

Career Education Methods for the Eighties*

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The primary purpose of career education is the facilitation of career maturity. This goal differs from the principal aim of career guidance which is promoting adjustment. The two goals of maturity and adjustment call for different methods. Career guidance addresses the content of a career choice and seeks increases in realism, congruence, and consistency. Career education, in contrast, addresses the decision-making process and seeks more integrated decisional attitudes and competencies. Of the two methods, those of career education are more fundamental because they focus on the person as decider rather than on a problematic choice. Improvements in the way students decisionally process the content of choices usually leads to more adjusted choices. Guidance methods which focus directly on the content of choices are more useful with students who already display a mature approach to decision-making. Students with less mature career choice attitudes and competencies profit significantly less from discussions of such content as interests, abilities, and occupational information. Clearly, education for maturity is a more fundamental service than is guiding adjustment. This is because more mature decision-making usually results in both more adjusted choices and greater personal integration.

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Though the case for the importance of developmental methods can be made, the reality of career education is that guidance methods are clearly dominant. Authoritative interpretation of aptitude tests and interest inventories, the dissemination of occupational information, and the encouragement of realistic educational-vocational choices are the standard methods and materials used by career educators. One of the major reasons that guidance methods dominate career education is simply because the materials exist and are widely known. The field is replete with guidance materials. There even are major corporations indirectly reinforcing guidance as opposed to developmental education by promoting such products as interest inventories and occupational information systems. Professionals who wish to implement the maturity model know the methods, but lack materials. The model was asserted by Super and his colleagues in the 1950's and 1960's and the methods for developmental diagnosis were created or refined in the 1970's. There has been comparatively little work performed, however, in refining developmental education methods and constructing maturity-promoting materials. As long as this remains true, career educators will continue to primarily use career-adjustment guidance methods and adjustment-promoting materials.

Developmental education and guidance are equivalent in having complex models and professionally demanding techniques. With regard to materials, however, the two diverge. The construction

of guidance materials seems easier because it focused on a relatively standard problem, that is, vocational choice. Accordingly, guidance materials seek to increase self-knowledge, provide information about jobs, and suggest occupations with which the student's personality would correspond. The construction of developmental education materials appears more difficult because such materials must focus on the unique person rather than on a universal choice. As such, maturity-promoting materials are more difficult to create.

An approach to this problem of individual uniqueness is to identify a core method which all individuals may use to promote their own maturation. One such method is self-exploration. Through cycles of self-exploration, an individual can expand and stabilize the self at increasingly higher levels of complexity and integration. By way of responding to the self, a student can:

1. Identify imminent career choices
2. Interpret the meaning each choice holds
3. Examine the feeling the choice evokes
4. Increase control over the choice
5. Plan action steps to produce a sound choice

It is through such a process that problems can be turned into opportunities and the self can expand in both depth and autonomy.

The primary focus of self-exploration during career education should be the students' career choice attitudes. Attitudes are the key factor because they mediate the use of

career choice competencies and may channel response to jobs such as interests and work values. Crites, in his model of career maturity, has identified a group of attitudes that appear especially important in the career decision-making process. He has turned this model into a measure which is called the Career Maturity Inventory- Attitude Scale. The attitudes reflected in this scale's items provide an empirically selected focus for meaningful career education. This is especially true for those students who score well below the norms for their age group. Exploration of immature attitudes is of great import with these students because such attitudes may actually thwart their effective response to the career development tasks of youth.

The CMI-Attitude Scale items can be used to guide systematic self-exploration during career education. This measure can be turned into materials compatible with the self-exploration method. Because the Attitude Scale items identify attitudes known to relate to effective career adaptation, students benefit from being taught the test. Unlike intelligence and personality measures, the Attitude Scale and scoring key can be given to students for their study. Indeed, career educators want students to know which items they missed, to understand the rationales for those items, and to reconsider their outlook with regard to those items.

The handout contains materials designed for use in career education. These developmental education materials were designed to be used with the self-exploration method and they focus on the identification of career maturity level and facilitation of higher levels of career maturity. Those interested in examining more developmental methods and materials for career education should consult the Career Maturity Inventory Pathfinder (Crites and Savickas, in press) and Career Decision-Making: Teaching the Process, (Savickas and Crites, in press with pre-publication copies available now).