

THE RATIONALE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF VOCATIONAL THEORIES
AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

by 580

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my husband, Charles, who has so generously and unselfishly provided the opportunity for me to continue my education.

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CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION

In the year 1909 Frank Parsons of Boston, Massachusetts, published a book entitled, Choosing a Vocation, which emphasized matching the person to his environment. This publication marked the beginning of the vocational guidance movement. The public assumed responsibility for vocational development of American youth in 1917 when Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act which enabled the states to provide vocational education at the secondary school level.

Since that time many vocational theories have been developed and volumes have been published regarding the problems of vocational choice and vocational decisions. The theories have been developed with respect to how individuals make their career choices and decisions; some are only "arm-chair" theories while others are built on research.

It has become apparent during the past decade that the need for guidance and counseling at the elementary school level is an urgent one. To satisfy this need, Congress amended the National Defense Education Act in 1964 to provide assistance to the states in setting up and maintaining a guidance program in elementary schools. Among other objectives of guidance at this level is vocational development.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM AND CLARIFICATION OF TERMS USED

While the young child is not yet concerned about his career, he nevertheless is interested in the world of work and often expresses a choice of an occupation even in his pre-school years. This vocational choice is presumably only a fantasy choice, but it points to an early developmental program of readiness for future choices and decisions.

One of the traditions of the United States is that an individual has the right to choose his own vocation. To prepare a child to choose a vocation wisely is not an easy task.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be considered in this report is the rationale and implementation of vocational theories at the elementary school level. The body of the report consists of (1) a review of the major theories of vocational development, (2) the implications of these theories for elementary school guidance, and (3) suggestions to implement the broad objectives of vocational guidance at the elementary school level.

The Purpose of the Study

This study was made to focus attention on the value of school's providing a program for vocational development of elementary school youngsters. Studies indicate that an individual's vocational choices are determined by the breadth of his experiences and the attitudes which he

develops during the process of growing up.¹ If a child is to be ready to make a tentative vocational choice at the junior high and secondary school level, he must understand himself. He must know his own wants and needs, and he must know about the world of work and the opportunities which are available to him.

The role of guidance in providing the experiences and activities which help to attain a realistic understanding of self and the interaction with environment needs to be defined. Guidance as a coordinating agency must provide a practical, workable approach to the vocational development of a child which can help him to achieve his life goals and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in contributing to the nation's economy.

II. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS USED

Fantasy Choice

Fantasy choice is defined as the translations of simple needs and impulses into occupational goals. Fantasy choices are often unrealistic in terms of abilities and talents; they are nevertheless real choices to the child.²

Guidance

The concept of guidance is an essential part of the total school program and is concerned with determining and providing for the development of the child. It includes the organized effort of all significant

¹Merle M. Ohlsen, Guidance Services in the Modern School (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), p. 341.

²Don C. Dinkmeyer (ed.), Guidance and Counseling in the Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 338.