



SELF-DETERMINATION

The Concept Powering Self-Directed Employment Practices

Self-determination is the most important skill that programs must teach (Ward, 1996). Secondary educational and supported employment programs, which typically have not taught self-determination skills (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997), must now infuse self-determination methods into their daily operations so that people with disabilities can learn these crucial skills (Browning, 1997; Halloran, 1993; West, 1995). The self-directed employment questions posed in Chapter 1 represent operational self-determination concepts. The answers to these questions tracked two types of changes—the noticeable evolution in practice and the switch to self-determination oriented practices in Phase Three.

Phase One methodology got people community jobs, but individuals with disabilities made no decisions—they simply went where they were told. These practices did not teach or provide opportunities for individuals to develop their self-determination skills. Phase Two procedures, which initiated staff-directed job match procedures, produced better outcomes than Phase One methods (McDonnell et al., 1989),

but the individuals still did not make the decisions. In Phase Three, practices evolved so that individuals with disabilities made their own employment decisions. Initial results indicate that this approach produces better results than Phase Two procedures (Martin et al., 2002). Programs that utilize Phase Three methods directly teach self-determination skills and provide opportunities for individuals to learn and practice these empowering behaviors.

Each self-directed employment question from Chapter 1 operationalized one or more self-determination concepts. Table 2.1 shows the self-determination concepts represented by each question. Two address self-awareness issues: choice and learning about one's strengths and weaknesses. The others focus on self-advocacy, decision making, self-evaluation, adjustment, and independent performance factors. Together, these self-determination concepts power Phase Three self-directed employment practices.

This chapter examines self-determination, reviews two self-determination strands, compares five self-determination instructional mod-

Table 2.1. Self-directed employment questions and corresponding self-determination concepts

Self-directed employment questions	Self-determination concept
What are the worker's job, task, and characteristic preferences and interests?	Self-awareness
What are the worker's skills and limits?	Self-awareness
Does the available job match the worker's preferences?	Decision making Self-evaluation
Does the available job match the worker's skills and limits?	Decision making Self-evaluation
What job accommodations are needed?	Decision making Self-evaluation
Can the worker do the job?	Decision making Self-evaluation
How does the worker do the job?	Decision making Independent performance (IP) Self-evaluation
What are the worker's problems and how are they solved?	Adjustment Decision making IP Self-evaluation
Who establishes the on-the-job support network?	Self-advocacy
Who determines if the worker should leave this job?	Adjustment Decision making Self-advocacy

els, shows that the self-determination components common to all the models are the same factors powering Phase Three self-directed employment practice, and provides examples of how self-determination concepts affect people with and without disabilities.

CONCEPT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

Discussions about self-determination date back several hundred years and lead to a macro- and micro-level understanding of this concept. The philosopher John Locke stated in 1715 that “the idea of men and self-determination appear to be connected” and that “men can determine themselves” (p. 293). Individual conceptualizations of self-determination grew into ideas of collective self-government. Since the days of the American Revolution, self-determination has served as a central concept in American ideology (Unterberger, 1996). The concept of self-determination has enabled high school students with disabilities to

participate in decisions that affect their lives (Ward & Kohler, 1996) and adults with disabilities to assume financial control for the purchase of services from social service agencies (Pennell, 2001).

Individual Capacity for Self-Determination

Capacity for self-determined behavior derives from each person's social life, the sociopolitical process affecting each person's opportunity for self-direction, and three person-specific factors (Mithaug, 1996). First, “self-knowledge and self-awareness of personal needs, interests, and abilities” vary from person to person and affect each person's ability to seize opportunities to achieve goals that match his or her self-understanding. Second, the capacity for self-determination varies by the degree that an individual learns and manages his or her skills and motivation to get what he or she wants out of life. Third, the degree of access to personal, social, economic, and technical resources and supports either hinders or facilitates each person's capacity to

achieve his or her self-selected goals. These three factors interact with each other, and each may be increased through specific instruction, opportunities, and supports. The larger society (macro-level) in which each person lives interacts with each individual's unique (micro-level) capacity to become and act self-determined.

Macro- and Micro-Levels of Self-Determination

Self-determination exists at macro- and micro-levels. *Macro-level self-determination* "refers to the right of a people to determine their own political destiny" (Unterberger, 1996, p. 926). Self-determination empowers societies and groups of people to take control of their own affairs and direct their own future. The American Revolution represents the first "assertion of the right of national and democratic self-determination in the history of the world" (Unterberger, 1996, p. 927). President Woodrow Wilson championed the right of self-determination to bring peace to Europe following the end of World War I (*Wilson's Address*, 1918). In contrast, societies that devalue groups of people and keep them in subservient roles produce individuals who lack the skills and attitudes for self-direction and goal-oriented behavior (Gilson & Tulser, 1997). Dictatorial governments that control all decision making, for example, never allow their citizens to learn and then use the self-determination skills needed for group goal-directed behavior and effective self-government. Many countries that attempt to become democratic struggle with self-government and occasionally lapse back into their previous, yet familiar dictatorial ways, in which the citizens are told what to do and how to do it. Indigenous Americans today still struggle with self-determination in educational systems (Snyder-Joy, 1992) and local, state, and federal government after not being allowed to make their own societal decisions for many generations (Smith, 1992).

Micro-level self-determination affects the individual. Self-determined individuals choose their own goals and attempt to attain their goals while using supports they have chosen (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Martin et al., 1994). Conversely, many people with disabilities—who may always have been told where to go, what to do, how they

did, and what they have to do next—lack the level of self-determination needed to plan and achieve their desired dreams (Bodgan, 1996). These individuals need school transition and employment programs that embrace a self-determination philosophy and methods, so that they can learn and apply their self-determination skills (Mittler, 1995).

Increasing numbers of people with disabilities now realize that they need to advocate for themselves in order to achieve community and individual goals (Miller & Keys, 1996; Ward, 1996). Dudley noticed this change:

Some labeled people are ready to break out of traditional consumer roles that characterize them as passive recipients of services. In place of these roles, they wish to take on new roles that involve more responsibility and risk-taking. These new roles can be "empowering" because they result in people assuming more control over their lives. (1997, p. 162)

These empowering behaviors enable individuals to organize into advocacy groups, which seek empathetic understanding and desired societal change (Rogovsky, 1997; Wilson, 1997).

An Applied Example In 1996, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded pilot programs nationwide to change the delivery system for adults with developmental disabilities. These pilot sites collaboratively created a service support system that simultaneously facilitated political self-determination and supported individuals' self-directed lifestyle decision making on the basis of each person's self-knowledge of preferences (Pennell, 2001). The change in the social service system (on the macro level) enabled individuals (on the micro level) to shift decision-making power from the existing social service structure to the person. In these national pilot programs, individuals choose how they will live and the supports they will use to attain their goals. This macro-level system reform effort provides individuals with disabilities with the skills and information needed to make their own major life decisions. The pilot programs changed their expectations and, by so doing, provided the opportunity for individuals to increase their self-determination capacity. Pennell (2001) believed that the macro-level changes enabled self-determined actions so that individuals would be able to do the following:

- Freely choose family and friends, and plan a life with needed supports and control of their own service dollars (rather than purchase a preplanned program from the current system)
- Control their own service dollars to purchase the desired level of support
- Arrange their own supports

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation projects had such an effect that many service providers, family members, and adults with disabilities now view self-determination as simply the means to control services. To these people, *self-determination* means that control over the services and supports that are offered to people with developmental disabilities should rest with the person receiving those services (Moseley, 1999). Clearly, controlling one's services represents a self-determined action or behavior, but self-determination manifests itself through more than just control of services.

SELF-DETERMINATION POLICY INITIATIVES AND MANDATES

A fundamental right of all people is the right to self-determination (United Nations, 1997). The National Agenda for Achieving Better Results for Children and Youth with Disabilities included this recognition in its call for a vision of education that “begins with images of children and youth with disabilities having access to supports and services that leads to self-actualization, self-determination, and independence” (as cited by Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994, p. 3). International and national leaders include self-determination concepts in policies and laws. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), advocated that all people should have the right to self-determination and that all countries participating in the UN should promote and respect that right (United Nations, 1997).

United States and United Kingdom Government Policies

Government policies in the United States and the United Kingdom include self-determination outcomes and practices in disability legislation and

regulations. The United States' Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (PL 102-569) “signaled a new era in disability service delivery and, indeed, in the way in which disability itself is viewed by society” (Wehmeyer & West, 1995, p. 277). The act indicates that people with disabilities should enjoy the rights to make choices and to enjoy self-determination. The goals of the United States, therefore, include providing individuals with the tools necessary to make informed choices and decisions and to become self-determined.

The 1991 and 1997 reauthorizations of the United States' IDEA (PL 102-119 and PL 105-17) require that school transition services be outcome-oriented; that is, current educational activities must focus on students' preferred post-school future. The law prescribed specific student-level self-determined activities, and its regulations mandated that if students' transition issues are going to be discussed, students must be invited to participate. More important, perhaps, is that decisions made about any student's transition activities must reflect that student's preferences and interests.

The United Kingdom's *Special Education Needs: Code of Practice* (1997) likewise mandated that self-determined student behaviors be present in the transition plan. The code required schools to answer these and other questions in their transition plans:

- “What information do young people need in order to make informed choices?”
- “How can young people be encouraged to contribute to their own transition plan and make positive decisions about their future?”
- “What are the young person's hopes and aspirations for the future, and how can these be met?” (*Special Education Needs: Code of Practice*, 1997, p. 118)

Special education laws in both the United States and the United Kingdom agree that students need to learn several self-determination behaviors prior to their transition plan meeting. Schools must teach students these behaviors. Student preferences and interests must guide the transition process. Mithaug, Wolman, and Campeau poignantly summarized these developments by saying “for the first time, the mandated

condition is for student preferences to drive service delivery” (1992, p. 7).

To meet student involvement mandates in educational planning, students must learn self-determination skills (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). The intent of both the American and the British laws are that students become equal players in the educational planning and implementation process. To do this, students need to become self-determined (Wehmeyer et al., 1998).

The Division on Career Development and Transition Policy Statement

The Council for Exceptional Children’s Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) published a self-determination transition policy statement. In this position statement, Field and colleagues wrote that self-determination is the transition foundation:

We strongly believe that self-determination oriented instruction during the elementary and secondary transition years prepares all students for a more satisfying and fulfilling adult life. There is substantial evidence that encouraging self-determination for all youth could help them be more successful in their educational programs as well as helping them to develop lifelong success skills. (1998b, p. 118)

This policy reaffirms an earlier DCDT transition policy statement in which Halpern (1994) said that an emerging component of transition must be “a sense of student empowerment which eventually enhances student self-determination within the transition planning process. . .” (p. 118).

Association for Persons in Supported Employment Guidelines

The Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) advocated for self-determination programs in its *Ethical Guidelines for Professionals in Supported Employment* (DiLeo et al., 1996). The ethical foundation of this organization demands that professionals

- Provide opportunities for each person to pursue his or her own career path

- Acknowledge each individual’s unique set of interests, preferences, and aptitudes
- Provide options so that individuals may make informed choices
- Believe that individuals with disabilities are the best source of personal interests, preferences, skills, aptitudes, and life goals

Many have called for the infusion of self-determination practices in supported employment programs, but few self-determination supported employment practices exist (Bodgan, 1996; Everson, 1996; Everson & Reid, 1997; Pumpian et al., 1997; Rusch & Hughes, 1989).

SELF-DETERMINATION STRANDS

Discussions of self-determination and its importance to people with disabilities date back to the early 1970s. In this context, *self-determination* is not a trait or characteristic of individuals. It consists of a set of skills that are constantly being taught, learned, applied, and adapted within and across settings (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Nowak, Laitinen, Stowitschek, & Affleck, 1995; Wehmeyer, 1999). Two major definitional strands emerge from these works: 1) the choice strand and 2) the goal setting and attainment strand.

Choice Strand

Nirje (1972) considered choice important from a disability rights perspective. Deci and Ryan (1985) discussed choice from a psychological motivational framework. Wehmeyer (1992) and Schloss, Alper, and Jayne (1994) stressed the human rights dynamic within a psychological construct perspective. Several others considered the intersection between self-determination and choice as well (see Table 2.2).

Vocational Choice Policies and legislation define vocational choice making by individuals with cognitive disabilities as a fundamental, international right. Article 23 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declared that everyone has the right to employment choices. The United States’ Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (PL 102-569) required that informed choice and self-

Table 2.2. Definitions of self-determination in the choice strand

Source	Definition
Nirje (1972)	Self-determination is a critical component of the normalization principle. Choices, wishes, and aspirations of people with disabilities must be taken into consideration in actions affecting them.
Deci and Ryan (1985)	Self-determination is the capacity of individuals to choose and then have these choices be the driving force behind their action. Choice initiates the self-determination process.
Williams (1990)	We already know what self-determination means—it is just a \$10 word for choice.
Wehmeyer (1992, 1996)	Self-determination refers to the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in one's own life and to make choices regarding one's actions free from undue external influence.
Schloss et al. (1994)	Self-determination is a person's capacity to choose and to have those choices be the determinants of one's actions.

determination become central principles that U.S. employment programs follow. Policymakers in the United Kingdom established vocational choice making and self-advocacy as fundamental practices (Stalker & Harris, 1998; Wood & Trickey, 1996). The European Community wants the “widest possible choices of personally appropriate opportunities” to be provided as people with disabilities make the transition into the mainstream workforce (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 1986).

Choice Making Denied These choice policy mandates stem from a history of abuse. Historically, people with cognitive disabilities have not been allowed to choose their own jobs because “employment programs unknowingly suspend basic employment rights that nonhandicapped workers enjoy” (Martin & Mithaug, 1990, p. 87). Just as experts once believed individuals with disabilities would not benefit from inclusive education or be able to work productively in competitive community-based employment, many failed to recognize the individual's right to control his or her own life through decision making, and self-advocacy (Inge & Tilson, 1997; Johnson, McGrew, Bloomberg, Bruininks, & Lin, 1997; Neumayer & Bleasdale, 1996).

Individuals with disabilities often had little to say about the jobs they found through school-based transition programs or adult agency-supported employment programs (Ficker-Terrill & Rowitz, 1991). The assessment process that schools and vocational programs used to match interests did not produce valid results (Agran & Morgan, 1991). The one-shot vocational interest and aptitude tests, checklists, and other forms that give cut-off scores for acceptable and un-

acceptable job placements do not work (Parker, Szymanski, & Hanley-Maxwell, 1989). The assessment process *was* systematic, objective, and replicable; however, it is invalid because the person actually is not making an informed choice (Beyer & Kilsby, 1997; Menchetti & Flynn, 1990; Parent, 1996). Even the person-centered planning process, which began as a means to listen to what people with developmental disabilities wanted, often does not facilitate real individual choice making because others typically make the decisions (O'Brien et al., 1997). Edgerton said,

Individual choice among available options is essential if there is to be any meaningful improvement in peoples' lives, we must assure that it is persons with mental retardation who choose what they want, not we who choose for them. And if their choices do not invariably bring them a greater sense of well being, we should not then impose our choices on them. They, like the rest of us, should have the right to strive for satisfaction in life in their own way. And we must understand that some of them, like the rest of us, will be more successful than others. (1990, p. 158)

The procedures in Chapters 4–9 of this book provide teachers and employment staff the methods that empower individuals to make their own choices.

Goal Setting and Attainment Strand

The process of achieving goals that satisfy needs and match interests define this strand (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000). This understanding emerged from several

sources, including an analysis of the business and sport psychology “success” literature, developments within the independent living movement, an understanding of the instructional power of self-control and goal-setting strategies to assist in skill acquisition and generalization, and follow-up studies and interviews with individuals with disabilities (Mithaug, Martin, & Agran, 1987). These definitions in this strand are included in Table 2.3.

Toward a Unifying Understanding

Much of what we know about self-determination comes from the effort to teach these skills (Eisenman, 2001). Martin and Huber Marshall (1995) developed their self-determination curriculum on a framework provided by the earlier Adaptability Model (Mithaug et al., 1987). They added to this framework additional constructs discovered through an extensive literature search, interviews, and surveys of parents, professionals, and adults with disabilities. Together, they produced a comprehensive list of 37 self-determination concepts grouped into seven constructs: 1) self-awareness, 2) self-advocacy, 3) self-efficacy, 4) decision making, 5) independent

performance, 6) self-evaluation, and 7) adjustment. From these, Martin and Huber Marshall (1995) created their self-determination curriculum.

Wehmeyer (1992); Field and Hoffman (1994); Serna and Lau-Smith (1995); and Mithaug, Wehmeyer, Agran, Martin, and Palmer (1998) followed similar procedures in creating their definitions by building their definitions from their identified constructs. For example, Wehmeyer, Kelchner, and Richards summarized their development efforts by saying

In operational terms, self-determined actions reflect four essential characteristics: autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization. These four essential characteristics emerge as individuals acquire component elements of self-determination, including choice and decision-making, problem-solving, goal setting, and attainment skills; internal locus of control orientations; positive self-efficacy and outcome expectancies; and self-knowledge and understanding. (1996, p. 632)

When laid side by side, the choice strand and the goal setting and attainment strand merge. Table 2.4 presents the constructs of five of the

Table 2.3. Definitions of self-determination in the goal and attainment strand

Source	Definition
Ward (1988)	Self-determination is the attitude and ability that lead individuals to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative in achieving those goals.
Martin, Huber Marshall, and Maxson (1993)	Self-determined individuals know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs, self-determined individuals set goals, then they doggedly pursue <i>their</i> goals. This involves asserting <i>their</i> presence, making <i>their</i> needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting <i>their</i> goals, adjusting <i>their</i> performance as needed, and creating unique approaches to solve problems.
Wolman, Campeau, DuBois, Mithaug, and Stolarski (1994)	Self-determined people know and can express their own needs, interests, and abilities. They set appropriate goals, make choices, and plans in pursuit of their goals, and make adjustments as needed to achieve their goals.
Field and Hoffman (1994, 1995)	Self-determination is a person’s ability to define and achieve goals from a base of knowing and valuing oneself.
Serna and Lau-Smith (1995)	Self-determination refers to a person’s awareness of his or her strengths and weaknesses, his or her ability to set goals and make choices, to be assertive, and to interact with others in a socially competent manner. The outcome is a person who is able to obtain his or her own goals without infringing on the rights, responsibilities, and goals of others.
Mithaug, Wehmeyer, Agran, Martin, and Palmer (1998)	Self-determination is the repeated use of skills necessary to act on the environment in order to attain goals that satisfy self-defined needs and interests.
Wehmeyer et al. (2000)	People who are self-determined will regulate their own problem solving to attain their own goals.

Table 2.4. Self-determination concepts in the choice strand, keyed to Martin and Huber Marshall's conceptualization (1995)

	Martin and Huber Marshall (1995)	Field and Hoffman (1994)	Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes (1998)	Serna and Lau-Smith (1995) (from their self-determination skills list)	Mithaug, Wehmeyer, Agran, Martin, and Palmer (1998)
<i>Self-awareness</i>		<i>Know yourself</i>	<i>Choice making</i>	not present in model	Identify interests and preferences
Identify needs		Dream	Selecting between alternatives based on individual preferences		
Identify interests		Know strengths, weaknesses, needs, and preferences			
Identify and understand strengths		Know options	<i>Self-awareness and self-knowledge</i>		
Identify and understand limitations		Decide what's important			
Identify own values		<i>Value yourself</i>			
		Accept self			
		Respect one's own rights and duties			
<i>Self-advocacy</i>		not present in model	not present in model	not present in model	<i>Self-advocacy instruction</i>
Assertively state wants					
Assertively state needs					
Determine support needs					
Pursue needed support					
Obtain and evaluate needed support					
Conduct own affairs					
<i>Self-efficacy</i>		not present in model		not present in model	not present in model
Expects to obtain goals			<i>Positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy</i>		
<i>Decision making</i>		<i>Plan</i>	<i>Decision making</i>	<i>Self-direction skills</i>	<i>Take action</i>
Assess situational demands		Set goals	<i>Problem solving</i>	Action planning	Determine opportunities and barriers
Set goals		Plan actions to meet those goals	<i>Goal setting and attainment</i>	Goal setting	Set goals
Set standards		Anticipate results		Goal planning	Determine a plan of action
Identify information needed to make decisions		Be creative		Self-management	Identify instructional strategies
Consider past solutions for new situations		Visually rehearse		Evaluating outcomes	Set goals
Generate new, creative solutions					Determine focus of action
Consider options					Prioritize learning needs
Choose best option					
Develop a plan					

<i>Independent performance</i> Initiate tasks on time Complete tasks on time Use self-management strategies Perform tasks to standard Follow through on own plan	<i>Act</i> Take risks Communicate Access resources and support Negotiate Deal with conflicts and criticism Be persistent <i>Experience outcomes and learn</i> Compare outcome to expected outcome Compare performance to expected performance	<i>Independence, risk taking, and safety skills</i> <i>Self-instruction skills</i>	<i>Persistence and risk taking</i> Persistence through problem solving Risk taking through decision making	<i>Set schedule</i> <i>Self-directed learning</i>
<i>Self-evaluation</i> monitor task performance Compare performance to standard Evaluate effectiveness of self-management strategies Determine if plan is completed and goal met	<i>Self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement</i> Compare outcome to expected outcome Compare performance to expected performance	<i>Self-evaluation</i> Evaluating present skills Evaluating skills needed for future goals	<i>Self-regulation</i> Self-monitor Evaluate progress Compare progress Decide if goal is achieved	
<i>Adjustment</i> Change goals Change standards Change plan Change strategies Change support Persistently adjust not present in model	<i>Experience outcomes and learn</i> Make adjustments	not present in model	not present in model Revise goal if necessary Revise action if necessary Revise action plan if necessary	
<i>Value yourself</i> Accept and value yourself Admire strengths that come from uniqueness Recognize and respect rights and responsibilities Take care of yourself	<i>Internal locus of control</i>	<i>Social skills</i> Giving positive feedback Giving criticism Accepting criticism Resisting peer pressure Negotiation Following instruction Conversation Problem solving	not present in model	

self-determination definitions aligned to the Martin and Huber Marshall (1995) conceptualization. Each of the definitional schemes included several of the constructs identified by Martin and Huber Marshall. All but one contains a construct that Martin and Huber Marshall did not identify. Comparisons of these constructs find that

- Four of the five models included self-awareness, with two including interests and limitations and two only focusing upon preferences.
- Out of the five models, Martin and Huber Marshall solely considered self-advocacy a self-determination construct. Later, Wehmeyer and colleagues extended this belief and concluded that individuals with disabilities “need to learn how to advocate for their own needs and interests by taking action to change circumstances that pose obstacles to their pursuits” (Wehmeyer et al., 2000, p. 441).
- Two of the five included self-efficacy.
- All five considered decision making a needed construct.
- All five included independent performance constructs, often emphasizing the use of self-management strategies.
- All five had self-evaluation as an essential self-determination concept.
- Three included adjustment components.

All four of the models included constructs that Martin and Huber Marshall did not. The analysis of these show

- Field and Hoffman and Wehmeyer et al. included one construct that Martin and Huber Marshall did not address. Field and Hoffman had “valuing yourself” as a major construct. Likewise, Wehmeyer et al. included a locus of control construct.
- Serna and Lau-Smith’s model highlighted several constructs no other model included: prerequisite social skills, networking skills, and collaboration skills.

The Serna and Lau-Smith model matches the Martin and Huber Marshall model on three out of seven (43%) self-determination constructs. Both the Field and Hoffman and Wehmeyer et al. models match the Martin and Huber Marshall’s

conceptualization on five out of seven (71% agreement) concepts, and the Mithaug and colleagues (1998) Self-Determination Learning Model matches six out of seven (86%) concepts.

Using Martin and Huber Marshall’s definitional framework, these models agreed at least once that self-determination consists of seven constructs. These are

- Self-advocacy
- Self-awareness
- Self-efficacy
- Decision making
- Independent performance
- Self-evaluation
- Adjustment

These self-determination concepts power the Self-Directed Employment procedures detailed in Chapters 4–9.

STUDIES ON SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is the most important factor for a person with disabilities to achieve (Nirje, 1972). Self-determination is the ultimate goal of education (Halloran, 1993). Ward (1988) said that it is critical for individuals with disabilities to become self-determined. Why do these policy leaders demand in such strong language that self-determination is so important? Studies of individuals who were peak performers and studies of individuals with disabilities illustrate the importance of these concepts. As you read these summaries, note the match between the identified skills and seven self-determination constructs from the previous section.

Results from the Study of Peak Performers

Since the 1940s, considerable research on peak performers in the business and sport communities reached the same conclusion. Peak performers set goals, believe they can accomplish their goals, develop plans, initiate action on that plan, evaluate outcomes, make adjustments, and advocate for their own interests. Numerous sources result in these findings.

The Garfield Study Garfield (1986) identified the skills and strategies of more than 500 high achievers and compared them across business, science, sports, and the arts. Amongst other factors, he found

- Peak performers' decisions included 1) choosing a mission that leads to action; 2) envisioning and communicating a clear mission; and 3) following with an action plan of specific goals and benchmarks to evaluate the timing, quality, and quantity of the results. Peak performers follow with action plans that include goals, resource development, and timelines.
- Peak performers believed they could accomplish their goals. They had the ability to "see oneself as the originator of actions in one's life . . . [viewing] events in life as opportunities for taking action and [seeing] themselves as the agents who must precipitate action" (Garfield, 1986, p. 141).
- Peak performers self-evaluated; that is, they used their ability to seek out feedback and used the feedback positively to adjust subsequent performance.
- Peak performers used self-control strategies. For instance, they rehearsed by making mental images of the roles they would play in important events.
- Peak performers had the ability to adapt.

Garfield's characteristics also differentiated between adjustments that keep one on course and major changes that lead to new plans, goals, or even missions.

Garfield's peak performers distinguished themselves by

1. Defining and pursuing missions that motivate
2. Developing plans and engaging in purposeful activities directed toward achieving goals that contribute to the mission
3. Engaging in self-observation and effective thinking, which assures maximum performance
4. Correcting and adjusting activities to remain on the critical path to the goal
5. Anticipating and adapting to major change while maintaining momentum within an overall game plan

The Gallup Study Gallup and Gallup (1986) described the ability of top performers to overcome adverse conditions and to learn from mistakes. Successful people ". . . tend to be realistic about their talents and their abilities as well as about their weaknesses. So they are in a position to learn from their mistakes, even as they *expect* to reach their goals" (Gallup & Gallup, 1986, p. 81).

The Robbins Formula Anthony Robbins (1997) wrote that successful people follow a consistent path. The path begins by knowing what one wants.

If you look at successful people, you'll find they followed these steps. They started with a target, because you can't hit one if you don't have one. They took action, because just knowing isn't enough. They have the ability to read others, to know what response they were getting. And they kept adapting, kept adjusting, kept changing their behavior until they found what worked. (Robbins, 1997, p. 12)

Results from Studies of People with Disabilities

Successful people set goals, develop plans, initiate action on that plan, evaluate outcomes, and make adjustments. But do individuals with disabilities have these skills? Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1992) interviewed a group of adults with learning disabilities. Much to their credit, Gerber and associates asked different questions than previous follow-up studies. They found out, among other things, that successful individuals with learning disabilities had

- A desire to succeed
- Well thought-out goals
- Persistence
- A social support network that facilitated their success

These researchers concluded that the successful individuals with disabilities wanted to succeed, set achievable goals, and confronted their learning disabilities. One participant in their survey said, "Successful people have a plan. You have to have a plan, goals, strategy, otherwise you are flying through the clouds and then you hit the mountain" (Gerber et al., 1992, p. 480).

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) also conducted a follow-up study of former high-school youth with mental retardation or learning disabilities. They collected data regarding each person's level of self-determination before graduation and again one year after graduation. The people who were more self-determined as students had more positive adult outcomes, including being employed at a higher rate and earning more per hour than peers who were not as self-determined.

SUMMARY

Self-determination has become an educational, vocational, and major human rights issue. Individual self-determination competency is a function of the person's skill level and the

opportunities that he or she has had in which to learn and practice those skills. The operationalized components of most contemporary self-determination models in the disability literature agree on seven major constructs: self-awareness, self-efficacy, decision making, self-advocacy, independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustment.

The time has come to teach self-determination behaviors to individuals with disabilities and to provide opportunities to master self-determination skills. To do this, self-determination practices must be infused into educational transition practices and adult agency supported employment programs. The purpose of the next seven chapters is to describe the steps for infusing self-determination concepts into existing transition vocational and supported employment programs.