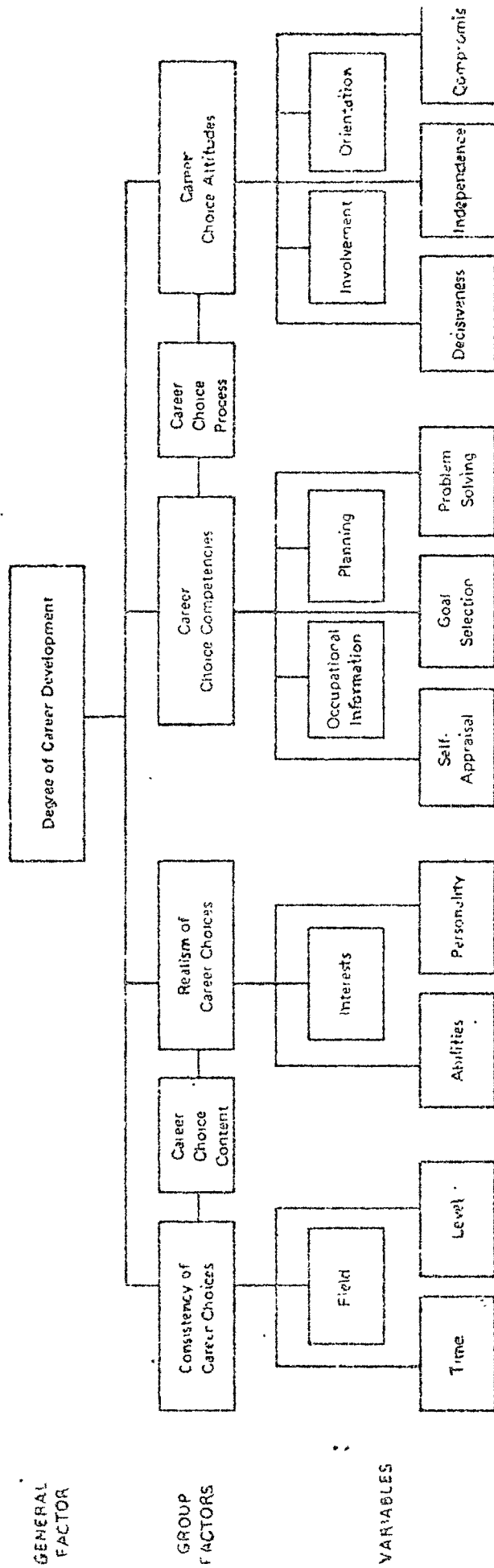


Figure 1. A model of career maturity in adolescence

From: Crites, John O. Theory and Research Handbook. IInd.Ed., CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1978

from Super's orientation to vocational choice, information and planning and certain components of crystallization of traits dimensions. The model (Figure 1) shows useful and meaningful distinctions among the dimensions of career choice content and career choice process (Crites 1974c). The former encompasses the consistency of career choices and realism of career choice factors in the model. To assess career maturity along these dimensions, it is necessary to elicit a career choice from a person, e.g. in reply to a question, which occupation do you intend to enter, if the person replies doctor, engineer, this would refer to career choice content. In contrast, career choice process variables refer to the variables involved in arriving at the declaration of career choice content. These variables include the group factors of career choice attitudes and career choice competencies. The Career Maturity Inventory CMI (Crites 1973, 1978) is designed to measure career choice process variables, and it consists of an Attitude Scale and a Competence Test.

The Attitude Scale is intended to elicit the attitudes or dispositions that the individual has toward career decision making activities. The variables surveyed by the attitude scale are decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation and compromise in career decision making. The scale, thus, maps the conative aspects of decision making. The competence test measures cognitive variables in choosing an occupation. In five parts, the test assesses "what might be

designated as comprehension and problem solving abilities as they pertain to the vocational choice process" (Crites 1978). Thus attitude scale asks about an individual's attitudes and feelings toward making a career choice and entering the world of work. The competence test is more concerned with knowledge about occupations and the decisions involved in choosing a career. Further details on the attitude scale and parts of the competence test have been discussed in Chapter IV (Part-II) dealing with adaptation of CMI.

Both, attitudes and competency dimensions, were originally incorporated into an instrument entitled the Vocational Development Inventory (VDI), (Crites 1965, 1971). Later, the instrument was renamed as Career Maturity Inventory (1973, 1978). Crites (1973) made this change in the name to emphasize career education as parallel to career development and to avoid the specialized meanings associated with 'vocational' by substituting 'career'. Although composed of an Attitude Scale and a Competence Test, Crites has called this instrument an 'inventory' to embrace an expression that characterizes both intellectual and non-intellectual measures (Hansen 1974). The Attitude Scale and the Competence Test of the CMI (1978) have been modified and adapted for use in the present study. The career choice process variables, (choice attitudes and competencies) as dimensions of career maturity, have been studied in the Western samples but hardly

any attempt has been made to study them in India, hence these variables of career maturity are being studied in relation to some socio-psychological factors in the Indian sample.