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## 1975 DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURE AND THE CAREER EDUCATION MOVEMENT

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In January of 1971, U.S. educators experienced the equivalent of a shock wave which was generated by a speech delivered in Houston, Texas. On that date, the then U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland, challenged members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in a widely quoted address, to disregard their outmoded concept of general education which offered students, in his words, only "irrelevant general education pap" in favor of what he described as a refurbished version of vocational education, labeled "Career Education" (Marland, 1971). Time has lessened the impact of that speech and all too often without any apparent corrective action being taken relative to the charges made. Whether significant reorganization of public education will eventually emerge in response remains to be seen.

In retrospect, it is obvious that Dr. Marland's description of career education, which he then and later steadfastly refused to define with any degree of specificity, offered nothing new or particularly innovative in the eyes of many progressive educators. It was his unabashed and searing condemnation of the current system of public education which attracted attention. His unswerving commitment to redirecting the aim of the USOE program toward making public education responsive to the needs of all students created a near sensation. It is interesting to note that among the countless hundreds of papers written on career education in the intervening five years an amazing number refer to Sidney P. Marland as the founder of the career education movement and the above meeting as the birthdate and place.

Let us not quarrel with anniversary dates or discredit claims of originators, but the passing years have revealed some fundamental problems relative to the concept which have required considerable soul searching and investigation. Needed revisions have been accomplished, but the greatest damage done on that historic occasion was in encouraging the education profession to regard career education and vocational education as synonymous terms. Whether this is intentional or

merely an effort to refurbish the often maligned image of Vocational Education is not known; but in the opinion of many, much time will be required to correct this unfortunate error. My remarks are not going to be an attempt to denounce career education or to advance the merits of Vocational Education. Both are of the utmost importance to the future of this nation and deserve full support. But the great potential of one and the specific limitations of the other must be understood if the final prototype of an educational system, designed to withstand the test of a rapidly changing socio-economic environment even now overwhelming us, can emerge and crystallize. These programs are mutually dependent.

Whether Dr. Marland's statement or the lack of adequate public funding to support the newly advocated career education program caused Vocational Educational leaders to move into the vanguard cannot be discerned at this point. Suffice it to say that Vocational Education funds and personnel in the main were utilized to introduce the fledgling career education program. Without any attempt to analyze motives or to justify decisions, it may be noted that Vocational Education leaders showed an amazing desire to assume not only the leadership but also the administrative responsibility for the entire career education movement. This, in my opinion, was most unfortunate as was the official move by the AVA leadership in the 1971 Portland Convention to bring career education under the administrative mantle of Vocational Education (AVA, 1972). History may some day record that the new cause was set back many years by this imperialistic urge toward expansion. Not only were Vocational Educators unprepared financially, or by training, to assume direction of this movement, but the attempts to do so bruised the egos of many non-vocational educators who consequently resisted the effort by a show of indifference which was far more damaging than any obvious attack could have been.

The truth of the matter, then and now, is that career education and Vocational Education are not synonymous terms. Far from it. If career education is ever to achieve its rightful place in our educational system, it must assume responsibility for revamping the total curriculum of the public schools, grades K through 14, with implications for the remaining years in the lifetime of the student. It is and must be recognized as a coordinating force which pulls together all the varied threads which collectively constitute the school curriculum. It is the melting together of all the facets and entities of the instructional program toward the end that all secondary level graduates emerge with their feet firmly planted on the rungs of a career ladder and their education sights zeroed in on a career goal within the reach of their intellectual and physical capabilities. Career education is concerned with careers and not just occupations. Vocational Education, on the other hand, is a single part of the total spectrum which assists and prepares the student to make the necessary decisions and to acquire the skills and understandings essential for entry and advancement in a chosen occupation. Without a strong Vocational Education segment, career education is an empty dream leading nowhere. Without the direction and support of career education planning and coordination, Vocational Education faces slow and difficult progress against the academic currents.

In spite of a proud heritage of instructional excellence, Agricultural Education practitioners have been unable to ignore the allure of the career education movement. Time will tell whether this involvement has been rewarding or distracting, but in some instances there is little doubt that Vocational Agriculture teachers would have been well advised to concentrate their efforts on the continuation of an already well-proved program. In many instances, these teachers have redirected their efforts from the secondary school level to the middle school level, and in more than one instance to the elementary grade level. They have usually justified such moves by reporting that younger children enjoyed instruction in agriculture and responded positively to problem-oriented teaching. It has often been pointed out that career education objectives at the early adolescent age level emphasize career exploration; and does not Vocational Agriculture instruction provide such a setting? Of course it can, and when it is done by good teachers youngsters will usually respond readily and appreciatively.

Teachers and their supervisors interested in exploratory programs in agriculture often overlook entirely the fact that such exploration is usually limited to the single area of agricultural occupations with teaching procedures reflecting the typical Vocational Education format. Career education theorists, on the other hand, insist that exploration at the middle school age level should involve many different careers selected from all across the occupational spectrum. Such leaders also insist that Vocational Education generally is not appropriate for youth of this age, and this is especially true when the instructional emphasis is on specific job preparation. Guidance counselors, quite properly, oppose any effort to lead youth to make career choices at such an early age. Certainly, to force them into a limited area of choice by restricted exposure is a highly questionable practice.

Teachers should not be held solely responsible for this movement of Vocational Agriculture instruction for youth of less than secondary school age. Supervisors, curriculum specialists, and, obviously, teacher educators have encouraged and supported them toward this end. Perhaps the added numbers tend to compensate for reduced enrollment reported in the traditional production agriculture courses at the secondary school level. Unfortunately, whether intended or not, the resulting reduction in available teaching manpower because of demands for middle grade classes has caused a neglect of the badly needed post-secondary and adult farmer instructional effort. The loss of prestige to the Vocational Agriculture cause, resulting from the reduced post-secondary and adult class enrollment, is changing and ultimately may undermine, the long-time nationwide support for the Vocational Agriculture instructional program which was truly vocationally oriented.

Vocational Agriculture teachers have earned a reputation for being skillful teachers, and they well deserve this recognition. In the face of declining numbers of young qualified teachers entering the profession, there is no reason to believe that adequate replacements will become available to fill the jobs opened up by the escalating demands for middle school and elementary grade teachers of agriculture. And

yet, if equally good teachers are to be made available to all classes of this age level, the number of teachers needed will certainly increase by three or four times. There is no way to supply such a demand, and the result of any attempt to recruit non-professionally trained personnel would be chaotic. The lack of Vocational Education funds to finance such expansion of Vocational Agriculture teaching personnel should not be overlooked. The answer seems clear. Vocational Agriculture instruction for occupational competency must be restricted to the secondary, post-secondary, and adult groups if the quality of the program is to be maintained and career education is truly to be served.

None of the foregoing should be construed to mean that Vocational Agriculture teachers should ignore the middle school and elementary school groups. They have two alternatives:

1. They should advise the counsel with the regularly assigned teachers of such groups, assisting them to explore agricultural occupations along with many other occupations with all of their students, or
2. They may be given further training and be assigned to middle grade schools to work in conjunction with teachers from many other areas with their specific assignment being to teach short-term exploratory or mini-courses in agriculture occupations. The specific objective of all such exploratory courses should be to lead youngsters to explore a great variety of occupations, including agriculture, as a basis for making and testing career choices. But this is career education and not Vocational Agriculture instruction as we now know it. The educational objectives are quite different just as the teaching techniques utilized should be.

Vocational Education, Vocational Agriculture, and career education may now be at that point in time when momentous decisions concerning the role of each must be made. Too much effort has been expended and too much promise has been uncovered not to face up to this challenge. If career education is to raise the public school out of its current low state, then Vocational Education in agriculture must project a course of action which strengthens the career education concept. This concept is almost entirely dependent on the cohesion of many divergent forces working harmoniously to assist each youngster to identify and prepare for a career.

We must all strive to develop a workable concept of career education. Commissioner Marland was right in forcing educators to examine and test the general thesis as a basis for arriving at a mutually acceptable definition of the concept. Such a definition is gradually emerging along with better understanding of the implications involved. This is good, but unless widespread support is quickly generated the entire movement may be in jeopardy (Smith 1975).

This matter of a definition seems to be a worrisome issue to many. It would seem to me more appropriate to become concerned with program limitations in order to lay the groundwork for cooperation between various instructional units than to become involved in the

endless process of definition and re-definition of the term. For a beginning, Dr. Marland provided considerable insight with his statement that "underlying career education is a conviction that our schools and colleges have a responsibility to students to teach the essential and established academic subjects, described as broadly as liberal arts, but to relate these offerings to a broad range of career options, personal growth and life styles. Equally important is the responsibility borne by the schools to provide students with the techniques that will enable them to make the best possible decisions about themselves" (Marland, 1973).

Kenneth Hoyt's early definition runs something like this: "the total effort of public education and the community to help all individuals become familiar with the values of a work oriented society; to integrate these values into their personal value structure and to implement these values into their lives in ways that make work possible, meaningful and satisfying to each individual" (Hoyt, 1972).

More recently the U.S. Office of Education seems finally to have gotten around to tackling this problem and has come up with an apparently official definition in a policy paper credited to the same Kenneth Hoyt who is currently Director of the Office of Career Education: "The totality of experiences through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work as part of his or her way of living" (Hoyt, 1975). At least Dr. Hoyt insists upon work alignment which may please Vocational Education partisans while perhaps irritating other segments of the education profession.

From my own direction, a concept of involving "a comprehensive educational program focused on careers which begins in grade one, or earlier, and continues throughout the years" is satisfying.

To become overly concerned with definition seems to be a waste of time under the circumstances. A more rewarding exercise would be to examine the concept and its implications with considerable care. Just what are the components of a career education curriculum? They can be listed generally as

1. Career awareness
2. Self-awareness
3. Economic awareness
4. Skill awareness
5. Knowledge awareness
6. Appreciation and attitudes
7. Decision making skill
8. Employability skills

Regardless of which definition of career education is accepted it will soon become apparent that a major facet or component will involve the making of career choices. This is an extremely critical step for any youngster to take. A man's status in early America was determined by the amount of goods he could produce through physical effort, and even today a man's occupation is still the single most significant status - conferring role (Venn, 1967). Tennyson (1970) carried

this idea further when he wrote, "In an urban industrialized society a man's work constitutes the major factor in his style of life, providing many of the basic motivations for his behavior and conditioning all of the roles he will play in society." Career education is therefore deeply rooted in occupational choice making; consequently a look into career development theory might be in order.

Career development theory has interested educators throughout the twentieth century and during this time many theories have surfaced for testing. They can be grouped into four general categories (Osipow, 1968), which include:

1. Trait factor approaches. These generally involve an attempt to identify and compare certain interests and abilities exhibited by persons successfully operating within an occupation with the interests and abilities of the individual being classified or guided in choosing an occupation. Essentially it is an effort to match people with specific jobs. This approach was widely supported in the early 1900's but has lost support in the face of rapid technological changes of recent years.

2. Social systems approaches. These theorists believe that sociological forces or conditions beyond the individual's control exert extreme influence on his choice of a career. Osipow (1972) states "this approach has as its central point the notion that circumstances beyond the control of the individual contribute significantly to the career choices each makes . . ." Such descriptions have caused some to refer to such choices as "accidental" or "path of least resistance" in nature.

3. Self - concept approaches. Supporters of this concept see the individual, as he matures, defining a self-concept against which he compares images of the occupational world around him. To the extent to which the individual is able to implement his self-concept the decision is satisfactory.

4. Personality and career approaches. In more recent years, many theories implying the existence of relationship between career choice and individual needs, values, interests, orientation to the interpersonal world around him, etc., have been advanced. In this general area prime illustrations are Hoppock's needs-satisfaction approach (Hoppock, 1967), Roe's work on the effect of early experiences on personality development and its consequent effect on vocational development (Roe, 1957), and other approaches relating psychopathology and career (Osipow, 1968).

Current development of curricula and trends in career development theory are rooted in this latter category. The earliest of these writers would be Ginsberg who identified four variables critical to vocational development and then identified three major periods of such development, i. e., the Fantasy, the Tentative, and the Realistic periods. The Tentative period, age 11-18, is quite important to teachers because at this age the youngster is attempting to establish a composite view of himself in relation to the occupational world (Ginsberg et al., 1951).

Donald Super made a significant contribution to career development theory with his five vocational development stages, i. e., Crystallization (14-18), Specification (18-21), Implementation (21-25), Stabilization (25-35), and Consolidation (35+). During the Crystallization

age (14-18) the youngster is attempting to relate and interpret his own preferences and special abilities with vocational choice (Super, 1957).

Anne Roe's theory is concerned with the effect of early childhood experiences on an individual's orientation to the interpersonal world around him as it causes him to turn towards or away from people. As a result of this reasoning Dr. Roe developed a system of occupational classification designed for use in making predictions about the occupational preferences of person-oriented individuals as opposed to the non-person-oriented individuals (Roe, 1957).

Career development theory strongly supports the idea that career development is systematic, culturally related, and strongly characterized by change and anxiety. Too often overlooked is the important part played by the individual's own special abilities in determining entry and advancement in an occupation. There seems to be little question but that environment plays a major role in an individual's career choice.

The National Vocational Education Advisory Council in its 1967 report listed a number of recommendations directed toward "a unified system of Vocational Education": First on this list were these three recommendations:

1. Occupational preparation should begin in the elementary schools with a realistic picture of the world of work.

2. In junior high schooleconomic orientation and occupational preparation should reach a more sophisticated stage with study be all individuals of economic and industrial systems by which goods and services are provided and distributed.

3. Occupational preparation should become more specific in the high school, though preparation should not be limited to a specific occupation.

There were other recommendations, but these three reflect the support of career development theory in a changing concept of vocational education. It should be noted that this "unified system of vocational education" lays the ground work for regarding career education and Vocational Education as synonymous rather than complementary systems. It probably merits attention here that the 1974 report of this same group attempts to set the record straight in this matter when it recommends that the distinction between vocational and career education be kept clear (Nat'l Voc. Ed. Adv. Council, eighth report, 1974).

Throughout this review of career development theory the impact of interest on career choice is repeatedly underscored. It would seem that an understanding of the career education concept will require insight into the nature of individual interests in general and vocational interests in particular. Numerous studies have shown interest as the prime reason students give as a basis for occupational choices. A study of Mississippi rural youth reported 68 percent of Vocational Agriculture students gave interest as their major reason for making an occupational choice (Shill, 1968). A North Carolina study indicated

that almost 75 percent of the sample of high school youth studied indicated that general interest in an occupation was the reason for their choice (Mathews and Drabrick, 1965).

E. K. Strong, author of one of the widely used early vocational interest inventories, stated "Interests are learned. Since interests involve reaction to specific things they must be learned. Accordingly they can be modified later on by re-education" (Strong, 1943).

Edward Thorndike, the great psychologist who contributed so much in the area of learning theory, wrote, "The results of our experiments support the conclusion that a person can be taught new attitudes and tastes as surely though not as easily as he can be taught facts and skills" (Thorndike, 1935).

Anne Roe also contributed to a better understanding of the origin of interest as a function of vocational choice. She wrote, "In the modern view that occupational choice is not a matter of one or two specific decisions, but that the occupational history is a life long development, thoroughly interwoven with the life as a whole, the origin and development of interest becomes a matter of more than theoretical importance" (Roe, 1964).

These references lend support to the conviction that the matter of making career choice must be regarded as one of the major components of a career education curriculum. These same references show that this aspect of career education theory is deeply rooted in career development theory and further that the individual's interests play a very important role in career or vocational choice making. Unquestionably, much of the groundwork for this development is laid in the early adolescent or middle school years. The direction of this distinctive stage of development in the life of a youngster should be entrusted only to highly trained and skilled teachers who have the philosophical persuasion and the pedagogical expertise to handle such a critical assignment. The vocational teacher may make input into the undertaking, but the methodology required is so different from that employed in the traditional vocational instructional program that without training most vocational teachers lack the professional expertise necessary to handle this demanding responsibility.

Vocational Education teachers are prepared and thoroughly capable of developing the necessary technical and employability skills needed for entry to and advancement in a specific occupation. They are also capable and skillful in developing the cognitive understanding supporting occupational proficiency. Since these achievements are not stated objectives at the middle school level, in most career education models the question of the desirability of Vocational Agriculture teacher involvement at this grade level then becomes a paramount issue. This is especially true if the educational objectives of such instruction by vocational teachers continues to be specific occupational proficiency as

at the secondary level. The need at the middle school level is for more wide-spread exploratory experiences and not specific skill development which should be reserved for the later age.

Numerous career education models have been projected including community based, home based, and industry based models in addition to the school based model to which this discussion is directed. Most school based models, although they may differ in some details, generally follow the same general lines of emphasis. These are:

1. Grades K-6----career and self-awareness emphasis.
2. Grades 7-9----career exploration emphasis.
3. Grades 10-12----preparation for entry level employment or further schooling.
4. Grades 13-14----specialized job training.
5. Adult years----job upgrading or retraining.

Of course, emphasis by the levels shown depict the Vocational Education thrust; but, for youth choosing professional careers, specialized job training at grades 13 and 14 and beyond would be replaced by university and technical study.

The very heart of this modellies in the recognition of the right of each student to change his career choice as a result of study, maturity or circumstances. With this right goes the privilege of changing his options and electing to pursue an entirely different study objective--even to opt for college entrance instead of immediate employment upon completion of high school. No one is locked into a pattern, but maximum curriculum flexibility is maintained to encourage students to experiment and test decisions made at an early age regarding future careers. To support this right to change following experience and reflection, the middle school emphasizes career exploratory type activities beginning with a broad general exposure to a wide array of careers at the early middle grade level and moving toward the selection of a broad occupational family or cluster for further exploration, including hands-on experience and possibly some prevocational education at the upper middle grade level.

It must be recognized at this point that Vocational Education with its skilled teachers could well make a vital input at the upper middle grade level with specially planned mini-courses or prevocational courses with emphasis on experimentation with shop, plant, and animal projects and a cognitive study program providing hands-on experiences designed to enhance skill development in decision-making situations. But it must be emphasized that the development of occupational competency is not a specified education objective at the middle school level. The student is not yet ready to make a career choice, let alone prepare to enter the chosen career. He is narrowing down his range of choice through study and experimental activities and perhaps developing some prevocational skills which have wide occupational applicability. For the vocational teacher merely to move the secondary school skill development instructional program down to the middle school flouts all that we know about career development theory and challenges career education curriculum design.

At the secondary level Vocational Education demands and is entitled to a major input into the student's program of study time. Since more students, because of middle school exploratory experience, will probably elect vocational courses of study and the socio-economic climate will probably extend the years of school enrollment for many in the foreseeable future, the number of Vocational Education enrollees will drastically increase. This will demand more teachers, undoubtedly, but it will also force vocational educators to recognize the need for keeping the instruction on a broad and general or "cluster of occupations" approach. Essentially this means the deferral of specialized job or technical occupational training to the twelfth grade at least and, it is hoped; for large numbers to the thirteenth and fourteenth years when highly sophisticated training can be accomplished without sacrificing quality teaching in the corresponding "general education" area needs of all students. Cooperative education programs and job placement for experience should be utilized to a maximum degree at this stage, not just in the interest of economy but in terms of instructional effectiveness as well. Only in this way can a true career education curriculum come to fruition and, parenthetically, can Vocational Education ever become a reality for the sixty or seventy percent of the student body which it is obligated to serve.

By way of summary allow me to recapsome of the major points attempted in this presentation:

1. Even though closely related and interdependent, career education and Vocational Education are not synonymous terms. Each must be viewed in the light of the total education commitment of the public education establishment.

2. Career education is the total school commitment of the curriculum to meet the educational needs of each individual with emphasis on the choice, preparation, and movement toward a career. It involves every learning experience and activity planned for students during the school career.

3. Vocational Education is that important segment of career education which prepares the student to choose an occupation and prepare for successful entry and advancement in same. It is an essential component of a true career education program and, when utilized properly, may be a major vehicle for motivating and making functional the academic instructional areas of the school program.

4. The demands of Vocational Education are so great and so critical that vocational teachers must concentrate on that program which they, and only they, can provide. That program is centered on preparation for employment. This does not mean that they cannot effectively advise, counsel, and assist other teachers whose preparation and teaching assignments cover the career exploration component.

5. When Vocational Education teachers, including vocational agriculture teachers, do undertake middle school grade instruction, they must recognize the basic philosophy underlying this phase of career education and resist the urge to transport Vocational Education instruction to that age group by merely simplifying course content to match the level of student maturation. They must develop, in conjunction with other teacher, exploratory units designed to broaden students' background of understanding as a basis for making career choice, and not for occupational preparation.

6. Vocational Agriculture instruction can and must make a major contribution to career education at the secondary school level. The major emphasis at first will be on broad occupational preparation for the field of agriculture. For those who elect to enter agriculture employment following high school graduation, highly specialized, job-oriented occupational education must be provided during the last one or two years of high school.

7. Nothing should be allowed to obscure the critical and increasingly recognized need for Vocational Agriculture instruction in farm and non-farm agriculture occupations at the post-secondary and adult levels. The need is great and the responsibility is awesome. The entire future of the Vocational Education in agriculture program may be determined by the degree to which this phase of the program is supported and developed. The secondary and post-secondary school offering should be carefully articulated toward the preparation of skilled technicians.

In conclusion, may I pay my respects to career education as the one most promising hope for bringing order out of chaos for the public education establishment. May I express the hope that Vocational Education in general and Vocational Agriculture in particular will assume their rightful places in that comprehensive program. May I extend support to the belief that Vocational Agriculture never had so much to offer or such a promising situation in which to operate as is now available and urgently in need of help. The future holds no limitations if the leadership will make the program serve the need in a rapidly changing social order.

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