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## A FRAMEWORK FOR CAREER EDUCATION\*

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Instructional programs in "Career Education" are being established across the nation. The concept of career education is based upon the sound "idea of revamping the school curriculum to make it more relevant to the real world in which people live and work to provide youth with an opportunity to make occupational choices as well as to prepare themselves for employment."<sup>1</sup> The goal of career education in essence is to have every high school graduate prepared to go into employment or on to a post-secondary educational program.

It is predicted that career education through a multiplicity of definitions and variations will become firmly established in public school systems as a result of the united support this new concept

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is receiving. The U.S. Office of Education is actively encouraging the adoption of career education by providing funds for pilot training programs and research projects. The American Vocational Association and National Education Association are both in support of career education as indicated by resolutions they each passed at their respective conventions.

The position formulated by the AVA House of Delegates<sup>2</sup> at the annual convention in 1966 was

"That the AVA join with those responsible for the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools in developing programs of occupational education appropriate for all students and participated in by all students in elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and post-high school institutions."

Relative to vocational and career education the NEA Representative Assembly<sup>8</sup> passed the following resolution (71-45) in July

"The NEA believes that preparation of children for careers, vocations, and productive jobs should be a basic policy of education. Educational programs should be developed for all children which will assure equal opportunity of career and occupational development. A continuing program for training, retraining, advancement and promotion should be provided for out-of-school youth and adults."

Since career education is supported as a new program in public education and since the need for it is clearly evident as reported objectives should be set forth upon which to establish an instructional model or models. Given that program objectives are related closely to local school objectives; total enrollments vary greatly among the many school districts; and the schoolmen will want to generate their own variations of career education, it does not seem appropriate in this article to list a set of meaningless objectives for educators in local schools. Instead, summary statements are put forth from which tailor-made objectives can be formulated by individuals or workshop groups. The objectives written by you are the foundation blocks upon which to build career education program and models.

### Scope and Organization of Learners

In order to provide some reasonable organization to instruction in career education, a program intended for all people of all ages grouping of learners and sequencing of content become necessary

When coordinating a program of in-school students, grade level grouping is conceived as a logical approach to organization. For in-school students a continuum on which to organize would consist of segments representing the fourteen grades from elementary school through the community college. Instruction in career education for out-of-school youth and adults would extend the continuum at the upper end.

Instructional content and approaches to learning adapt themselves best to certain grade level groups along the 1-14 continuum. The program is commonly separated into four instructional emphases which include the following combinations of grade levels: 1-3 and 3-6 or 1-6; 7-8 or 7-9; 9-12 or 10-12; and 13-14. It seems logical that local school administrators would adopt the combinations which best accommodate their own school organizational pattern for grouping grade levels.

More appropriately for out-of-school youth and adults, instruction may be approached in terms of individual's occupational needs, manpower needs for the immediate geographical area, preparation for job changes, advancement and promotion for established workers, etc.

### Programs and Subject Matter

Career education, as presently conceived, is dependent upon comprehensive programs and/or master plans for education. An interdisciplinary approach is absolutely necessary between and among the disciplines at all levels if programs are to accomplish their purpose, which is the placement of graduates on jobs or into post-secondary educational programs. Academic and vocational educators will have to cooperate if a program of career education is intended to be more than a series of courses. The academic-vocational teaching team should have the benefit of a coordinator to direct the program and to reduce the gaps and overlaps in subject matter content, as well as other duties which are carefully described.

Generally the task of the elementary school (grades 1 - 6) is to orient students to the world of work. At this level students acquire awareness of and a positive attitude toward work and school. The students learn about themselves individually and collectively. They are informed in breadth rather than depth about occupational clusters representing the world of work. The occupational clusters<sup>7</sup> are: Agri-business and Natural Resources, Business and Office, Health, Public Service, Environment, Communication and Media, Hospitality and Recreation, Manufacturing, Marketing and Distri-

bution, Marine Science, Personal Services, Construction, Transportation, Consumer and Homemaking Education, and Fine Arts and Humanities.

The middle school-junior high school (grades 7-9 and possibly 10) is given to career orientation and exploration, employability and limited job preparation. At this level a student explores several of the occupational clusters of his choice and possibly one of the several clusters in greater depth. While beginning to focus on an occupational cluster it is understood that the student may wish to change to another and is encouraged to do so. At a point, however, a student selects a single occupational cluster and moves toward entry level job preparation.

High school (grades 11-12) is given the task of job preparation, placement for real work experience, and placement of each student in an entry level job. In lieu of placement in a job, the student may wish a post-high school education.

The post-secondary school (grades 13-14) prepares students for jobs which are technical in nature. It provides for adjustment in jobs for those who seek additional education and wish to work on the technical or professional level.

Out-of-school youth and adult programs (continuing education) provide for job preparation, retraining, and advancement and promotion. Stated differently, the student may wish to prepare for and enter a new occupation, or he may wish to update and upgrade his existing occupation. Needs of individuals and society often dictate the kinds of programs offered.

### Teacher and Teaching

Career education requires approaches to teaching which stimulate active participation and relevant learning experiences by and for learners. Discussions, film presentations, other visuals and resource persons are useful approaches to teaching during the early and middle school years: practicing manipulative skills, engaging in simulation exercises in school laboratories, and participating in real cooperative work experience in business and industry are recommended approaches to teaching the technological skills of career education in the later school years.

Teaching is somewhat dependent upon the availability of tangible resources and the necessary time to meet with the learners. A career education library or center in each school replete with pertinent instructional materials and media is an incentive to teachers and students alike to do a better job. The allotment of money

and class time must be greater than that presently given to conventional academic programs. An educational program which involves the business community and a variety of school laboratories with freedom given to the student for discovery, exploration, and testing are costly inputs into the program.

### Learners and Learning

In the business of education, learners are raw materials at the beginning of the teaching-learning process and later they become the product of it. Unlike the raw materials and finished products of business and industry, learners cannot be standardized. Each learner is different from others at the beginning of the process and upon the completion of it. Independent of other learners, each has his own abilities, competencies, temperament, desires, limitations, and aspirations among other qualities. He must be made aware of them and be helped to grow or change as he is being transformed into a more finished product -- a satisfied and useful citizen.

Career education is for the disadvantaged, average learner and the advantaged all studying together in the same classroom or laboratory. Learners are individuals not intended to be standardized or grouped homogeneously. In the past the above-average were in academic classes, college-bound, and headed for a profession; the less-than-average were in the general curriculum and relegated to unskilled labor, repetitive work, and enforced leisure upon completion of the program.

Learners are concerned about the relevancy of their education. The career education program attempts to make education relevant in several ways. It (a) guides and directs learners more positively toward occupational objectives, (b) attempts to broaden, not narrow, the options open to learners, (c) provides a better balance of activities between the cognitive and manipulative, the academic and vocational, and the classroom and laboratory, (d) offers meaningful work experience to the learner, and (e) ultimately culminates in job placement with a more comprehensive follow-up program.

Use of advisory committees is a most effective means for making and keeping learning relevant. Committee members know the skills and competencies learners need to become gainfully employed, the kinds of equipment and machinery schools need in laboratories, and the number and kinds of job opportunities available now and projected for the future.

Supervised experience programs are supportive of relevancy. An appropriate supervised learning experience may be conducted in

the classroom, simulated in the laboratory, directed on the school campus, pursued in the community, or obtained through any combination of these.

Cooperative work experience makes use of satellite learning centers (business and industry in the community) for advanced practical training of learners. The emphasis of this instructional approach should be on learning rather than on earning although financial considerations are an important aspect of the experience. The cooperative experience helps bridge the gap or smooth the transition between school and the first job. This approach has the built-in means for updating teacher-coordinators. It provides a wealth of resources as well as a viable labor market for the placement of graduates. It is a sleeping giant which has not really been utilized as an approach to learning in public education.

### Program Effectiveness

There is no one best way to measure and evaluate effectiveness of career education programs. Teaching process; product evaluation in terms of learning effectiveness, job placement, and benefit-cost analysis; and research studies are means for gathering data to make and support judgments about programs.

New programs, those without output in terms of graduates are limited somewhat to teaching process and learning effectiveness data. One concern is that teachers can be effective in the classroom and yet be doing too little in career education to make an impact on the labor market; or they may be teaching effectively that which is inappropriate to the occupational needs of students or the community.

Program effectiveness is sometimes measured indirectly through accomplishments of its graduates and is one kind of product evaluation. The successful entry of graduates into the world of work, their job performance and satisfaction, and advancement on the job are kinds of criterion utilized to measure product effectiveness. In that the goal of career education is to have every high school graduate placed on a job or in a post-secondary educational program, product evaluation lends itself well to evaluating program effectiveness.

If placement is the criterion for evaluating the program, and it is, schools must provide a job placement service in high schools with a status equal to that for college placement. Administrators and coordinators would do well to consider the use of state employment service personnel, program advisory committee members, and work experience cooperators as part of the job placement team.

Follow-up means that the school is responsible until the individual has adjusted to the job which is an advancement in terms of a salary increase or a promotional step up the occupational ladder. Some individual may have to be placed two, three or more times before they adjust to a job. A few may have to withdraw from the job for additional training.

Cost-effectiveness analysis has potential for comparing programs. "But a major disadvantage of applying cost-effectiveness to pedagogy is its failure to consider social, cultural, political, and personal values, which are relegated to a secondary level of importance and superseded by economic values; measurement is recorded as a ratio of dollars invested to returns gained per dollar from the investment. On the positive side, cost-effectiveness analysis requires up-to-date records, and it aids the administrator in decision-making activities, furthermore, it is compatible with modern systems analysis techniques and programs. It has considerable merit for evaluation of career education from an economic point of view."<sup>4</sup>

### Summary Statements

The following statements represent a point of view about career education; they are written as guiding statements for formulating objectives for programs. The statements are as follows:

Career education is for all people of all ages in school and out of school.

The grouping of learners by grades for specific kinds and levels of instruction provides an organizational structure for the total program. Adopt the already established plan for grouping grades within the school system for the career education program.

An interdisciplinary approach to a comprehensive career education program will be necessary at all levels if the overall purpose of the program is to be achieved.

Career education programs are designed to prepare students for employment or further education by interrelating knowledge of self, career planning, employment skills, and employability skills in such a way that students have the confidence to make decisions about their own immediate or projected future in the world of work.

Students in the early grades are oriented by broad awareness orientation programs which promote positive attitudes toward work and school. In the higher grades breadth gives way to depth of

occupational clusters when job exploration, preparation for work experience and work are stressed in the program.

A successful program depends upon the retraining of teachers and counselors already employed by the school system.

Proposed is the elimination of the general curriculum at the secondary level and a marriage of the academic and the vocational curriculums.

Career education is based on approaches to teaching which spur student participation and lead to relevancy. Individualized instruction favors the learner.

A well stocked career education library and media center support teachers and students alike.

Except by grade level or age, administrators must resist the grouping of learners if they are to be fair to them and the program.

The use of cooperative work experience and advisory committees does much to keep programs of career education student centered and relevant.

Probably the best way to evaluate new programs is through the teaching process and by learning effectiveness. Product evaluation lends itself well to the evaluation of established programs. Cost-effectiveness analysis can be used to compare efficiency of programs and satisfy accountability requests in terms of economics.

Job placement must be on equal status with college placement. The job placement team can be supported by state employment personnel, and interested people from business and industry.

Follow-up means that the school is responsible until the individual has adjusted to the job which is advancement in terms of salary increase or a promotional step up the occupational ladder.

If the statements above are educationally sound, they are administratively feasible.

#### REFERENCES

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<sup>3</sup>Bottomis, Gene. Some Basic Principles of Career Development Education, Contemporary Concepts in Vocational Education, Washington, D. C., American Vocational Association, 1971, P. 230.

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<sup>5</sup>Marland, Sidney P., Jr. Career Education Now. An address presented at the 1971 Convention of the NASSP, Houston, Texas, January 23, 1971.

<sup>6</sup>National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. Fifth Report, June 21, 1971, P. 2.

<sup>7</sup>U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Career Education, OE 72-39, Washington, D.C. U. S. Government Printing Office, 1971.

<sup>8</sup>Vocational and Career Education. Today's Education, October, 1971, 60:24.

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