

The Making of a Management Mastermind: The Career Development of Peter Drucker

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Keywords

Career development
Peter Drucker
Jeffrey Greenhaus
Careerography
Psychobiography

Abstract

Peter Drucker (1909-2005), an Austrian-American writer, consultant, academic and mentor has been described as the founder of modern business management and the world's most influential and prolific management thinker. His writings transformed business management and established it as an international discipline. Although Drucker died two decades ago, biographical and management literature continue to attract attention and invite research into his life and work. This psychobiography used the Greenhaus career development lens to investigate Drucker's life history. Drucker was purposively selected as the subject due to his extraordinary contributions to management theory and practice. Primary and secondary documentary data was collected and interpreted during the study. The findings indicate remarkable alignment between the age categories proposed by the Greenhaus framework and Drucker's career development stages. Although the findings relating to Drucker's occupational and organisational choice stage are noteworthy, significant differences were noted only in terms of his late career stage. The study contributes to the legacy of Drucker, applies and verifies career development theory in practice, and underscores the importance of longitudinal studies in the career development of extraordinary individuals. Lastly, the study highlights the value of careerographies in business management research, theory development, practice, and training.

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1. Introduction

This psychobiographical single-case study focuses on the career development of Peter Georg Ferdinand Drucker (1909-2005), an Austrian-American writer, academic, and consultant whose contributions to the theory and practice of business management are recognised internationally. Drucker's career demonstrates exceptional productivity, versatility and success. It has been estimated that his written work amounts to "at least ten million words equaling twelve Bibles or eleven Complete Works of Shakespeare" (Starbuck, 2012, p. 8) and to more than 1.8 metres of shelf space (Kantrow, 2009). According to Starbuck, Drucker "has outwritten everyone else in his field, and is the most written about, because what he had to say was relevant in his day and is still relevant" (p. 8). Although Drucker identified most with being a writer (Starbuck, 2006; 2012), his career, which spanned seven decades, was multi-faceted. The purpose of this paper is to explore Drucker's extensive career in the form of a psychobiographical case study and through the lens of an existing career development framework.

1.1. Background

In essence, psychobiographical case studies represent an in-depth, longitudinal approach to the study of extraordinary individuals (Ponterotto, 2014; Runyan, 1982) within the socio-cultural and historical context of the time in which they lived (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Psychobiographers employ psychological theories to explore, describe and interpret biographical data in an attempt to convert life stories into "coherent and illuminating" narratives (McAdams, 2009, p. 496).

This study forms part of a psychobiographical project focusing specifically on the career development of extraordinary individuals (e.g., Mayer, 2019; Ponterotto and Park-Taylor, 2021a; Van Niekerk & Fouché, 2010, 2014, 2015a, 2015b; Van Niekerk et al., 2015). Ponterotto and Park-Taylor (2021a) invented the term careerography to describe psychobiographical research that focuses on the "lives of historically significant individuals throughout history through the lens of established theories of career development" (p. 3). According to Ponterotto and Park-Taylor (2021b) careerographies are able to demonstrate the interaction of life experiences and events as well as the historical and cultural context that ultimately shape career development" (p. 10).

The exploration, description and interpretation of Drucker's career development is important for several reasons. First, Drucker has been described as the master (Starbuck, 2012), apostle (Ryder, 2009), father (Buchanan, 2009; Cohen, 2008; Pearce et al., 2010; Rao, n.d.), and founder (Denning, 2014) of modern business management. Cohen (2008) referred to Drucker as the world's foremost, most celebrated business management consultant and writer.

Second, Drucker is one of the most prolific and influential management writers (Byrne & Gerdes, 2005; Gomez, n.d.; Pearce et al., 2010; Starbuck, 2006; 2012). He is the author of more than 50 books that have been translated into at least 37 languages. Further, he was a Wall Street Journal columnist for 20

years (1975-1995) and contributed to several other magazines and journals (e.g., Financial Times, Fortune, Harpers, Harvard Business Review, The Atlantic Monthly, The Economist [Gomez, n.d.]).

Third, at the time when business management was still in its infancy, Drucker successfully extended the boundaries of business management as a theoretical and practical discipline (Ryder, 2009). In the process Drucker transformed and revolutionised its reach and influence (Reckman, 2023). According to Buchanan (2009) and Rao (n.d.) few, if any, authors contributed as much value as Drucker to the business, societal, and political discourses of the 20th century. Jim Collins, the author of *Good to Great* (2001), also gave credit to Drucker: “Drucker gave us the language, the metaphor, the lens, the understanding of the role of management as the critical function” (cited in Buchanan, 2009, n.p.)

Fourth, Drucker envisaged several major developments that impacted significantly on the business world. These include concepts such as privatisation, decentralisation, the emergence of knowledge workers, the rise of Japan to economic world power, the importance of marketing, and the emergence of the information society with its requirement for lifelong learning (Gomez, n.d.).

Last, Drucker received several awards during his lifetime. Among these are 22 honorary doctorates from universities in Belgium, the Czech Republic, England, Spain, Switzerland and the United States; a United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, three awards from the Austrian government⁴; the Japanese Order of Sacred Treasure; seven Harvard Business Review McKinsey Awards⁵; and a Presidential Citation from New York University. In 2018 Drucker was inducted into the *Thinkers 50 Hall of Fame* after being rated the Top Thinker in both 2001 and 2003.

1.2. Problem Statement

Drucker lived for 95 years, and his active career covered more than 75 years. Like many career entrants, it took him several years to establish and clarify his occupational identity. However, once he had found his niche, he became and remained the world’s most prolific and influential business thought leader. Drucker did not adopt a “fashionable and trendy approach to management” (Ryder, 2009, n.p.). Instead, he remained productive, relevant, and popular. A decade ago, Starbuck (2012) estimated that there are more than 80 Drucker societies spread over every continent around the world. His ability to accurately read the context and anticipate future developments in society and the business world enabled him to stay a few steps ahead of others in his approach to business management. Drucker’s work continues to attract attention and it is unusual for a thought leader to retain relevance for such a long time. This study adopts a longitudinal approach to unravel the evolution of Drucker’s remarkable career and success.

⁴ Grand Silver Medal for Services to the Republic of Austria, Grand Gold Decoration for Services to the Republic of Austria, and the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, First Class.

⁵ Annual awards – judged by a panel of business and academic leaders – for outstanding articles published in the Harvard Business Review.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general purpose of this study is to explore, describe, and interpret Drucker's career development through the lens of an existing career development framework. More specifically, the study has four objectives:

- a. to formulate an accurate and comprehensive description of Drucker's career development as portrayed by primary and secondary documentary data sources available in the public domain;
- b. to interpret Drucker's career development according to the theoretical framework of Greenhaus et al. (2019);
- c. to informally evaluate the applicability of Greenhaus's framework to Drucker's career development; and
- d. to contribute to the growing field of careerographies of extraordinary individuals.

The paper comprises six sections. Following the introduction and literature review, the methodology of the study is explicated. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings. The last two sections comprise the practical implications of the study and concluding remarks respectively. To avoid unnecessary repetition, the career development framework of Greenhaus et al. (2019) as well as Drucker's life history are presented in the findings section (and not repeated in the literature review section).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Psychobiographical Research

A psychobiography is a biography that involves the systematic application of psychological theory. A psychobiography typically incorporates three elements: (a) a biographical account, or life history of an extraordinary individual; (b) an analysis of developmental processes, contextual factors, and contributions or accomplishments; and (c) a theoretical interpretation of the life history (Van Niekerk et al., 2016). An overview of various definitions of psychobiographical research (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010) highlighted four generic characteristics, namely that (a) psychobiographers utilise qualitative data collected by biographers and historians; (b) psychobiographers tend to approach the life histories of individuals holistically; (c) psychobiographical subjects are identified by name (and consequently do not enjoy anonymity); and (d) psychobiographers do not aim to solve research problems per se, but rather formulate life stories of extraordinary individuals that have considerable historical and psychological significance.

Although psychobiographical research has attracted considerable interest during the last five decades, it was a neglected research genre for much of the 20th century (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; Roberts, 2002). Freud's *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1910) is frequently cited as the formal beginning of psychobiography (Runyan, 2005). Several prominent psychological theorists (e.g., Henry Murray and Gordon Allport) contributed to the development of psychobiography between 1930

to 1950. Erik Erikson (1958, 1969) revitalised this approach with his psychobiographies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi.

The 1980s brought a renewed interest in psychobiography as a result of the work of William Runyan (1982, 1983, 1984, 1988). Runyan's contributions were significant because he identified criteria for methodologically sound psychobiographies.

In South Africa, Olivier Burgers (1939, 1960) completed the first two psychobiographies on Cornelis Langenhoven and Louis Leipoldt respectively. Between 1960 and 1999 only three other psychobiographies were written. They focused on the lives of Ingrid Jonker (Van der Merwe, 1978), Gerard Sekoto (Manganyi, 1996) and Jan Smuts (Fouché, 1999). The growing number of completed psychobiographies since 1999 confirms the current status of psychobiography as an established research genre in South Africa.

2.2 Career Development

Work plays an important role in the lives of human beings. It fulfils both personal and social needs and therefore terms such as work, job, occupation, employment and career are significant psychological constructs (Faheem, 2017; Lent & Brown, 2013; Mayer, 2019). While the term *work* usually refers to general effort and activities, the term *career* refers to a series of work-related employment experiences. Greenhaus et al. (2019) defined career as a pattern of work-related experiences spanning the course of a person's life and career development as the manner in which individuals develop, implement and monitor their career goals and strategies through solving problems and making decisions.

In line with theorists such as Schein (1978) and Super (1980), Greenhaus et al. (2019) conceptualised a stage-based career development framework as an ongoing process comprised of a series of stages through which individuals pass, with each stage characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks. The framework is based on the following principles (see Van Niekerk et al., 2015): (a) career development takes place systematically through four stages; (b) each stage is associated with particular tasks and challenges; (c) each stage is associated with a proximate age period; and (d) career development is viewed against the background of work, family, and self-development dynamics. The four stages identified by Greenhaus et al. (2019) are termed the occupational and organisational choice, early-, middle-, and late career stages.

The model of Greenhaus et al. (2019) is currently in its fifth version and it is widely used as prescribed text in career management education and training. The framework has been employed in several existing psychobiographies including those of the world-renowned Brazilian author, Paulo Coelho (Mayer, 2019); renowned Dutch Catholic priest and author of numerous books, Henri Nouwen (Van Niekerk et al., 2021); and Christian Barnard, the cardiac surgeon who performed the world's first human-to-human heart transplant (Van Niekerk et al., 2015).

While stage-based frameworks have remained popular over time, certain aspects thereof continue to attract criticism. These aspects include the universality of career stages; the relevance of traditional careers; the lack of culture-free career development frameworks; and the confounding influence of

contextual factors such as culture, environment, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-political factors on career development (Faheem, 2017; Hobololo, 2020; McIlveen & Patton, 2006; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2017). Greenhaus et al. (2019) acknowledge that contextual factors may influence individuals' orderly progression through the stages. However, they maintain that the attributes and experiences of individuals tend to change over the years in a relatively predictable manner. For this reason, they deem it appropriate to view a career as a series of relatively unique stages. In support, Faheem (2017) contends that stage-based career development theories are useful as they provide comprehensive frameworks that structure existing career knowledge and guide career interventions and investigations in a coherent manner.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Psychobiographers focus on development across the lifespan or on discrete lifespan segments (Edwards, 1998; Stake, 2005). This qualitative study employed an idiographic⁶, longitudinal, psychobiographical, single-case study design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mayer, 2019; Ponterotto, 2014; Roberts, 2002; Van Niekerk et al., 2015). This design allowed for the exploration, description and interpretation of Drucker's career development according to a theoretical framework and within the context in which it occurred.

3.2 Sampling and Psychobiographical Subject

Psychobiographies focus on the lives and contributions of extraordinary individuals (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; Howe, 1997; McAdams, 2009). Drucker was selected as psychobiographical subject through purposive sampling (Shaheen, & Pradhan, 2019) based on his outstanding international reputation and influence on the establishment and development of business management as a theoretical and applied discipline.

3.3 Data Collection, Processing and Analysis

The data collection included two documentary data sources that are publicly accessible, namely primary (i.e., autobiographical) and secondary (i.e., biographical) data (Allport, 1961). Utilising both types of data sources reduced the influence of researcher bias and facilitated data triangulation. The theoretical framework of Greenhaus et al. (2019) was used as a template for collecting, processing and analysing the data that describe Drucker's career development. The data processing followed guidelines suggested by psychobiographers (e.g., Alexander, 1988; Anderson, 1981a, 1981b; Ponterotto, 2014; Runyan, 1982) and methodologists (e.g., Miles et al., 2013; Yin, 2018). The guidelines ensured that Drucker's career development was analysed according to an existing theoretical model and against the background

⁶ An approach that focuses on the individual and emphasises unique personal experiences.

of prevailing historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts. A matrix (see Table 1) was employed to organise and process the data in terms of the theoretical constructs of the Greenhaus et al. (2019) model and to allow for the verification of a substantial amount of data (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Similar matrices have been used in psychobiographical research projects (e.g., Fouché, 1999; Nel, 2013; Perry, 2012; Van Niekerk et al, 2021).

Table 1: Data processing and analysis matrix

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
	Occupational and organisational choice	Early career	Midcareer	Late career
Age	18-30 years	25-45 years	40-60 years	55 years - Retirement
Developmental tasks	Develop occupational self-image Assess alternative occupations Develop initial occupational choice Pursue necessary education Obtain job offer(s) from desired organisation(s)	Learn job Learn organisational rules and norms Fit into chosen occupation and organisation Increase competence Pursue career goals	Reappraise early career and early adulthood Reaffirm or modify career goals Make choices appropriate to middle adult years Remain productive in work	Remain productive in work Maintain self-esteem Prepare for effective retirement, both financially and mentally
Biographical and autobiographical data*				

*This row is reserved for the processing of data and presentation of findings related to each of the four stages

Source: Van Niekerk, Mayer and Fouché, (2021, p. 266).

3.4 Research Procedure

The study followed the stepwise procedure developed by Du Plessis (2017). The steps require psychobiographers to (1) select the subject, (2) identify primary and secondary sources, (3) identify contextual data, (4) select an appropriate psychological theory, (5) allow the data to reveal itself, (6) ask the data questions, (7) code the data, (8) select formats of display, (9) integrate coding and display, (10) write the psychobiography, (11) revise the psychobiography, and (12) evaluate the research process.

3.5 Trustworthiness Considerations

The authors followed the criteria and guidelines in Guba's (1981) model of trustworthiness to maximise the methodological rigour of this qualitative study. Guba's model includes four criteria (the equivalent criteria employed in quantitative studies appear in brackets): credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (construct validity). Several strategies were employed to meet three of the four criteria. Transferability was excluded because the findings of psychobiographical case studies are not intended to be generalised to other cases. Instead, the findings are traced back to theory in the form of analytical generalisation (Yin, 2018), in this instance career development theory. The following strategies were employed to improve trustworthiness: (1) clear and explicit formulation of research objectives, (2) detailed description of the research method, (3) operationalisation of the theoretical constructs, (4) prolonged engagement with sources of data, (5) triangulation of sources and data, (6) the use of published data sources, (7) comprehensive documentation of procedures, and the (8) maintenance of a research audit trail (Long and Johnson, 2000; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the authors acknowledged that researcher bias influences the credibility of psychobiographical research. It was therefore important to monitor feelings and attitudes towards Drucker and ensure objectivity by consistent and rigorous analysis of the data according to the Greenhaus et al. (2019) framework.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The authors were guided by established ethical considerations for psychobiographical research, such as (1) adopting a balanced and respectful attitude toward Drucker; (2) taking care to ensure that Drucker's contributions to the management discipline are explored objectively and with respect, empathy, prudence and responsibility (Ponterotto, 2017a; 2017b); (3) interpreting the data in a transparent manner to avoid embarrassment, reputational damage, distress or harm to the subject's family or associates (American Psychiatric Association, 1976; Elms, 1994; Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017; Runyan, 1982); and (4) using public resources exclusively (Runyan, 1988). Drucker died 18 years ago in 2005 while his spouse died in 2014. As the data sources consulted were in the public domain and Drucker and his spouse were not recently deceased, consent for the study was not required.

4. Findings

The framework proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2019) is based on traditional perspectives on adult life development and therefore starts at the age of 18 years. The findings commence with a brief overview of Drucker's family of origin and pre-adulthood years to provide a context to his upbringing. Thereafter the findings are structured according to the career development stages of Greenhaus et al. (2019).

4.1 Childhood and Adolescence (Birth – 18 Years: 1909-1927)

Drucker, the oldest of two children, was born into a privileged family who lived in Vienna, Austria, one of the intellectual centres of the pre-World War I (WWI) era. His parents, Adolph and Caroline, were Jews who converted to Lutheran Christianity before Drucker's birth (Davenport, 2005). His mother studied medicine while his father was a lawyer and civil servant. During Drucker's childhood, the family regularly hosted dinner parties attended by prominent Viennese intellectuals, including artists, musicians, government officials, politicians, economists, scientists, and writers (Beatty, 1998; Starbuck, 2006; 2012). From an early age Drucker was thus exposed to stimulating debates that instilled in him a curiosity and interest in ideas and concepts (Buchanan, 2009).

When Drucker was five years old, World War I interrupted the comfortable life of his family and brought with it poverty and turmoil. This coincided with the start of his school career. Drucker credited his approach to learning and self-development to two sisters who taught him in primary school. This approach was to sustain him throughout his career. In their teachings, Elsa and Sophie Reiss emphasised the identification of strengths and aptitudes, the elimination of weaknesses, and the careful analysis of progress (Starbuck, 2012). Drucker viewed his primary school education as one of the most significant periods of his intellectual development. In contrast, he found his high school education less significant, mostly due to the emphasis on Greek and Latin grammar. However, he found Greek philosophy interesting and this interest contributed to predilection for quoting Greek philosophers throughout his career.

4.2 Occupational and Organisational Choice (18-28 Years: 1927-1937)

The approximate age range proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2019) for the first career development stage is 18-30 years. The stage is sub-divided into two phases, each with its associated development tasks. First, the occupational choice phase, which requires that individuals accomplish five tasks, namely to (a) refine an occupational self-image, (b) explore alternative occupations, (c) develop a tentative occupational choice, (d) pursue the education or training required to implement the choice, and (e) obtain a job offer from an organisation. Second, the organisational choice phase requires that individuals select a desired organisation that will satisfy their career interests, values and aptitudes. The tasks associated with the first career development stage require the development of insight into individual abilities, interests, and values as well as the challenges associated with alternative occupational fields. For Drucker, this stage began in 1927 when he completed his school career at the age of 18 years. Due to limited employment opportunities in post-WWI Vienna, Drucker moved to Hamburg, Germany. Here he completed a one-year apprenticeship at a cotton trading company, a position that his father arranged for him (Drucker, 1979). Due to boredom and a lack of stimulation, Drucker embarked on an intellectual journey "which began with an attempt to discover a purpose for living" (Starbuck, 2012, p.15). In the process, Drucker turned to reading and attending operas. He also enrolled at the Hamburg University as a doctoral student in the Law Faculty. These activities left a lasting impression on him. In his reading

he demonstrated a preference for a wide range of topics that included literature (i.e., English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish), philosophy/theology (i.e., Søren Kierkegaard, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, Max Weber, and Fyodor Dostoevsky), economics (i.e., attending the lectures of Joseph Schumpeter), and law (i.e., international law). According to Starbuck (2012), these early interests remained apparent in his work throughout his career and “enabled him to see connections between activities and events” (p. 14). In fact, his eclectic interests as well as his aptitude for holistic analysis and synthesis became “part of his persona” (p. 14) and created the Drucker trademark that attracted international attention to his academic and professional activities.

Following the apprenticeship Drucker was employed as a journalist by the *Osterreichse Volkswirt* (The Austrian Economist). In 1929, 15 months after arriving in Hamburg, Drucker moved again, this time to Frankfurt, Germany where he first worked as journalist for the *Frankfurter General-Anzeiger* (Frankfurt General Indicator), and after being recognised as a talented writer (British Library Newsletter, n.d.) as one of the three editors. As editor, Drucker was responsible for four sections of the newspaper, namely the foreign affairs, economics, music, and women’s sections (Gomez, n.d.). He also travelled throughout Europe and the Near East where he, for example, attended important events such as the Geneva Disarmament Conference⁷ and the League of Nations⁸. During his stay in Hamburg and Frankfurt, Drucker completed his studies. He was awarded a doctorate in public and international law by the Frankfurt University in 1931 for a study on two international theories that focused on facilitating world peace. Drucker referred to his doctorate as a gesture to his father (who also held a doctorate in law) because he was not really interested in a legal career (Drucker, 1979; Starbuck, 2012). After completing his research Drucker did part-time lecturing at the Frankfurt University, but declined a full-time lecturing position (Starbuck, 2012). He later published his thesis (Drucker, 1933a) as well as a book focusing on Friedrich Stahl (1933b).⁹

When Adolf Hitler emerged as a political leader and took power in 1933, Drucker decided to leave Germany. He returned to Austria and after a short stay moved to London, England. Here, he accepted a position as trainee analyst in an insurance company. This position did not satisfy him and so he successfully applied for a position at an international private bank. Drucker was quickly promoted from assistant to analyst, then economist and later to the role of banker (Gomez, n.d.; Starbuck 2012). While in England, he attended a seminar by John Maynard Keynes¹⁰. This seminar had a significant impact on

⁷ Delegates from 60 countries met in 1932 to consider reductions in arms.

⁸ An international organization established after the First World War to resolve international disputes.

⁹ Stahl (1802-1861) was a conservative German philosopher who proposed a democratic ideology in opposition to the principles of Nazism.

¹⁰ Keynes was an English economist and philosopher whose ideas changed the theory and practice of macroeconomics and the economic policies of governments. He argued, for example, that demand drives supply, that healthy economies spend or invest more than they save, and that governments should increase

Drucker as it made him decide not to pursue a career in economics (mainly because of its emphasis on commodities), but to rather pursue a career that would satisfy his interest in people.

The move to London also brought changes to his personal life. Here he met an acquaintance from the University of Frankfurt, Doris Schmitz (Gomez, n.d.). The couple married in 1934. While in London, Drucker recorded his experiences in Germany (Gomez, n.d.) and published them in his third book, *The Jewish question in Germany* (Drucker, 1936). In the book he described the Jewish people as a tribe without a state that rarely integrated fully into the countries where they lived. He believed that the Jews have been more integrated and successful in Germany than in other European countries such as the United Kingdom and France. Drucker further accused the Nazis of segregating the Jews, driving them into ghettos and emphasising their separate identity by giving them Jewish names. He urged readers to demonstrate their social conscience by considering the plight of threatened individuals.

Drucker was disappointed in Europe's attitude towards Hitler and the Nazi's and, following four years in London, the couple decided to move to the United States (USA). In New York Drucker initially worked as correspondent for several European newspapers and free-lance journalist for the *Financial Times*, *Harpers*, and *The Washington Post*. The move to the USA provided Drucker with clarity about the occupation he wished to pursue as well as the organisation[s] he wished to be associated with. In this sense the move brought an end to the occupational and organisational choice stage (Greenhaus et al., 2019).

The biographical data indicates that Drucker experienced uncertainty about occupational choice after he left school. He had no clear idea about the occupation he wanted to follow. Admittedly, employment opportunities were limited after WWI and, as with other school leavers at the time, he had to take what was available. His first position (i.e., apprenticeship) did not satisfy or stimulate him. He therefore satisfied his intellectual curiosity by focussing his attention on extra-career activities (e.g., reading, attending opera concerts) and later decided to follow in his father's footsteps by registering as a law student. He spent time in two separate journalism jobs. In the second, his ability to analyse and write well attracted attention and he was promoted to the position of editor. This position afforded him the opportunity to travel and attend important international political events. The combination of postgraduate studies in international law and his attendance of international political events raised his awareness of socio-political dynamics. At the same time, his willingness to and interest in working in different countries exposed him to a wider range of opportunities.

Drucker's experience as a journalist enabled him to formulate complex ideas simply and elegantly (Kantrow, 2009). This contributed to the perception that many of his ideas are considered common

spending – even if it means going into debt – to create jobs and boost consumer buying power during a recession.

sense. It is important to keep in mind that Drucker broke new ground in the work he published in the first half of the 20th century, in particular as it related to business management (Gomez, n.d.).

Drucker did not stay long in positions that did not satisfy him. The result of this was a rather intense exploration of jobs and organisations. Working in four different countries, he changed jobs eight times in ten years. In addition, he studied and explored his interest in writing books. The data indicates clearly that the first career stage was an unsettling and unstable time for Drucker, but that he made a determined effort to identify an occupation and organisation that would satisfy his needs. The rapid changes and career experiences enabled him to refine his occupational self-image, explore alternative occupations, implement tentative occupational choices, pursue postgraduate education, and obtain job offers from organisations. Gradually, he made progress in identifying his abilities, interests and values as well as the requirements of several occupational fields. According to Greenhaus et al. (2019) the approximate age range for this stage is 18-30 years. The data suggests that Drucker progressed to the career development tasks of the early career stage at the age of 28 years. By the end of the first career stage, Drucker clarified two issues, namely his interests in the macro socio-political context and in writing and presenting his viewpoints to the wider public.

4.3 Early Career (29-40 Years; 1937-1949)

The approximate age range for this stage proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2019) is 25-45 years. Like the first stage, the second stage also comprises two phases, these being finding a niche in the adult world and striving to be successful. The tasks associated with this stage are to (a) master the technical requirements of the job, (b) acquire organisational norms and values, (c) fit into the chosen occupation and organisation, (d) increase competence and being accepted as a valued employee, and to (e) pursue career goals.

The biographical data suggests that Drucker's early career started in 1937 when he relocated to the USA. Here he focused on a career as journalist and wrote articles for quality magazines. At the same time, he pursued his interest in writing books. In 1939 he published his fourth book, *The end of economic man* (Drucker, 1939). Drucker had conceived the book six years earlier when Hitler came to power in Germany. In the book, Drucker analysed Nazism and described the breakdown of the liberal and humanistic socio-political context in Europe. He predicted that the rest of Europe would, like Germany, fall under totalitarian rule, but that totalitarian rule would not survive in the long term. The book attracted considerable attention, even praise from Winston Churchill (Gomez, n.d.), and contributed significantly to Drucker's prominence.

Drucker began lecturing economics and statistics at the Sarah Lawrence College in 1939¹¹. In the next two years he also lectured part-time at several liberal arts colleges. In 1941 he accepted an invitation to lecture part-time at a private liberal arts college in Vermont, Bennington College. In 1942 he was

¹¹ A private liberal arts college in Yonkers/Bronxville, New York. Originally a women's college, the college became coeducational in 1968.

appointed to a full-time position and remained at Bennington College until 1949. During this time, he taught several subjects on demand (e.g., economics, history, literature, management, philosophy, politics, and religion). He was later appointed as Professor of Politics and Philosophy. Later in Drucker's career his willingness to teach subjects on demand contributed to the integrative, systems-oriented approach he preferred to follow (Gomez, n.d.). He valued finding the middle ground between rival theoretical frameworks (Ryder, 2009). As a result, he urged managers to view their responsibilities and tasks in context, appreciate the traditions out of which they emerged, be sensitive to competing economic ideologies and their underlying premises and also to the fixed limits of human adaptation (Starbuck, 2012).

In 1942 Drucker published his fifth book, *The future of industrialised man* (Drucker, 1942) in which he urged readers to plan for life after Hitler's defeat, elaborating on the development of societies and organisations. He argued that management is one of the most important engines of human progress and proposed that large commercial organisations replace centralised bureaucracies as basis of communities (Ryder, 2009). Drucker believed that organisations should fulfil both economic and social functions. The book received complimentary reviews and more importantly, led to an invitation to conduct a detailed analysis of General Motors (GM) as a social organisation. This project provided him with free access to GM and an opportunity – over a period of 24 months – to attend board meetings, interview managers and employees, and analyse production and decision-making processes. At the time, GM was one of the largest and most successful companies in the world. According to Starbuck (2012), “[t]his was the opportunity that Drucker was seeking” (p. 45). It established his career as consultant and business management thought leader. Bennington College realised the importance of this opportunity and released him for this project. Coincidentally, Drucker received USA citizenship in 1943 while the project was underway.

His experiences during the GM project afforded Drucker an opportunity to publish his sixth book, *Concept of the corporation* (Drucker, 1946) which focused predominantly on management functions and activities. Although relatively inexperienced in business at the time, he raised several issues that he believed GM should address in this ground-breaking book. The issues related to ensuring the prioritisation of employees, developing self-governing plant communities, addressing limited opportunities for advancement, resolving the ambiguity surrounding the role of foremen, and acknowledging the important role of labour unions.

Alfred Sloan, the chairman of GM, had expected a more flattering description of the organisation's success and was therefore very critical of the book. While it recognised GM's success it also highlighted fundamental differences between the management approach adopted at GM and the views Drucker held.

One important difference was that “GM saw the workforce as a cost in the quest for profits, whereas Drucker saw people as a resource” (British Library Newsletter, n.d.). He believed that it was important for workers to be involved in their jobs and also derive satisfaction from and experience meaning in

their work. Instead of emphasising profits, Drucker viewed organisations as human communities built on trust and respect for employees. At the core of his approach to management lies the notion that, to succeed, businesses need to put the development and well-being of their people first (Reckman, 2023). In his later publications, Drucker described how organisations can bring out the best in people and how employees should be able to find meaning, a sense of community, and dignity in organisations.

Despite the differences, the book became very popular, both within and outside GM (Drucker, 1979) and ultimately laid the foundation of business management as a scientific discipline (Gomez, n.d.). It also attracted the attention of Japanese industrialists to Drucker's work. *Concept of the corporation* (1946) has remained remarkably relevant and when General Motors filed for bankruptcy in 2009, some of the issues that Drucker believed GM should address 60 years earlier came up for discussion again. Ryder (2009) and Rosenstein (2009) viewed this as confirmation of the relevance of Drucker's work, even six decades after it had been published.

Drucker's career was now developing rapidly, and he was viewed with respect. His reputation benefited from his publications, position at Bennington College, public and radio presentations, and the increased demand for his consultancy services. In 1949 he resigned from Bennington College to take up a position as Professor of Management at the New York University Graduate Business Administration School. This signalled the end of Drucker's remarkable early career stage.

Generally, the data indicates that Drucker was successful in mastering the career development tasks associated with the early career stage by the age of 40 years. During this stage he demonstrated productivity as a journalist (e.g., he managed to publish six books before his 40th birthday). Additionally, his books, lectures, radio broadcasts, as well as his reputation as consultant, attracted considerable and favourable attention. Drucker demonstrated commitment to master the competency requirements of his multiple occupational interests (i.e., journalist, academic, and management consultant). His appointment at the New York University Graduate Business Administration School confirmed his success with the development tasks of both the establishment and achievement phases of the early career stage. From a contextual perspective, Drucker also benefitted from receiving USA citizenship (i.e., in 1943) in that his career was not negatively influenced by World War II.

4.4 Midcareer (40-62 Years; 1949-1971)

According to Greenhaus et al. (2019) the approximate age range for this stage is 40-60 years. During the midcareer years, individuals tend to reappraise the lifestyle of their early careers. The career-related tasks associated with the midcareer stage are to (a) reappraise the early career and early adulthood lifestyle, (b) reaffirm or modify of career goals, (c) make choices appropriate to the midcareer, and to (d) remain productive. The approximate duration is 20 years, but Greenhaus et al. (2019) indicated that the midcareer stage can last longer.

Drucker established his reputation as management thought leader towards the end of his early career stage. The start of his midcareer stage at the age of 40 years coincided with the move to New York

where he lived throughout this stage. During this time, he gained extensive experience as a consultant to business organisations (e.g., Adela Investment Company, Coca Cola, General Electric, GM, IBM, Intel, Procter & Gamble, Sears and WR Grace); governments and government departments (e.g., Canada, Japan, United States), non-profit organisations (e.g., American Red Cross, Girl Guides, Salvation Army); the mega-church movement (e.g., Saddleback Church), as well as several Japanese organisations such as Toyota.

He also acted as advisor to several prominent business leaders, including Andrew Grove, Alfred Sloan, Jack Welch, and Charles Wilson (Gomez, n.d.; Ryder, 2009; Wartzman, 2012). These experiences enabled him to develop a holistic approach to organisations (Reckman, 2023). It is important to note here that, throughout his career, he worked as a sole practitioner – without a personal assistant – and even preferred to answer his own phone (Cohen, 2009).

Drucker published five books in quick succession during the 22 years of his midcareer stage. Soon after moving to New York, he published his seventh book, *The new society* (Drucker, 1950). In this book he elaborated on several of his earlier ideas (cf., Drucker, 1946) and also introduced new ideas (e.g., the challenges caused by labour unions, the importance of worker satisfaction, and the benefits of decentralisation).

Four years later he published *The practice of management* (Drucker, 1954). In this publication he described the distinct functions and responsibilities of business management. As with the *Concept of the corporation* (Drucker, 1946), in this book he made another significant contribution to establish business management practice and further strengthened his position as leader in the field. This contribution centred on the introduction of what was to become the highly popularised management by objectives. This intervention aims to improve the performance of an organisation by clearly defining objectives that are agreed to by both management and employees. In *The practice of management* Drucker demonstrated “understanding of and sympathy for the difficulties and demands faced by managers” (British Library Newsletter, n.d.). Similarly, it emphasised Drucker’s position on the importance of customers. He made it clear that the main reason for a business to exist is to create and satisfy customers. Some of the other ideas highlighted in this book include decentralisation, task-teams, measurement, innovation, delegation, and time management. Drucker further introduced a new marketing mindset that de-emphasised advertising and prioritised knowing and satisfying the desires or needs of customers (Buchanan, 2009).

This landmark work was followed by *America’s next twenty years* (Drucker, 1957) in which Drucker introduced the use of demographic data for forecasting future business trends. In his next book, *Landmarks of tomorrow: A report on the new “post-modern” world* (Drucker, 1959), he emphasised the important role of education in business and social innovation. He also reminded Japanese business leaders that their future survival and success depended on their ability to westernise.

It is notable that Drucker's popularity in Japan increased considerably during his midcareer stage. Large Japanese organisations, including Toyota, implemented several of his ideas, especially those related to the importance of employees and marketing. Drucker, in turn, commended Japanese practices such as lifetime employment and deliberative decision-making followed by quick action (Buchanan, 2009). The next book Drucker published, *Power and democracy in America*, was a joint venture (Drucker et al., 1961). This was his eleventh publication and focused more on political and societal trends than on management. The authors discussed topics such as individual freedom, effective government, the social structure of power, the role of bureaucracy, and a description of democratic society.

The next book published, *Managing for results* (Drucker 1964), was one of the first on strategic market analysis. In this book Drucker reminded readers that customers buy what they believe is value, and not what businesses think they are selling. He also reiterated that businesses must build on their strengths rather than try to do everything themselves. Two decades later prominent authors such as Peters and Waterman (1982) built on this idea by emphasising the importance of *sticking to your knitting*. Later Prahalad and Hamel (1990) did the same by referring to core competences.

Two years later Drucker (1966) published *The effective executive*, a handbook for senior managers. Here, he highlighted, among other things, the difference between efficiency (i.e., doing things right) and effectiveness (i.e., doing the right things) as well as the importance of building on strengths and eliminating weaknesses. Long before anyone else expected knowledge to become a more important than raw material, Drucker coined the term *knowledge worker* in this book. Drucker predicted that knowledge workers would largely replace manual workers and become a key resource or commodity in future. He emphasised that knowledge skills are more portable than manual skills and therefore that the management of knowledge workers should assume that organisations need them more than they need organisations (Buchanan, 2009).

The next publication, *The age of discontinuity* (Drucker, 1969a), underlined several business trends, for example technological advancements, the influence of social values on consumer behaviour, the internationalisation of markets, the importance of privatising non-performing public organisations, and the importance of lifelong learning, especially for knowledge workers. In the same year he edited *Preparing tomorrow's leaders today* (Drucker, 1969b), a collection of essays by business leaders for a symposium on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the New York University Graduate Business Administration School. Drucker contributed three essays, namely *The business system and the business school*; *Business and the quality of life* and *Preparing tomorrow's business leaders today*. In these essays he emphasised that business schools could no longer define their audiences as one homogenous group but should rather aim to render services to four distinct audiences: young students, midcareer students, specialists who require further specialisation, and senior managers.

The last two books Drucker published in the midcareer stage, *Technology, management and society* (Drucker, 1970a) and *Drucker on management* (1970b) were both collections of essays. The first book (Drucker, 1970a) comprises 12 essays on technological innovation, management, and their relationship

to, and interaction with society, while the second (Drucker, 1970b) comprises essays that he published earlier in a British magazine *Management Today*.

The biographical data indicates that Drucker settled down and stabilised his career after his appointment as professor at the New York University Graduate Business Administration School. This position afforded him the opportunity to lecture, expand his consultancy network, and increase his productivity and reputation as a writer. Compared to the first two career stages in which he moved around considerably, Drucker spent his whole midcareer stage in New York. This suggests that he was satisfied with the direction his career was taking as well as the choices and progress he made to that point in time. It is also evident that he remained productive during the midcareer stage. In fact, the data suggests that his productivity was escalating. The stability he experienced resulted in a slightly extended midcareer stage that came to an end when he was offered a position as professor at the Claremont Graduate University in Los Angeles at the age of 62 years.

4.5 Late Career (62-95 Years; 1971-2005)

According to Greenhaus et al. (2019) the approximate age range for the late career stage is 55 years until retirement. There are three tasks that dominate this stage. Individuals are required to (a) continue to be productive contributors to their organisations, (b) maintain a sense of self-worth and dignity, and (c) anticipate and plan for an effective retirement.

At the beginning of his late career stage in 1971 Drucker, at the age of 62 years, decided to change the direction of his career once more. He accepted a position as the Marie Rankin Clarke Professor of Social Science and Management at the Claremont Graduate University in Los Angeles, California. Here he continued with his consulting and writing activities and lectured for 30 years until the age of 93 years. During this stage Drucker acted as consultant to several high-level organisations and governments.

In fact, Drucker received corporate and social-sector leaders from around the world in their modest home in Claremont (Gomez, n.d.). While at Claremont Graduate University he developed one of the first executive MBA programmes for employed students. In recognition of his exceptional contribution to the university, the management school was later named the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management in 1987 (later renamed the Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management).

From a publication perspective, Drucker's late career stage was exceptionally productive. He published 32 books in 41 years. In five of these years, namely 1971, 1977, 1982, 1993, and 1999, he published more than one book per year. He adopted a versatile and eclectic approach in his writing and it is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to categorise his publications. Regardless of the method or outcome of classification, it is safe to say that although the major emphasis of some of Drucker's books fell outside the scope of management as a discipline, all the books included some important messages for managers.

The current authors sorted Drucker's late career books into five categories. The categories include an autobiography (Drucker, 1979), two novels (Drucker, 1982b; 1984), three books that focus predominantly on economic matters (Drucker, 1981; 1991; 1997), seven that focus on societal issues, dynamics and trends (Drucker, 1971a; 1971b; 1976; 1989; 1993a; 1993b; 2003), and 19 that focus on management (Drucker, 1974; 1977a; 1977b; 1978; 1980; 1982a; 1985; 1986; 1990; 1992; 1993c; 1995; 1996; 1998; 1999a; 1999b; 2001; 2002; Drucker et al., 1988).

It is beyond the limited scope of this paper to review the 32 publications from Drucker's late career. Suffice it to state that in his late career Drucker was recognised as the foremost business management thought leader in the world. Apart from his unequalled productivity, he also demonstrated astonishing ability to predict important societal changes and trends, such as privatisation, decentralisation, Japan's rise to world power, and the emergence of knowledge workers and the information society with its requirement of lifelong learning (Gomez, n.d.; Rao, n.d.). Several trends identified by Drucker have since been made fashionable by other business writers (British Library Newsletter, n.d.). Furthermore, Drucker's publications covered an impressive spectrum of topics and themes that reveal an unusual scope of knowledge and insight. While his early work focused on the nature of industrial society, he later focused more on the principles and practice of business management as well as the impact of developments such as technological change. Drucker (1986) emphasised that management needed to be a discipline with an organised body of knowledge. He viewed management training as a liberal art (and not vocational, technical training), in other words a discipline focusing on general knowledge, critical thinking, and the acquisition of transferable skills. Furthermore, Drucker provided details on the development of managerial competence (1986; 1998) and the multiple changes that managers have to cope with (1980; 1982a; 1995; 1998; 2002). Drucker believed that these changes include demographic, global, political, economic, and societal fluctuations.

Drucker held realistic views with regards to employees. He often referred to the poor design of the human machine and stated that it is not possible to hire only the hand, because the individual always come with the hand (Drucker, 1966). However, he made no secret of it that he viewed people as the greatest asset of organisations (Drucker, 1974). In particular, during his late career he stressed that a key managerial challenge is to make and keep knowledge workers productive.

In some of his writings Drucker focused on specific managerial issues, including the role, responsibility, challenges and development of executive managers (1982a; 1992; 1995; 1998; 2002). Another was how to make and keep knowledge workers productive (1974). He further formulated specific guidelines and rules for successful acquisitions (1986) and the management of non-profit organisations (Drucker, 1990). He accentuated that in the case of non-profit organisations, the measure of achievement is quality of service and provision of satisfaction, and not the bottom line. Although Drucker's publications included an extensive range of organisational case studies (e.g., see Drucker, 1978) aimed at management training, he only published one textbook for students, namely *People and performance: The best of Peter Drucker on management* (Drucker 1977a).

Not known for criticism, confrontation, judgement or attacks on people or institutions, Drucker became quite vocal in his late career about issues that concerned him. These included the crisis at universities (1974), threats to quality education (1986), excessive executive compensation (1974; 1982a), the deterioration of governments (1992), reckless mergers and acquisitions (1986) and the greed, selfish interests, rigid rules and work structures that increasingly infiltrated business organisations (1990).

Drucker was a champion for innovation and entrepreneurship. As far back as 1974 and before it became fashionable, he stated that all organisations need innovation to convert problems into opportunities (Drucker, 1974). He wrote one of the first books on innovation and entrepreneurship (1985) in which he emphasised that entrepreneurship is a practice, and not a science or an art. He later elaborated on the importance and development of innovation and entrepreneurship (1986;1992) and further warned that over time innovation would change the composition of the labour force (1992).

Apart from the 19 books published during his late career, Drucker wrote more than 100 columns for the Wall Street Journal and published more than 30 articles (more than any other author) in the Harvard Business Review (Drucker, 1998). He was awarded with seven McKinsey Awards for these articles.

Drucker recognises the extent to which some of his earlier assumptions changed over time due to contextual changes (Drucker, 1999a; 2001), an acknowledgement that aligns with the contention of Greenhaus et al. (2019). For example, after twenty years of lecturing, presenting executive programs and seminars, and working as a consultant, he returned to an earlier publication, *The practice of management* (Drucker, 1954), and published an updated version, *Management: Tasks, responsibilities and practices* (Drucker, 1974). This supports his belief that when assumptions outlive their usefulness and are no longer tenable, they could become serious obstacles (1999a; 2002).

Towards the end of his career, Drucker established the Drucker Archive at Claremont Graduate University in 1999. The archives were renamed the Drucker Institute in 2006. In 2000 his health had deteriorated, and his productivity declined. He acted as consultant into his nineties, presented his last lecture in 2002 (at the age of 93 years, and completed his last book a year later. In his final years, a colleague, Joseph Maciariello assisted with his writing. Drucker died of natural causes on 11 November 2005 at the age of 95 years and was survived by his wife and four children.

Throughout his unusually long career Drucker remained a loner or outsider and deliberately refused to become part of the mainstream (Donkin, 1996). He avoided managerial roles or organisational jobs as he claimed that he worked best outside of existing structures. He created a reputation for mastering subject matter, expressing himself clearly, and applying common sense understanding to the analysis of business management challenges (Donkin, 1996).

The biographical data indicate that Drucker experienced an atypical late career stage. He not only continued to be productive during his late career stage, but his productivity also increased significantly between the ages of 62 and 92 years. There is no indication that his career declined, that he anticipated or planned for retirement, or that it was necessary for him to put effort into maintaining a sense of self-worth and dignity as he experienced his late career stage. Drucker remained employed at the Claremont

Graduate University and continued lecturing, consulting, and publishing until his health started to deteriorate. During his late career stage, the business world was exposed to much uncertainty, turbulence, technological advancements and rapid change. Drucker demonstrated his ability to cope exceptionally well with the social, political, economic, and cultural changes that impacted the context in which he worked. In fact, Drucker accurately predicted and recorded many of the developments that occurred and his contributions to the field of management science assisted managers to cope with the changes.

5. Managerial Implications

This study has four implications for business management theory, practice, research and education.

5.1 Management theory implications

The development of academic disciplines relies to a large extent on the development of new, more accurate and useful theoretical frameworks as well as the revision and refinement of existing frameworks. The longitudinal study of complete lives allows for the assessment and refinement of theoretical frameworks through the mapping out of developmental processes and the identification of areas where lived experiences and theoretical propositions differ.

The findings of this study have specific implications for the refinement of the Greenhaus et al. (2019) framework. To date, this framework had been neglected in longitudinal, case study research. In this study the framework proved to be generally appropriate and effective for presenting the long and productive career of Drucker in a coherent and illuminating psychobiographical case study. Drucker's career development generally matches and supports the framework proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2019). However, specific findings related to his career development trajectory raised questions such as: Does retirement necessarily form part of the late career stage? To what extent is it necessary and important for individuals to focus on the maintenance of their sense of self-worth and dignity during the late career stage? The findings of this study indicate that Drucker did not anticipate or plan for retirement. Instead, he maintained momentum until his deteriorating health made it impossible for him – during the last two years of his long life – to continue working. The findings also demonstrate that the productivity of some individuals increase during the late career stage and that this largely shields them from threats to their sense of self-worth and dignity during the late career stage.

5.2 Management practice implications

Managers often make use of career development services such as counselling, coaching and mentoring. The findings of this study have implications for the offering of these services. Drucker's career development trajectory indicates that it is important for career development practitioners to adopt a long-term or longitudinal perspective when assessing the behaviour of managers. Such a perspective may prevent practitioners from drawing the wrong conclusions when they, for example, become aware that individuals are struggling with the career development tasks of specific career stages.

The findings of this study indicate that Drucker struggled with the career development tasks of the first stage (i.e., occupational and organisational choice). His exploration of jobs, geographical areas, organisations as well as leisure time activities during this period was intense and riddled with behavioural inconsistencies and instability. For a decade he struggled to find his niche and during this time he experienced considerable uncertainty about his career. However, the findings also illustrate that most, if not all the experiences during this unstable decade, ironically added considerable value to Drucker's later career. Similarly, Drucker's last career development stage (i.e., late career) did not match the Greenhaus et al. (2019) framework. Health problems led to the decline of his career when he was in his 90s. Before this, there were no indications that Drucker considered retirement. Instead, he remained active and productive until the age of 93 years and coped remarkably well with the rapidly changing world throughout his late career. The above-mentioned deviations from the framework of Greenhaus et al. (2019) contributed to, rather than undermined, Drucker's extraordinary career.

5.3 Management research implications

A key management competency requires managers to demonstrate proficiency in research. Research competence enable managers to initiate scientific inquiry, acquire and develop disciplinary knowledge, solve problems and navigate through the increasingly complex world of work. Many managers demonstrate research competence by conducting, for example, survey-, correlational- or action-oriented research. Although this research genre is growing both internationally and in South Africa not many managers conduct psychobiographical research.

The findings of this study have implications for how managers conduct their own research. The psychobiography of Drucker's career development illustrates the reciprocal interaction between Drucker the individual and the professional contributions he made to business management theory and practice. On the one hand, the study focuses attention on the life and career of an extraordinary thought leader and role model who achieved international fame and is viewed by many as an icon and inspiration. On the other, the study focuses on his publications that are still – almost two decades after his death – valued within the broader business management domain. The emphasis on both Drucker and his work indicates how the one influenced the other and how detailed background knowledge helps readers to understand both the content and evolution of his thinking and publications. This study encourages managers and management students to undertake detailed case studies of individuals who made extraordinary contributions for two reasons. First, such research projects have the potential to enrich their understanding of the contributions of extraordinary thought leaders. Second, such investigations provide researchers with opportunities to reflect on the intricate relationship between their own lives and their career contributions.

5.4 Management education implications

At tertiary education level business management programmes are typically housed in faculties of commerce or business and economics. The programmes aim at shaping the skills and mindsets of future

managers by providing broad-based theoretical and practical knowledge of business management processes and functions. They provide opportunities for knowledge, skill and attitude acquisition in the business management context and include subjects such as accounting, business management, computer science, economics, finance, law and statistics. Essentially, the programmes aim at preparing students for the typical challenges faced in the workplace.

The findings of this study have implications for the content and format of business management programmes. It adds a provocative perspective by describing how Drucker's background and interests in journalism, law, literature, philosophy, politics, societal dynamics and theology contributed to his extraordinary success in business management in the absence of any formal business management education. Despite not having undergone formal business management training, Drucker managed to produce work of the highest caliber and contribute towards the success of business organisations and business leaders over a period of seven decades. Clearly, the Drucker trademark that attracted international attention was informed by his eclectic background and interests that enabled him to analyse and synthesise events, trends and activities holistically. The study thus raises pertinent questions about the education and training of managers such as What academic content should be included in academic and professional business management programmes? Which competencies should be prioritized? And to what extent should non-management subjects from the faculties of humanities and arts be included in business management programmes?

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

This longitudinal, psychobiographical case study focused on the exploration, description, and interpretation of Drucker's career development according to the theoretical framework proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2019). The findings indicate that Drucker's career development largely matches the framework proposed by Greenhaus et al. and the study therefore confirms the accuracy and usefulness of the theoretical framework. The researchers acknowledge four important shortcomings of the study, namely: (1) that the scope of this study does not do justice to the extensive data relating to Drucker's life (a doctoral manuscript may allow for a more complete presentation and interpretation of data); (2) that the study focuses on a single aspect of Drucker's life, this being his career; (3) that the findings are based on documentary data available in the public domain; and (4) that the authors did not have an opportunity to validate the findings with Drucker's family or associates. The limited scope of this study necessitates further investigations. The researchers recommend that scholars from different disciplines (e.g., business management, economics, personality psychology, or sociology) use different theoretical lenses to illuminate additional aspects of Drucker's career and life. Furthermore, career psychologists who employ alternative theoretical models are encouraged to investigate Drucker's career. Lastly, the researchers recommend that similar investigations be undertaken of other thought leaders who contributed to the field of business management.

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