

# Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling in the Schools: Career-life Planning For All

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## Abstract

Young people today are facing a very different world than their teachers and parents faced as adolescents. Technology is doubling every two years. The top 10 jobs in demand in 2010 did not exist in 2004. We are preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that have not yet been invented, in order to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet. To succeed at this task, schools (and parents) need to address the whole-person needs of students and not restrict themselves to only focusing on academic learning. This is best accomplished when career guidance and personal development are infused into all school subjects, and when guidance practitioners and counsellors are able to demonstrate the added value that a whole-person approach can offer.

**Keywords** – *comprehensive guidance, career guidance, career theory*

## CONTEXT

To paint a context for the main messages I want to convey, I will begin by asking readers to reflect on two questions: (a) Think back to when you were in high school; did you have an idea of what you wanted to do in your career? Then (b) think about your current career; to what extent are you doing that now? If I were posing these questions in a large presentation hall, I would ask people to raise their hands if they had an idea when they were in high school of what they wanted to do in the way of career. I would ask people to look around and see how many people raised their hands. Typically almost everyone (95%+) would raise their hand. Then I would ask them to keep their hands up if they were doing that now. Again I would ask people to look around and see how many hands were still raised. Typically only a few people (less than 10%) would still have their hands raised. I would comment on the observation that the majority of people had career goals in high school and they are not doing that now. Therefore, I wonder why adults are putting so much pressure on adolescents to make career decisions when they are in high school. Or saying in another way, maybe it's time to reduce the pressure to decide and instead encourage the need to explore, be open, learn to adapt, and learn to be flexible.

We live in rapidly changing times and young people today face a very different world than their teachers and parents faced as adolescents. One occupation for life is no longer the norm. Statistics Canada figures indicate that the average Canadian worker changes jobs every 3 years and changes occupations every 5 years. The average Canadian experiences 6-10 changes in occupation during his or her working life. The US Department of Labor estimates that in the USA, today's learners will have 10-14 jobs by age 38. But still, there is pressure on adolescents to make a choice of career path before they finish high school, and often there has been very little exploration to inform the decision-making process.

Technology is changing rapidly and the rate of change also is increasing. Think back 15 years ago (most teachers and guidance counsellors are about 15 years older than their students, or more). Think of what technology, or other factors in the world, exists today that did not exist in 1995, but are a part of every day living today. The list might include: cell phones, DVD players, Blue Ray, big

screen plasma televisions, digital cameras, global recession because 1 country had lax banking laws, cross boarder career mobility, common currency in Europe, and the list could continue for a long time. <Glumbert.com> reports that the amount of new technological information is doubling every 2 years, which means that half of what students learn in their first year of a 4-year technical program will be outdated by their third year and three-quarters of what they learned in their first year, and half of what they learned in their second year will be outdated by the time they graduate. As many as 80% of new jobs in 2010 did not exist 10 years ago and a similar percentage of jobs that existed 10 years ago do not exist today. The top 10 jobs in demand in 2010 did not exist in 2004. In a sense, we are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies that have not yet been invented, in order to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet (Arzuaga, de Tezanos, & Fernando Arzuaga, n.d.). How are we as educators, guidance practitioners, and parents, preparing young people to deal with these types of situations?

How are young people reacting to this changing world? Studies done with Canadian adolescents in many cities (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2004; Borgen, & Hiebert, 2006; Hiebert & Huston, 1992; Hiebert, Kemeny, & Kurchak, 1998; Magnusson & Bernes, 2001; Posterski & Bibby, 1988) have found that the most frequent and intense worry of adolescents is "what do I do after high school." It is a career-life planning concern and the aspirations of these students are not realistic. For example, in Canada, 80% of grade 10 students plan to attend university, or some other formal post-secondary education, and their parents expect that also. This expectation is impossible to meet, because there are not enough spaces in post-secondary institutions to accommodate that many students. Furthermore, only 30% – 40% of students expect to leave high school and go directly into the labour force. In reality, about one-third of students attend some form of formal post-secondary education and two-thirds move from high school directly into the labour force. Of those who do attend post-secondary education, only about half of them complete the programs they begin. The rest change majors or drop out, moving directly into the labour force. The number one reason that students report for changing programs or dropping out is "lack of fit" i.e., they do not see the relevance of the programs they are taking. (Lambert, Zeman, Allen, & Bussiere, 2004). The question arises: How well is the majority being served?

Some people have learned to be flexible and are able to adjust to these new circumstances, but many are having difficulty adjusting to the constantly changing world in which we live. The role of guidance in helping people adapt to new and changing environments is critical, not just in the area of careers, but in all facets of living. The need for life-long guidance and life-wide guidance is more important today than it ever has been in the past. In the guidance field we need to attract the young and the brightest to understand the challenge of helping others deal successfully with our constantly changing world and to see professional guidance as a challenging but very rewarding career path.

A few years ago, a group of creative Canadian career development leaders held a brainstorming session to identify a better approach for talking to youth about careers. The result has become known as the *High 5 + 1: New Career Development Messages for Youth* (Redekopp, Day, & Robb, 1995). They are summarized below.

1. Change is constant
  - The only thing certain is that everything is changing.
  - Many jobs that exist today will be obsolete in 5 years.
2. Focus on the journey
  - Since change is happening so rapidly, the job we are preparing for today may not exist when the training is complete.
  - Since the occupational destination is uncertain, the journey is all that can be counted on, so it is important to enjoy it.
3. Follow your heart
  - How often have we seen a boarder line student, catch fire and begin to succeed in school, often because they found a teacher they really liked.
  - How many people have made a dramatic career change in their mid-forties to pursue a dream that they "always wanted to do."
  - People tend to strive for, and be motivated by, what they are interested in.
  - Passion is what drives the soul.
4. Keep learning
  - Since everything is changing, all people will continue to learn.
  - People do not stagnate, they continue developing. The question is whether or not they want to influence the direction of their development or leave it to chance.
  - It is not a matter of "if" people will keep learning, but of "what" they will continue to learn, and whether that learning will be planful or haphazard.
5. Access your allies
  - 80% of all jobs are filled in the informal labour market.
  - Personal contacts are the richest source of job leads.
  - Personal networks help to what keep our thinking straight (or not), keep us motivated, and help us grow.
6. Believe in yourself
  - Belief in self is one of the most important personal characteristics, it pervades everything that we do.
  - If people don't believe in themselves, it will be hard to get others to believe in them.
  - Everyone has many positive characteristics, it is a matter of focusing on the positives, rather than dwelling on the negatives.

**Figure 1. High 5 + 1: New Career Development Messages for Youth**

In my country, and in many countries, *The High 5 + 1* have become widely accepted as the new career messages that young people and their parents need to hear.

## **CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CAREER GUIDANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD**

What is the theoretical and conceptual support for re-focussing career guidance and career education to address the current political, economic, and social system we all experience. Interestingly enough, the support comes from the theoretical leaders in our field. It is widely accepted that career development is the life-long process of managing learning, work, and transitions, in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future. Thus, career planning is life planning: Developing a vision for your life. A vision for ones life addresses the question: What kind of a person do I want to become? There are some guidelines in theory to help answer that question.

### **Donald Super**

Likely everyone has heard of Donald Super, who was a founding member of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, and one of the first people to create a systematic theory of career development. For many people, Donald Super is associated with stages of career development. However, I think there is more to be gained by examining the basic propositions underlying his theory (See Super, 1987; Super & Knasel, 1979). I have grouped them into 3 broad categories.

The first category is multi-potentiality, which refers to the fact that most people are good at more than one thing, and most jobs require people to be good at more than one thing. People's characteristics are different and broad and occupational requirements are different and broad. Therefore, each person could qualify for many occupations. There is no best job for any given person, but there are many jobs where a person could be successful, experience high job satisfaction, and feel like they are making a contribution to themselves and society.

Secondly, career development is a process that unfolds across time and goes hand-in-hand with self-concept development. The activities people engage in, the outcomes they experience, the tools and techniques they learn to use, all interact to form personal beliefs, values, and abilities that produce self-concept which can map onto numerous jobs and can be enacted through both paid and non-paid work. Personal values, beliefs, and abilities are subject to external influences, and for most people test results contribute a relatively low amount of influence. Thus, self-concepts change across time and so do career paths, as a result of the experiences that people encounter.

Thirdly, because career development and self-concept development are so closely intertwined, without job satisfaction, there will be little life satisfaction. Because a job occupies more than one-third of each day, if a job is not satisfying it will be hard to be satisfied with life. Life satisfaction comes from many sources, each source related to the various roles that people enact. Super created the career-life rainbow to illustrate the various roles that people occupy over a lifetime. Career satisfaction results from integrating work roles with the other aspects of a person's self-concept. When the integration is high, life satisfaction and career satisfaction will be high. Conversely, when self-concept is not integrated, i.e., when the various components of self-concept are disjointed, disconnected, or opposing, life satisfaction and career satisfaction will be quite low. Pulling these ideas all together, we find major support for the belief that career planning is life planning, having a vision for one's life and a plan to help the vision become a reality.

## **Ken Hoyt**

Ken Hoyt focused a large part of his career on applications of career theory in public school systems. He was one of the first people to make a distinction between the concept of work and other related concepts such as occupation, job, career, and employment (Hoyt, 1991). Hoyt defined work as conscious effort producing benefits to self and others. Work consisted of the things people do that they find fulfilling and satisfying. Work is not tied to paid employment, but to meaningful and satisfying activities, hence the use of terms such as volunteer work. For Hoyt, employment was tied to payment, but not necessarily to work, for sometimes people are paid for doing things from which they gain little satisfaction or not much sense of personal fulfillment. Hoyt called this drudgery. Hoyt defined career as the sum total of everything a person does that requires conscious effort and produces benefits to self and/or others. Thus, everyone has a career, even elementary school students. One goal of career/life planning is to find paid employment that also is work (not drudgery), i.e., to find paid employment where an individual experiences a sense of satisfaction, self-fulfillment, and making a contribution to the larger societal picture (Hoyt, 1988, 1991).

## **John Krumboltz**

John Krumboltz has made numerous contributions to career development theory and his perspectives have been categorized in many different ways. My preference is to avoid placing ideas into theoretical boxes and instead select those aspects of a theory that are particularly relevant for addressing the context of change that people face today. For Krumboltz, three constructs are of particular importance.

Krumboltz was one of the first people to describe in detail the powerful influence that observational learning has on people's career choices. Young people especially observe significant others in their lives (parents, aunts, uncles, neighbours, etc.) and form beliefs about what different occupations involve, how appealing (or not) different occupations are, and their place in the world of work. Krumboltz referred to these beliefs as Self-Observation Generalizations, or SOGs (Krumboltz, 1983). SOGs are beliefs about self and the world of work, such as: "I am not good at math and therefore any job involving math is not right for me" or "I get nervous about speaking to a group of people, so any job that involves speaking to groups of people would be too stressful for me" or "there are no good jobs available, all the good jobs already have been taken (so why bother trying to find any job)" or "it's who you know that counts, not what you know, so I don't have any chance of finding a good job."

Often there is a grain of truth in a SOG, but often it gets distorted and becomes a “rule to live by” and can either limit, or expand, the career alternatives that young people are willing to entertain. Part of the job of guidance workers is to help clients identify their own personal SOGs, reality test the validity of those SOGs, and where necessary replace limiting SOGs with more productive ones. The “High 5 + 1” messages described earlier are one way of counteracting unproductive and limiting SOGs and providing appropriate and successful role models for young people also is extremely important.

A second important contribution that Krumboltz has made flows from the construct described above, building on the work of Bandura (1977), focusing on the constructs of self-efficacy and personal agency. Self-efficacy involves people’s beliefs about their ability to perform different tasks and beliefs about the likely consequences of performing those tasks. Self-efficacy is part of a larger construct called personal agency, or beliefs about the extent to which people think they are active agents in their own life circumstances. People with high personal agency believe that the situations they experience are largely a function of their own role in participating in those situations. In other words, they are not passive recipients of what fate hands them, but active players in their own life experiences. People who have accurate self-efficacy beliefs and a high sense of personal agency usually are also highly motivated to set and pursue their goals and most often are very successful in achieving those goals. As educators and guidance workers, it is useful to think that part of our job involved engineering success experiences for young people so that they develop self-confidence in their abilities and also to help them shift to an alternate plan when things do not turn out as expected.

More recently, Krumboltz (Krumboltz, 2000; Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999) introduced the notion of *planned happenstance*. Happenstance is a general term used to describe things that happen seemingly for no particular reason. Sometimes such events are ascribed to luck or serendipity. However Krumboltz points out that frequently when such events are examined more closely, it is possible to see that a person played a large role in positioning him or her self so that the good luck happened to them and not someone else. Thus, opportunity awareness becomes an important skill so that people learn to identify opportunities that are about to happen, in order to place themselves in a position where good luck will happen to them. Astute readers will notice that the three concepts I describe in this section are inter-related and very closely connected to the *High 5 + 1* messages described earlier. Surrounding young people with role models that provide good examples of people who are motivated and successful in their careers and who demonstrate and expanded and non-stereotypic approach to career-life planning, engineering success experiences to build self-confidence and personal agency, and teaching opportunity awareness and the ability to plan their good luck, can all make important contributions towards teaching people to cope successfully with the constantly changing world in which we live today.

### **Summary: Pulling it all Together**

There are several themes running through all of the perspectives described above. These are summarized briefly below. A central theme in the preceding text is that career planning is life planning. It is not possible to separate career from other aspects of a person’s life, hence the commonly used expression career-life planning. Moreover, the main driver in career-life planning is a person’s vision for their life, i.e., their answer to the question “What kind of a person do I want to become?” It is important also to remember the implications arising from the construct of multi-potentiality. People can be successful in many occupations. There is no “best job” for any given individual and in fact it is important to develop the idea that all jobs are valuable, and should be valued, as potential sources of satisfaction and fulfillment. Furthermore, all of a person’s life roles contribute to their personal satisfaction. The main career-life goal for adolescents, and younger people, is exploration. Therefore it is important to teach young people how to make informed choices, i.e., how to explore within themselves, to discover their own interests, abilities, values, personal life goals; how to explore outside themselves to see what is involved in different occupations; and reality test the occupational alternatives they are considering. In the process it is important for people to discover their passions, the things they get excited about, and the activities from which they derive a sense of personal fulfillment. In the process of exploration, it is important also to discover that personal fulfillment is largely self-determined and that they are active agents in the lives they lead.

For educators, guidance workers, and parents, it is important to realize the usefulness of beginning career education at a very early age, in fact, the younger the better. Young people need to develop adequate exploration skills, acquire good decision-making skills, and develop an attitude that embraces the importance of being planful and making informed choices. Adults need to provide an

environment that supports and encourages exploration, goal seeking, goal setting, and that minimizes the barriers that young people face, especially artificial barriers that often result from the unfulfilled dreams of adults. The central unifying theme in the above discussion is that career planning is life planning and that it is good to approach career-life planning in a planful way. i.e., it is good to have a plan, and in fact any plan is better than no plan. The guiding questions are: "what kind of a person do I want to become?" and "How do the activities in which I engage, the learning opportunities I pursue, and the attitudes I develop, contribute to my plan for my life?"

## **THE PRACTICE OF CAREER GUIDANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Hopefully you have found some of this interesting and thought provoking, perhaps even useful, but the fundamental question is: What does all of this have to do with professional practice. I have found that a useful way to help people think about the implications for practice is to give people a short thought listing exercise. I tell them that I am going to give them a question and ask them to write down all the words or phrases that come to their mind in response to the question—I will give them 1 minute to do this exercise. The question is: "What is being a guidance specialist all about?" (depending on the audience I might ask what is being a counsellor all about, or what is being a social worker all about, etc.) When I do this activity in a large presentation hall, I tell people to stop writing and put down their pens at the 1 minute mark, and I ask them to call out the types of things they have written down. Typically, people mention things like: facilitating, listening, helping, supporting, encouraging, being empathic, etc. Most often, all of the words are process words. In the minds of people in the audience, being a guidance specialist (or a counsellor, or a social worker, etc.) is about process. It is very seldom that anyone mentions any outcome words, such as client change, achieving goals, a more fulfilling life, etc. Since my colleagues and I have observed this, we have been advocating that counsellors and guidance practitioners reconceptualise their roles as involving two equally important components: Process and outcome. Process is important, but equally important are the outcomes that result from the processes we use.

Focusing on process, one implication coming from what I have said in this paper has to do with the importance of addressing the whole-person needs of young people, not just their academic learning, but also the social, emotional, psychological, dimensions of the context in which our young people live. We need to remember that the world in which we live today is very different than the world we lived in when we were adolescents. We are living in a world where flexibility and adaptability are more important than ever before. People in the guidance field are uniquely positioned to coordinate and provide leadership in meeting the whole-person needs of young people and doing it in a way that provides evidence that guidance is making a positive difference in the lives of students. In North America, this whole-person perspective is characterized by a comprehensive approach to guidance and counselling in schools. In *Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling (CGC)* (see Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Gysbers, Hughey, Starr, & Lapan, 1992), an infusion approach is adopted where meeting the whole-person needs of students is viewed as an integral part of the main mission of the school and guidance objectives are part of every course (see Hiebert, 1993). In schools where a CGC approach is implemented, many positive academic and non-academic outcomes typically result. These include: increased academic achievement, lower absenteeism, reduced student alienation, reduced drop-out rate, reduced incidence of substance abuse, greater student participation in school programs, more positive school climate, enhanced satisfaction with school, increased student satisfaction with the quality of their education, increased student reports that school experiences are relevant and adequate preparation for the future (see Hughey, Gysbers, & Starr, 1993; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997 for research reports).

Turning our attention to outcome, most people working in the guidance field believe that they are providing a worthwhile service to the clients they see. However, evidence to support this belief is frequently sparse. The problem was highlighted at a recent Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy. Policy makers stated explicitly that in order to continue to provide funding for career guidance, it was necessary to provide evidence attesting to the positive impact of career services on clients, and that the researcher and practitioner communities had not yet made a convincing case that career guidance was having a positive impact. In response to this challenge, the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) was formed. The CRWG is an ad hoc group of researchers from seven different universities and one private foundation, who pooled their talents to develop more convincing ways to demonstrate the value of career guidance in schools, government agencies, and community-based agencies that

provide career services. The CRWG has created a framework for gathering evidence that permits making a connection between the resources used, the processes in which service providers and clients engage, and the outcomes that are achieved, i.e., the knowledge and skills that clients acquire, the personal attributes that clients develop, and the impact on the clients life, plus in some cases the economic and societal impact that results from career services (see Baudoin, et al., 2007). The CRWG also has developed a compendium of tools and resources that can be used to gather evidence connecting the services provided to the outcomes obtained (available from <http://www.ccdf.ca/crwg/tools.html>). Over the past 3 years members of the CRWG have been involved in various projects that have developed new interventions and validated the evaluation framework (for research reports and intervention guides, see <http://www.ccdf.ca/crwg/reports.html>). All of the materials developed by the CRWG are available free of charge to members of the career development community by accessing the websites

A repeating theme in this paper is that guidance needs to be responsive to the changing contexts that our clients face every day. Perhaps the allegory presented in Fig. 2 will provide a convincing illustration of the need for reform in the philosophies and practices of those of us working in the guidance profession.

There an American legend of Rip Van Winkle, a villager of Dutch descent, who lived in a nice village at the foot of a small mountain range. He is a pleasant man, but his home and his farm suffer because he frequently gets distracted by things around him and does not complete what he starts. He is generally loved by everyone except for his wife, who gets impatient with him and is sometimes prone to nagging him to complete the things he starts and to do more around the house and the farm.

One autumn day he escapes by wandering into the mountains, where he encounters strangely dressed men, who he assumes to be the rumored ghosts early explorers that frequent the mountains. After drinking some of their liquor, he settles down under a shady tree and falls asleep. He wakes and returns to his village, where he finds 20 years have passed. He discovers that his wife has died and that his close friends have died or moved somewhere else. He sees that there are strange and noisy vehicles that do not require any horses to make them go, and many other changes that are barely believable.

Now suppose that Rip Van Winkle fell asleep 20 years ago from today and wandered down the mountain and into a hospital, would he see much difference? Suppose he wandered into a school classroom? Suppose he wandered into a career guidance office, or into a university program preparing guidance counsellors? How much change would he see?

**Figure 2. An Allegory to Consider**

We live in a changing world and we need to respond to it differently than we did 20 years ago. Young people need different sets of skills, different spheres of knowledge, and most of all the personal attributes that will help them adapt to and be successful with the unpredictability of the world they face (Hiebert, Donaldson, Pyryt, Arthur, 1998; Magnusson, Day, & Redekopp, 1989). There are trustworthy theories of career development that offer useful guidelines for how to address our changing context. We need to draw on these ideas to guide our interactions with clients and also to guide our interactions with ourselves as we engage in our own career-life planning. Career-life planning involves gaining clarity on our vision for our life and creating an implementation plan that will help us meet our personal and professional goals.

Underlying the ideas I have presented is a large social action agenda. We need to be able to provide policy makers, as well as managers, supervisors and funders, with the evidence they need to provide us with the type and amount of support we need. We need to find out how to engage our policy makers and government departments to work together with us to create the infrastructure needed to support life-long and life-wide guidance services to all who need them. It involves identifying the people who are in positions of influence and who can help to make changes, then learning how to talk to these people in a way that provides the messages they need to hear, in language they can understand, and pointing out to them how it is in their best interest to support guidance services. The task is larger than any of us could manage individually, so we need to be able to recruit others in the quest to address the whole person needs of students and other clients across the life span. As counsellor educators and trainers of guidance practitioners we need to broaden the focus in our university programs to include the broad spectrum of competencies that are needed to help people

work effectively with the clients they see. Working together to promote the field of guidance and counselling will accomplish much more than any person could accomplish individually. All of us are more capable than any of us. There are accomplished leaders and dedicated supporters in our various countries, and together, I believe we can make a substantial difference to the practice of life-long and life-wide guidance in our countries.

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