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ABSTRACT

Over the past 15 years there have been pronouncements by nationally known educators and critics on counseling. During this period there has been a growing emphasis upon career counseling, career choice and career development. Concurrently there has been an increase in effort to develop and validate counseling and career development theories. The authors conclude that there are no meaningful theories of counseling of career development. The empirical data that researchers have submitted to assess the consequences of counseling and career development efforts have uniformly warranted no positive conclusions. (Author)

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Analysis of Pronouncements,
Theories, and Research on
Career Counseling

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ANALYSIS OF PRONOUNCEMENTS, THEORIES, AND RESEARCH ON CAREER COUNSELING

by

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Introduction

Pronouncements by nationally known educators and educational critics generally receive broader dissemination than do esoteric research papers. Pronouncements issued during the past fifteen years related to career counseling are analyzed for patterns which suggest change and/or expansion of career counseling in secondary schools and community colleges.

Change in the number and assignment of counselors over the past fifteen years is compared with the suggestions of the educators and critics cited. The correlation between pronouncement and practice is presented.

Five of the leading career counseling theorists are reviewed and changes, refinements, and modifications of the theories are presented. The changes, refinements, and modifications are then compared with the changes in practice.

Published research which assesses the consequences of career counseling practice is reviewed and summarized. In addition, as yet unpublished data available to the authors of this paper are presented. These data include the responses of over 6000 high school students and over 600 vocational teachers.

The authors' conclusions based upon the research reviewed are compared to the pronouncements, theories, and practices in career counseling. The paper concludes with questions about the current practices in career counseling and the concomitant allocation of educational resources.

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Pronouncements

Many authors have had thoughts published that they were sure would revolutionize education. We have elected to concentrate upon the pronouncements of two men, Conant and Marland (not that we consider them to be of equal stature). One educational philosopher agrees with one of our choices. Harry Broudy (10:11) writes that, "James B. Conant undoubtedly wielded more influence on public education in the fifties and sixties than any other single man."

Conant's pronouncements that are of import here were contained in his books, "The American High School Today" and "Slums and Suburbs." Among other stances: 1) Conant advocated the implementation of counseling in the elementary, junior and senior high schools (14:44); 2) Counselors were to be full-time with teaching experience as background (14:44) and a well formulated counseling department policy (14:93); 3) The ratio of guidance personnel was set at a minimum of one per 250 to 300 students with the admonition that a twofold increase would be necessary were the tracking and labeling procedures of schools to be reformed in the direction of individualized programs for each student (14:46, 13:64); 4) Vocational education, for girls as well as boys, was to be an integral part of the comprehensive school program (14:30) and a planned transition from school to a full-time job was to be the norm (13:40) and for college bound students a full-time counselor would be in charge of college placement (14:95).

Ten years later, echoing many of the same thoughts but employing the "new" term career education; Sidney Marland 1) reiterated the importance of articulation between high school, the world of work and/or colleges perceiving this as

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a key role of the counselor (39); 2) stressed the role of community or two year college as a most important unit in career education; 3) Crawford (40:263) reflecting on a panel of critics convened by Marland "urged improved advising and counseling systems, and it is assumed that much youth employment can be attributed to lack of information about viable options;" and, 4) in declining to give a Federal definition of Career Education, Marland deemed it essential for a definition to be jointly developed by teachers, counselors and other school personnel (40:ix).

It is interesting, if not provocative, to watch how these pronouncements, made in the absence of hard data, emerge as recommended and/or implemented practices which have led to change and to expansion of career counseling. Among others note: 1) The Report of the 1967 Advisory Council and the Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1968 recommended that occupational preparation should begin in the elementary schools with a realistic picture of the world of work (74:25); Herr in a review sees career education as having operational implications for every level or grade from kindergarten through graduate school; and a resolution formed in Portland, Oregon, the American Vocational Association stated that support be provided for programs at the elementary, middle school, secondary, and post-secondary levels and continuing education to develop career orientation and exploratory programs, and for programs of vocational guidance activities at all levels of the educational structure (30:139).

The trend toward integration or fusion of academic and vocational curricula is best stated as objectives in several comprehensive programs e.g., City of Denver (74:45) and the State University System of Florida. The recommended

number of counselors or guidance staff needed occurs often in the literature, e.g., Hoyt states in 1972 "The number of school counselors currently employed in the public schools of this country is woefully short of the number needed for implementation of the career education concept" (30:318).

These examples should be sufficient for observing the transition from pronouncements to their embodiment within the field by others and the eventual transition into practice.

A Brief Review of Extant Theories

The following review of some of the more important theories of career development and career choice was extracted from Charles Herger's unpublished dissertation (76:25-27).

Various theories dealing with career development have been categorized by different authors in varying fashion. Some of the more common categories utilized are: (1) Trait and factor theorists, (2) Career Pattern theorists, (3) Self-concept developmental theorists, (4) Developmental task theorists, (5) Psycho-social crisis theorists, (6) Vocational developmental task theorists, and (8) Need theorists. Both the establishment of these categories and the assignment of specific writers to a category appear to involve judgments of a highly subjective nature. This subjectivity is readily admitted by most authors surveying the theory literature.

In reviewing the career development theories as they relate to a Career Education program, it becomes clear that the well-known theories positively support the value of Career Education programs although in varying degrees. The role played by career information and career exploration varies among

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theories; it is either stated, or implied, as a crucial aspect in all theories.

To the needs theorists, such as Hoppock, career information is essential, allowing the individual to explore and select an occupation that he feels will best meet the needs that concern him most.

The self-concept theorists, a group centered around Super of Columbia Teachers College, also view career information and career exploration as essential in the career development process. Super stresses the need to have information and exploration, i.e., "reality testing." This reality testing is viewed as crucial to self-concept development.

Typically cast as either a career pattern theorist or a needs theorist, Ann Roe indicates the need for an individual to select a career based on childhood generated needs. Obviously without sufficient knowledge of careers, proper satisfaction of such needs is impossible.

Holland, whose theory is often viewed as trait and factor based, considers the individual's personality and its needs as being of major importance in the career development process. The individual's perception, or "stereotype" of an occupation is viewed as the prime motivator of career choice. Since career information and exploration directly influence perceptions, it must be assumed that these, too, are important factors in locating a career that will be compatible with a person's personality.

One of the earlier career development theories came from Ginzberg et al. in 1951. Of the four variables given as playing a role in career choice, "personal values" and a "reality factor" might be viewed as congruent with the areas of concern in a Career Education program. Both imply enough knowledge of an occupation to allow a choice to be made.

Career development as envisioned by O'Hara and Tiedeman presents the picture of an individual undergoing a process in which the organization of a work identification is a result of the interaction of the person's personality and the society. So viewed the development process is a series of complex decisions. Career information and exploration is paramount in such decisions if the process is to go forward properly. In relating their theory of development of the goals of a Career Education program a high degree of compatibility would seem apparent.

In comparing different theorists in terms of the periods or stages of career development a certain consistency may be noted. Of particular importance to a Career Education program directed at students in their mid- to late-teen years is career information and exploration.

Ginzberg, et al. view the mid- to late-teen years as the time during which personal values, as they relate to work, as well as actual occupations, are explored in depth. O'Hara and Tiedeman view these years as the period when the transition from "anticipation" of work to "implementation of choice" is made. Super considers students of this age group to be in the exploratory stage of their development, moving from "tentative," through "realistic" to the "establishment" stage.

The career development process is generally viewed as a continuous process. The position of an individual along the continuum varies at any given time. Given the lock-step nature of our educational system this career development concept has serious implications for the student whose occupational decisions are, by necessity, geared to his grade level rather than his vocational maturation level.

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During the fifteen years from Conant's pronouncements until the present, what if anything has happened to the theories of career guidance and development? There is little doubt that practice changed, at least in term of the number of counselors employed, as the result of Conant's pronouncements. There is no doubt that Marland's pronouncements have lead to an increase in the number of counselors with a career emphasis, at least in name, and to an enormous growth in the number of placement counselors employed. But we ask, what if anything has happened to the theories of career guidance which guide the efforts of this area of the educational endeavor?

Ginsberg, Holland, and Super continued to publish on career development and were joined by Crites, O'Hara and Tiedeman among others. In a book Epitaph For Vocational Guidance, published in 1962, Barry and Wolfe found no theories which gave meaning to the practice of vocational guidance, but they held out hope for the work being done on the developmental stages of vocational choice (5). Crites in 1969 (15:607) grudgingly agreed that the situation was so up to 1951, but claimed that meaningful empirically based theories began to be developed after that date. However, as Crites applied criteria to existing theories he found them all lacking. In most cases the theorists agreed that they had not yet reached the full blown theory state (15:617-621). Holland, too, in a recent article (28) concludes that vocational guidance is without theory to guide its practice.

The few citations presented are not intended to, nor do we assume they have, made a case against theory postulation and theory testing in the realm of career guidance. The theories or non-theories continue and research testing

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their postulations continue. Maybe someday we will know the theory underlying how careers are chosen and what conditions the choices.

The question that came to our minds was, "Since the field of guidance has grown significantly in recent years and since career guidance and career placement have been important elements in that growth, can it be that the practitioners have demonstrated results without a theoretical basis to guide them?"

This question led us to review some of the research, most of which is descriptive or analytical at best, which present data on the impact of career guidance. Our review makes use of the following points, one which current theories of vocational development seem to agree.

1. Career development appears to be systematic in nature, i.e., it follows in a general way a predictable course.
2. While generally predictable career development may be characterized as flexible, particularly during the high school and college ages.
3. Knowledge of careers is crucial in the development process.
4. Knowledge of self is crucial in the development process.
5. The interaction between a person and his work environment plays a critical role in career development.

The Ripples Continue

Although Conant's and Marland's pronouncements have not been realized, in fact, there continues to be a quest for the magic student-to-counselor ratio of 300 to 1 (75) at the high school level. Community colleges use that ratio in planning for expanded guidance services (54). The current student-counselor ratio in community colleges ranges from 250 to 1 upward to 1,000 to 1 (22). Senior colleges with a student-counselor ratio of 100 to 1 upward

to 8,000 to 1 with a mean of approximately 3,000 to 1 (2,12) use the pronounced ratio as criterion level in assessing the adequacy of their guidance programs.

The pronouncement of need to expand guidance services continue and have taken on interesting branches. Counselors should be involved in curricular modifications (77,35,65) and they should give special attention to the career needs of women and minorities (78,82).

Two studies by Schill (52,53) included data on the influences of job choice. In both instances, although the personal influence of significant others influenced job choice, school counselors received meager mention if at all. The most recent data provided by Schill (51:10-12) reinforces the earlier indications of little counselor influence on high school students. Slightly over 7,000 high school students in Snohomish County, Washington responded to a survey. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that the counseling services were adequate. Fifty percent also indicated that the career information available to them was adequate, but only three percent indicated that they were influenced in academic and/or career choice by counselors.

Other writers have also found counseling, including career guidance, lacking in impact upon student. Arbuckle (4), while concluding that schools do need counselors, found more literature to the contrary to their effectiveness than he did in support of it. Noeth et al. (80) were forced to conclude that:

"By and large, guidance programs appear to be falling short of students' needs, even in those areas involving the more commonplace career guidance activities long advocated in counselor education programs and textbooks."

Menacker (79) concludes a recent article' "Finally, career guidance advocates should heed the warning signs that signal increased pressure on career guidance

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programs to produce evidence of their value."

Lest we be tempted to limit our concerns about counseling and career guidance to the common schools it is necessary to mention a study reported at the 1974 conference on higher education for minorities. Schill (81) cited data collected at the University of Washington on counseling effectiveness for minority students who were admitted to the University with special consideration. The data found no support for counseling practice, in terms of the students retention or academic performance.

The questions asked by C. Gilbert Wrenn (83) in 1960 about school counseling remain unanswered. However, the growth of career counseling and career placement goes on unabated. Now the schools (at least in the State of Washington) are hiring unemployed counselors on CETA funds to act as placement counselors for high school and community college students and graduates.

Conclusion

Over the past fifteen years there have been pronouncements by nationally known educators and critics on counseling. During this period there has been a growing emphasis upon career counseling, career choice and career development. Concurrently there has been an increase in effort to develop and validate counseling and career development theories. The authors conclude that there are no meaningful theories of counseling or career development. The empirical data that researchers have submitted to assess the consequences of counseling and career development efforts have uniformly warranted no positive conclusions.

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