

# FACILITATING CAREER EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

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Barriers to becoming successfully employed are encountered by almost everyone in our society. To the more than 35 million handicapped Americans who are physically, mentally or otherwise disabled, obstacles to employment can be quite substantial. For example, in 1977 approximately two million handicapped students left school without marketable skills (Schworles, 1976). Current employment figures clearly demonstrate the result of such hindrances. Only 40 percent of all disabled individuals of employment age are employed, compared with 74 percent of the non-disabled population (Levitan and Taggart, 1977). There is little doubt that the handicapped have been denied sufficient access to the mainstream of American society.

To remove obstacles to employment for the handicapped, new and progressive ways of thinking about the rights of handicapped individuals have produced a plethora of legislative mandates. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112) was passed and became the first landmark legislation to give substantive attention to this need. Sections 503 and 504, in particular, required equal opportunity not only for employment,

but also for education, transportation, housing, and accessibility. The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) attempted to remedy the exclusion of handicapped students in vocational education. The Developmental Disabilities Amendments of 1978 (P.L. 95-602) have received widespread acclaim for attempting to correct service gaps by providing for follow-up and lifelong services not covered by other legislation. These legislative developments have begun to alter the existing patterns of economic maladjustment experienced by the handicapped.

Probably the most important of these developments has been the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142). Not since *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) has a court or congressional action created so much attention in educational circles or so much widespread speculation in the public arena as has Public Law 94-142. The law is sometimes referred to in professional parlance as "mainstreaming." It was to be fully implemented within school districts no later than the 1978-79 school year. The handicapped are expected to make adequate vocational adjustment as a result of their educational mainstreaming. Achievement of this

ambitious goal will require additional career education and its natural complement, career counseling.

The provision and integration of career education in grades K through 12 generally produce favorable and pervasive effects. Bonnet (1979), in a meta-evaluation study, synthesized the results of separate evaluations of 47 career education programs located all over the country. The evaluations demonstrate that these programs increase students' knowledge about careers, their ability to make decisions relative to careers, and most importantly, their initial adjustment to the world of work. The eventual effects of increased career education for the handicapped should be similar. Preliminary research (Beane and Zachmanoglou, 1979) appears to confirm this prospect.

School counselors, whose functions have traditionally been the provision of career education, the assessment of student's vocational potential, and the rendering of overall guidance services in the school system, must recognize their increasing responsibility (Humes, 1978). As stated in Hawaii's State Plan for a Comprehensive Guidance Program (1975), ". . . all students with the aid of school counselors should be able to assess career interests, career needs and life goals, career poten-

tials, and career opportunities and requirements, culminating in the formulation of realistic career plans" (p. 32). In spite of the immediate problems posed by counselors who lack the necessary training and experience in working with the handicapped, school counselors at all levels are clearly mandated to serve in this regard. However, career education and career counseling for the handicapped will be somewhat different from that aimed at the non-handicapped, and will require a diversified and modified system of service delivery.

### **Program Development**

*Vocational Evaluation.* Vocational evaluation is one of the keys to successful career education efforts with the handicapped. Prior to entry into a career education or vocational preparation program, each handicapped student's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social capabilities should be reviewed, and an assessment should be performed whenever such information is lacking or inadequate. In fact, P.L. 94-142 mandates that an individual educational plan (IEP) be made out for each handicapped student including, whenever possible, information on career education and/or vocational preparation based on sound, appropriate assessment procedures. However, because traditional evaluation approaches are, to say the least, limited in their usefulness with this population, some caution must be exercised. Extended time for and a comprehensive approach to evaluation are necessary to determine the abilities and needs of handicapped students so that a valid IEP can be formulated. Naturally, vocational assessment procedures should follow guidelines specified by the Department of Education in conjunction with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The interested reader can consult Guibaldi, Kehle and Murray (1979).

*Course Instruction.* Unlike vocational education, the goal of career education instruction is not to help the student acquire specific job-related skills. Hawaii's Career Development Continuum (1978) defines career education as a sequence of planned activities, beginning in the early elementary grades and extending into the adult years. It provides students with an awareness of the world of work and a broad orientation to various occupations existing in society. Hawaii's program provides guidance and counseling to aid in career decisionmaking and gives assistance in methods of securing jobs. The goal is for each student to acquire positive attitudes toward work. Wherever possible, with support services available as needed, handicapped students should be able to participate in such career education programs.

Once again, P.L. 94-142 mandates that the handicapped be educated in the "least restrictive" environment which is appropriate to their needs. In some cases this environment is represented by regular career education programs which have been heretofore inaccessible. However, for many handicapped students regular career education programs are somewhat inappropriate. The career preparation of handicapped individuals should help them to obtain their maximum potential for community living and working. Such programs must focus on the total constellation of career education needs of these individuals, and not only those needs specified by Hawaii's Career Development Continuum. Brolin (1978), in his curriculum guide, "Life-Centered Career Education: A Competency-Based Approach," categorizes such extended needs into three types—daily living, personal-social and occupational.

Specific vocational skills can be acquired by most, if not all, of the handicapped population under proper vocational education guidelines. Past research (Gardner, 1978) has certainly demonstrated the efficacy of the behavioral management and task analysis approach for developing such skills in the handicapped. However, neither sufficient occupational preparation nor general career information and guidance is enough for this population. Without the daily living and personal-social skills associated with "making it" in the world of work, the handicapped individual may still fail. Course instruction geared toward these irregular deficiencies must be established and integrated into the regular areas of career education such as career awareness and career exploration.

*Informational Support Services.* In the career education context informational support services usually consist of two types: career education resource centers and computer-assisted career information systems. The special needs of the handicapped should be considered when either type of informational support service is developed and implemented at the local school level. Career education resource centers should not only be architecturally accessible, but free of occupational stereotyping that also produces barriers for the handicapped. These centers must be free of stereotypical orientations which customarily exclude the handicapped from various occupations in the world of work. The handicapped, like the non-handicapped, should be exposed to the full range of employment possibilities. This will certainly serve to encourage handicapped students to think about their careers in terms of meeting their own needs and desires rather than merely choosing among limited fields presented at some schools. Phelps and Lutz (1977), in their book, "Career Exploration and Preparation for the Special Needs

Learner," describe strategies for making career information materials and resources more accessible to the handicapped.

In similar fashion, computer-assisted career information systems should be accessible and usable by all disability groups, regardless of functional limitations. It is heartening to note that Hawaii, as one of 14 states selected to receive a grant to aid in the development and implementation of a statewide computerized career information system, has taken the special needs of the handicapped into consideration in the initial demonstration phase.

### **Interagency Cooperation and Shared Responsibility**

In the 1960s, special education programs for handicapped students across the country were openly criticized because they were primarily teaching academic skills and not vocational skills. In response, special education and vocational rehabilitation set a precedence in joining forces to establish work-study programs for some handicapped high school students. Under this innovative plan mentally retarded students, beginning in their junior year, were involved in academic work, received occupational information, and had actual job experience and training in local businesses and industries. The overall result was generally better job success after graduation. A large proportion, however, still had considerable adjustment problems after leaving school.

If the career education needs of the handicapped are to be really met, then such cooperative efforts among agencies, organizations, business, industry, and parents must be forthcoming. Territorial rights, professional rivalries, jealousies, theoretical differences, and other problems should be put aside. Roles and responsibilities must be clarified

so that effective and efficient services are actually delivered. If the handicapped are to be given the opportunity for career education and career development, a cooperative effort must be maintained. For example, P.L. 94-142 especially allows for programs developed under its mandates to include individuals of ages 3 to 21 years, if consistent with state law. Extension of educational services to age 21 enables programs to furnish additional training to those needing it in cooperation with other agencies serving the handicapped, such as the Rehabilitation Services Administration, before the handicapped enter competitive or long-term sheltered employment.

At the federal level, an important breakthrough in cooperation occurred in October 1977. The commissioners of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped issued a memorandum of understanding recognizing that they have many common responsibilities to handicapped persons, and that:

"... education agencies are concerned with the overall life adjustment of handicapped young persons within their communities, including their ability to become employed. Vocational rehabilitation agencies are concerned with enabling handicapped individuals—particularly the severely disabled—to prepare for and engage in employment. These concerns are clearly compatible and every effort should be made to coordinate available services" (Council for Exceptional Children, 1977, p. 1).

In Hawaii, the State Plan for Special Education and Services was completed and adopted by the Board of Education in February 1975. This plan, which is to be utilized not only by management personnel of the Department of Education in making policy decisions to improve and expand special education in the state, but also by other public and private

agencies in coordinating the overall provision of special education services, clearly encourages interagency cooperation and shared responsibility.

### **Counselor Training**

To meet the career education needs of the handicapped, counselors must become competent in a number of areas through preservice or inservice training. Hosie (1979, pp. 271-272) lists some of the knowledge necessary for counselors to provide comprehensive services to this special population:

- *Federal and state legislation.* Guidelines and local policies relating to programs and services for the handicapped.
- *Rights of handicapped children and their parents.* The skills necessary to advise parents and enable them to exercise their rights.
- *State guidelines for classification.* Diagnostic tools and their limitations. The skills necessary to relate these to learning characteristics and the common elements of correction.
- *Informal assessment procedures.* The skills necessary to relate these to the special learning strategies of the handicapped.
- *Growth and development process.* Characteristics and impediments of the handicapped. The skills necessary to relate this knowledge to developmental learning tasks and strategies.
- *Characteristics and development of the learning disabled.* The skills necessary to diagnose why the individual is failing tasks and to change methods and objectives when necessary.
- *Sensory impairments, speech disorders and communication deficits.* Their effect on diagnosis and remediation. The skills necessary to overcome or lessen their effect in learning and counseling settings.
- *Input, structure and potential outcomes of the Individual Educational Program (IEP).* The skills necessary to consult and assist in their construction for the mainstreamed student.
- *Ability, learning rates and modes of learning of the handicapped.* The skills necessary to utilize these factors in recommending educational placements and environments.

- *Attitudinal biases of teachers and others.* The skills necessary to teach and consult with regular and special educators to produce a facilitating learning environment.
- *Learning disorders and the social and emotional behavior problems of handicapped students.* The skills necessary to instruct and consult with teachers, using behavior modification and management principles to enhance academic learning and social behavior.
- *Potential growth and development of the handicapped child.* Fears, concerns and needs of the parents. The skills necessary to consult, counsel and teach parents regarding methods to facilitate their child's academic and social development.
- *Characteristics of the handicapped related to employment skills, training programs, and potential occupational and educational opportunities.* The skills necessary to assist the individual in career decisionmaking and development.
- *Roles and skills of other personnel within and outside the institution.* The skills necessary to refer them or work with them to enhance the learning and development of the handicapped individual.

As Westcott and Feldman point out in their study, "Impact of P.L. 94-142 on Hawaii's School Counselors," counselors in the field must request assistance in obtaining these competencies. University-based counselor education programs and state department of education inservice training programs are likely sources. Unfortunately, many of the training materials currently produced through United States Office of Education grants are for regular and special education classroom teachers. These materials are limited mostly to the mainstreaming concept, although certain modules are applicable to the counselor's plight. For example, the Technical Education Research Center at Cambridge, Massachusetts has developed a publication entitled: "Guidance, Counseling and Support Services for High School Students with Physical Disabilities" (1977).



This training package provides a comprehensive treatment of handicapping conditions, career development and career guidance, vocational assessment, psychometric testing, and job placement services for the school-aged handicapped. A second publication, "Programming for Handicapped Students at the Secondary Level: Responding to Public Laws" (Moore and Engleman, 1977), is also a useful training resource for counselors. It includes sections on vocational evaluation, vocational training, adopted instructional materials and equipment, and job placement and follow-up services, as well as the individual education program required by P.L. 94-142.

At the preservice level there exist few, if any, specific training programs for counselors who work with the school-aged handicapped. Of course, more than 100 rehabilitation counselor training programs exist across the country which train counselors to work with the handicapped. But these programs almost exclusively deal with the adult handicapped and not with the personal, social and vocational needs of the school-aged handicapped. Perhaps what is needed is a new counseling specialty. This new specialty in the counseling field could incorporate elements of rehabilitation and school counseling with certain aspects of special education added on. Flugman, Goldman and Katz (1979) report on the feasibility of such a preservice counselor training specialty.

### Conclusion

As the vocational mainstreaming of the handicapped continues to be encouraged by legislative fiat, career education and career counseling services to this population grows in importance. School counselors are expected to play key roles in this regard. However, career education and career counseling for the handi-

capped will be somewhat different from that aimed at the non-handicapped, and will require a diversified and modified system of service delivery. Programs must be developed which improve the vocational evaluation process, modify course instruction, and take into consideration the special needs of the handicapped in the delivery of informational support services. Interagency cooperation and shared responsibility must be fostered and improved. And, finally, counselor preservice and inservice training programs must be developed and implemented. Only after these initiatives have been undertaken will the handicapped be able to achieve vocational normalization.

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