

CAREER MATURITY AND ITS DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The career maturity construct has been the subject of much research since its introduction into the literature in 1955. The construct of career maturity or vocational maturity as he called it, was introduced by Super (1957). He claimed that career maturity represented “the place reached on the continuum of vocational development from exploration to decline “Super, (1957). The construct has been described as being central to career development theory, the most commonly employed outcome measure in career counseling, and as being the most widely used career construct nationally and internationally. Super's theory of career development, initially formulated in the 1950s, has led to a number of important research programmes, focusing particularly on the concept of vocational maturity. The major findings of these studies are surveyed in this paper. They suggest that vocational maturity is a development characteristic which increases with age, is multidimensional in nature, develops at different rates in different individuals, and can help in the pre-diction of occupational satisfaction, occupational success and career success.

Keywords: Career development, Career maturity, Vocational development, Vocational Maturity

I.INTRODUCTION

The progress and action taken by a person throughout a life time, especially those related to that person's occupations. A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position. Maturity is the ability to respond to the environment in an appropriate manner. Maturity also encompasses being aware of the correct time and place to behave and knowing when to act, according to the circumstances and the culture of the society one lives in.

Career maturity

**“career maturity involves forming interest,
making consistent and competent choices
and developing attitude towards career.”**

Crites (1978) [1]

The twentieth century, through the years of the Great Depression, to the post-World War Two era, the prevailing view of vocational choice among counselors, educators, and laymen alike was largely that of "putting square pegs in square holes and round pegs in round holes. It stemmed from Parsons', the acknowledged father of vocational guidance, tripartite model of vocational counseling, in which a young person first conducted a self-analysis of his/her personal capabilities. The Parsonian model(1909)[2] quickly gained widespread currency and served as the conceptual touchstone for much of the pioneer work in vocational psychology pursued by Donald G. Paterson and his associates at the University of Minnesota during the 1930s. This group of researchers and practitioners set about the enormous task of "operationalizing" Parsons' approach to choosing a vocation. An economist of neo-Freudian persuasion Eli Ginzberg Speaking at the annual convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association in 1950, Ginsberg declared that they had no real theory of vocational choice and that, in any case, vocational choice is not a once in-a-lifetime phenomenon. Ginzberg, Axelrad, and Herma introduced the idea that vocational choice is a continuous process which remains in existence for a long period. In this developmental framework, career behavior refers to the responses that an individual makes in selecting a career and adjusting in it. He and his colleagues (Ginzberg, Axelrad, & Hernia, 1951) proposed that vocational choice is a developmental process which spans the years from late childhood to early adulthood when the individual enters the world-of-work. They divided the process into three periods, each of which was characterized by the factor that was paramount in decision-making during a given stage of career development. Despite the emphasis which Ginzberg placed upon the developmental nature of vocational choice, however, he did not take the next logical step and formulate the concept of career maturity implied by his theory.

It was Donald E. Super who subsequently introduced and articulated the concept of career maturity, drawing upon his own earlier work (Super, 1942) in which he had used Buehler's (1933)[3] framework of "life stages" as well as the theoretical contributions of others on the development of vocational interests (notably Carter, 1940).[4] He defined what was earlier termed Vocational maturity' as "the place reached on the continuum of vocational development from exploration to decline" Super (1957) said that "Like social development; emotional development and intellectual development, vocational development has both distinctive characteristics which make focusing on it worthwhile and common characteristics which reveal it as one way in which the general development of the individual manifests itself". Super also notes that a vocational maturity quotient might be developed to indicate "whether or not the vocational development of an individual is appropriate for his age, and how far below or beyond his chronological age his vocational development is." Super, emphasizing the continuity of the vocational development process, identified vocational maturity as a key concept and defined it "as the degree of development; the place reached on the continuum of vocational development from exploration to decline" (Super 1957)[5] An individual's vocational or career maturity reflects his "readiness to make vocational decisions, called for by society, revealed by method of coping with developmental tasks, which are occupational In nature" (Super 1964). Super (1955, 1960) identified dimensions of vocational maturity some of which were later modified by Crites (1961, 1965, 1969)[6] in terms of career choice attitudes and competencies. Super was influenced by Ginzberg and Buehler in developing his theory of career development. He has utilized principles from differential and phenomenological psychology to describe and explain

the choice process. He fitted together the aspects of developmental psychology with self concept theory to suggest ten propositions in 1953.[7] These were later reorganized into a new list of eleven propositions and appeared in his book Vocational Development: A Framework for Research. [8] The eleven propositions were again revised and appeared as twelve propositions in Scientific Careers and Vocational Development Theory. [9] The twelve propositions suggested by Super are as follows: [10]

1. Vocational development is an ongoing, continuous, generally irreversible process.
2. Vocational development is an orderly patterned and predictable process.
3. Vocational development is a dynamic process.
4. Self concepts begin to form prior in adolescence, become clear in adolescence and are translated into occupational terms in adolescence.
5. Reality factors (the reality of personal characteristics and the reality of the society) play an increasingly important part in occupational choice with increasing age from early adolescence to adulthood.
6. Identification with a parent or parent substitute related to the development of adequate roles, their consistent and harmonious interrelationship and their interpretation in terms of vocational plans and eventualities.
7. The direction and rate of the vertical movement of an individual from one occupational level to another are related to his intelligence, parental socio-economic level, status needs, values, interests, skill in interpersonal relationships and the supply and demand conditions in the country.
8. The occupational field which the individual enters is related to his interests, values and needs. The identification he makes with parental or substitute role models, the community resources he uses, the level and quality of his educational background and the occupation-structure, trends and attitudes of his community.
9. Although each occupation requires a characteristic pattern or abilities, interests or personality traits, the tolerances are wide enough to allow both some variety of individuals in each occupation and some diversity of occupations for each individual.
10. Work satisfactions depend on the extent to which the individual can find adequate outlets in his job for his abilities, interests, values and personality traits.
11. The degree of satisfaction the individual attains from his work is related to the degree to which he has been able to implement his self conception in his work.
12. Work and occupation provide a focus for personality organization for most men and many women, although for some persons this focus is peripheral, incidental or even nonexistence and foci such as social activities and the home are central. According to Super, the vocational life has five basic stages. He identified these life stages as growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. [11]

Super's Five Life and Career Development Stages

1. Growth (Age: birth – 14)

Self concepts develop through identification with key figures in family and in school, need and fantasy are dominant early in this stage, interest and capacity become more important with increasing social participation and reality testing. During this stage, experiences provide a background of knowledge of the environment generally, including the world of work, which ultimately will be used in tentative choices and in final selections. Sub stages of the growth stage are:

- ❖ Fantasy (4-10): Needs are dominant, role playing in fantasy is important.
- ❖ Interest (11-12): Likes are the major determinant of aspirations and activities.
- ❖ Capacity (13-14): Abilities are given more weight and job requirements are considered.

II. EXPLORATION (AGE 15 – 24)

This stage is characterized by the formation of self concepts and occupational concepts, self examination, role tryouts and occupational exploration taking place in school, leisure activities and part time work. Sub stages of the exploration stage are:

- ❖ Tentative (15-17): Needs, interests, capacities and values and opportunities are all considered. Tentative choices are made and tried out in fantasy, discussion, courses, work etc. Because of uncertainty about ability, availability of training or access to employment opportunity the list may contain choices that will later disappear.
- ❖ Transition (18-21): Reality considerations are given more weight as the youth enters the labor market of professional training and attempts to implement a self concept.
- ❖ Trial (22-24): In this stage individual narrows the list to occupations that he feels are attainable and that provide the opportunities thought to be most important.

III. ESTABLISHMENT (AGE 25 – 44)

In this stage the individual at first often by trial and error attempts to ascertain if the vocational choices and decisions made during the exploratory period have validity. If the individual finds an appropriate field, effort is put forth to make a permanent place in it. Sub stages of the establishment stage are:

- ❖ Trial (25-30): The field of work presumed to be suitable may prove unsatisfactory, resulting in one or two changes before the life work is found or before it becomes clear.
- ❖ Stabilization (31-44): As the career pattern becomes clear, effort is put forth to stabilize, to make secure place in the world of work. They accept the occupation as one offering the best chance to obtain satisfactions that are personally important.

IV. MAINTENANCE (AGE 45 –64)

In this stage, the major concern is to hold the job, to continue to do well and plan for retirement. Essentially the person is concerned with continuing satisfying parts of the work situation and work revising or changing unpleasant and annoying

aspects.

V. DECLINE (AGE 65+)

As physical and mental powers decline, work activity changes and in due course ceases. According to Isaacson, the worker is now more concerned with retaining the position than with enhancement.[12] Sub stages of the decline stage are:

- ❖ Declaration (65-71): Sometimes at the time of official retirement, sometimes late in the maintenance stage, the pace of work slackness, duties are shifted or the nature of the work is changed to suit declining capacities.
- ❖ Retirement (71 on): In this stage, some people can cope with complete cessation of occupation pleasantly, some others with difficulty and disappointment and some others only with death.
- ❖ Super indicates that career development is a process which continues through time and it is manifested in a sequence of vocational behaviors occurring through out the life span of the individual. It is also an orderly patterned process in that the patterning of behavior can be explained through the concept of developmental tasks which are crystallization, specification, implementation, stabilization and consolidation. Super also indicates that three type of factors appear to play a major part in vocational behavior and development i.e. role factors, personal factors and situational factors. Super interprets career development behavior as a time extended effort to build and implement a self concept. According to Super, a self concept is the individual's picture of himself, the perceived self with accrued meanings. In Super's view, the self concept operates both as a significant source of information about the individuals make up as a determiner of a person's maturing vocational identity. The formation and progressive clarification of self concept are shaped by one's social experiences and one's perceptions of the meaning of those experiences. Thus Super's theory focuses on four major elements vocational life stages, vocational maturity, translating the self concept into a vocational self concept and the career patterns. Super's theory is the most comprehensive of all developmental theories. It offers valid explanation of developmental concept supported by numerous researches.

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