Theory Of Career Development Essay, Research Paper

Theory of career development

Marie Doxey

There are many ways to develop theories of career development. Mainly the ideas result from personal experience including but not limited to sociological, economic, family life and environmental conditions. Other reasons why people make career decisions rely on personality and inner self. There are many theories to refer to but as our world changes everyday in many ways so does career development. As we become aware of those changes , we are challenged to develop new theories in order to adapt to the new variations in our society.

Our society in which we live in has a great impact on developing a theory. It is the background and common ground that conditions and guides our behavior to choose our career. This effect may be considered a general factor but it is the greatest factor. In order to survive in society, compliance must take place. Society presents certain rules and abidance is necessary for conformity. Society depicts what is considered as acceptable behavior, family life, available resources, freedom, environment, economics, and ultimately career choice. The only possibly resilient factor to societal pressure and conditions may be the inner self which motivates individuals and sets people apart from one another.

Career development is a continuous process due to the changes in society and environment. Super’s concept includes economic factors influencing career development and relates them to society and labor market. The economic influence is manifested in family life and status. One’s financial background affects career background. Financial security is a partial factor and can act as one less obstacle towards reaching career goals. Although financial aid is readily available, family background and wealth may result in higher expectations. It is very common to see many families with several members carrying out the same tradition of either being doctors, lawyers or related careers.

Family traditions and values must be considered as a contributing attribute. Family expectations and traditions apply a certain amount of pressure on its members’ decision making. Values most likely stem from family influence. As we grow up and constantly change, our values may be the most resilient to outside influence. Those values are mostly instilled throughout the developmental years. Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herma base their theory on the concept of developmental standpoint. Our family life relating to ethics, religion or lack of it, parents or guardians’ values, has a great impact on the maturation of our values. Most everything revolves around one’s values. Career choice must adhere to a certain extent otherwise conflict arises within the person or between the person and the source of conflict.

Family lifestyle is also an element in ultimate career choice. One’s family class and accommodations sets and guides one’s motivation to achieve a comfort level accustomed to. The higher class can motivate higher achievements in order to continue or resume the lifestyle acquainted with. It also seems that higher income or status may also be related to one’s intellectual abilities. Goltfredson’s discusses intellectual level and its relation to career choice and level of accomplishment.

Environment is unescapable as a major influence and that would include, family style, society, economics, culture and many other factors. Heredity may also be a factor in one’s choice of career to a certain extent and from some point of view. Some behaviors are believed to be hereditary such as alcoholism, tolerance level, and many others. Intelligence is also believed to be somewhat hereditary. Therefore, some people may be more fortunate than others in that aspect or less fortunate, because ultimately, intelligence is a major aspect of the level of achievement.

After discussing certain factors of career development which caught my attention and were somewhat more relative to my experiences than other theories, I would like to relate some of those elements to my life. Society’s role in my career choice manifested itself in many different and nontraditional ways. Born in Lebanon, I moved to the United States at the age of thirteen. I had absorbed a fair amount of the Lebanese culture by that age. That aspect served as a motivator for me to succeed against all odds due to the language barrier and despite the fact of feeling different. I had to try harder to achieve ordinary tasks such as reading and comprehension. Without the knowledge of the English language, I was forced to work harder. I achieved a 4.0 GPA in my first year of school and was a member of the National Honor Society. The dictionary was my best friend. Having attended a private French Catholic school ( we all know how strict nun teachers can be) in Lebanon, I was geared into a direction already, of focusing all my energies on school and family life. I resumed that direction as I entered school in a totally different culture. I tested at the junior level in high school at the age of fourteen. The American culture had not influenced any of my behavior yet. I graduated at the age of fifteen. I did not have the opportunity of choosing a career or planning for one due to the fact that the issue was never discussed at school or at home. I sent for college information on my own but felt limited due to the lack of encouragement and support from my family. I worked two jobs at the age of fifteen. I also worked for my father’s business at the age of sixteen and assumed all bookkeeping duties and more responsibilities of his business. I married at the age of nineteen which was the preferred path to take from my parents’ point of view. I was not forced to make any choices by my family. Culture and background led me to the path that I took. Nevertheless, I always expected of myself to achieve a higher education. That desire was more of a personal choice than any other factor. I was blessed with children and my oldest was handicapped. My situation from that moment on, affected my life including career, for a long time. Due to the fact that my son was completely dependant on me, I could not pursue a career nor think of one for a long time. As my son got older, and as I became more adjusted to my circumstances, I decided to go back to school. The personal desire from within never left me. My situation only set me back a few years. I realized how difficult it was to manage a family with a husband and three children and attend school. As my son went to school, I worked for my husband due to the need of a flexible schedule. My job for fourteen years at my husband’s office was not a career planned, it was rather an accommodation to the lifestyle at home, limited schedule, motherly “LOVE”, and obligations to my handicapped child. I completed quite a few classes by attending night school.

I was fascinated by the medical field (which may have been due to my son’s condition) and obtained my associate degree in Clinical Laboratory Sciences. I intended to go forth with that field in order to go on to medical school. I was accepted in the bachelor’s program but as I began and had to fulfill practicum hours at different hospitals, I realized how isolated from patients I would be as a lab scientist. I decided to explore the psychology field and became instantly comfortable with my decision. I finished my undergraduate education in psychology for no other reason but choice and comfort within that field. Parsons may refer to it as a trait factor theory although it is applied in the context of education rather than a job.

I felt a great sense of accomplishment after obtaining my bachelor’s degree due to the difficult schedule between school and my family lifestyle. At the age of thirty-four, I realized that my desire for higher achievement was limited by my family lifestyle. I could have achieved much more at a much younger age but my circumstances, mainly family responsibilities slowed down and altered my goals in life, including career goals. My priorities shifted as I assumed more responsibilities at home. The shift was inevitable and never questioned as I accepted my situation. My interaction at home with my children resulted in an increased interest in helping children and especially understanding limitations beyond their control. Once again my situation at home, influenced my career goals. As I became more interested in focusing my career choice to become involved in working with children, my desire for higher education increased to satisfy my developmental point of my life.

Devastated by the loss of my son at the age of fourteen, my career became secondary and adjustments had to made, reality had to faced and goals became trivial. As I was working on developing a career and had emerged and matured through my “thirty-something” years, I had to step back and shift gears. My career was put on hold for two years. As important as it was to me and as hard as I persisted at attaining a career goal, my mental and physical abilities at that particular time of my life temporarily nullified all pre-existing efforts to continue with my career destination.

As I emerged from that event and a year later, from my father’s passing away, I became faced with an incomplete projection. Despite the setbacks, my career goal did not change. I had developed and matured into a designated ambition. I knew what I wanted and had made a connection with a certain career goal and I believe it to be instilled in me. I look forward to reaching my goal, especially after having gone so far, I couldn’t let myself allow for any obstacles to stand in my way.

As I relate my personal experiences to the different theories and factors of career development I find Super’s theory more complete and relative to career development. Trait and Factor theory by Parsons is definitely manifested in my life experiences as I persisted with a field that felt comfortable to me. All other elements of Super’s theory come into effect in my personal career development. The changes that I went through as I matured, mental physical abilities, personal characteristics and opportunities exposed to me, resulted in my ultimate career goal.

References

Zunker, V, G. (1998). Career 5th Counseling: Applied Concepts of Life Planning. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Ettinger, J, M. (1996). Improved Career Decision Making in a Changing World. Maryland: Garrett Park Press.

Forsyth, D, R. (1995). Our Social World. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Cole, M., Cole, S, R. (1996). The Development of Children. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

33f