

Occupational Education

CURRICULUM development should be basic to all program planning in occupational education. Inlow (1966) states that the "... curriculum will carry the connotation of the planned composite effort of any school to guide pupil learning toward predetermined outcomes." The development aspect is the effort put forth in preparation, implementation, and then evaluation of the total curriculum.

Occupational education refers to a total program of education oriented to the world of work. Occupational education should begin to take form in the elementary school with a basic introduction to the world of work in terms appropriate to the maturity level of the students. This may very well be modeled after the Technology for Children program which has been and still is operational in New Jersey. The program should continue through the middle school years, with appropriate breadth and depth which would allow students to develop favorable attitudes and values toward work.

Industrial arts education and educators should have their major responsibilities at this level of the developmental process. Our concern must be the student and not what "camp" of educators provides the expertise to make the program worthwhile. The final stage may occur during the last two or three years of high school or in the community college. This education may be in job skills

and knowledge for a cluster occupational area. It should go without saying that expert counseling and advisement are necessary during the total educational process.

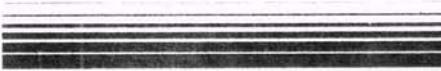
Stated Objectives

Before a curriculum development effort can begin, it is first essential to review the philosophy and/or stated objectives of the school district in which such an occupational program is to be operational. Such a program must be consistent with the direction indicated in the philosophy statement. If a new direction is indicated, then perhaps the philosophy statement and/or the objectives need to be revised.

This phase must occur before the curriculum development effort begins, since it sets the direction for the occupational preparation program. The people involved in the program planning at this level must believe in occupational preparation for all children. For all too long, vocational education programs have been planned for other parents' children. Each of us in education and especially those of us involved in occupational education must be able to answer the following question: Would I allow and encourage *my* child to take a vocational education course, if he wanted to?

Occupational education, to use Marvin Feldman's (1966) term, can provide the

in the Curriculum



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motivating techniques to "make all education relevant." Mangum (1968) states:

Involved is recognition that any dichotomy between academic and vocational education is outmoded, that all education to be acceptable must be relevant, that adaptability to change is as important as initial preparation and that the needs and objectives of individuals should take precedence over those of the labor market (pp. 45-46).

Here we have two pleas to make education relevant to all children, not just those who in past years have entered vocational schools. If in fact education is preparation for life, those skills essential for employment must fit into the educational establishment at some level. Such preparation should be available for all children, not just those select few who enter vocational education programs.

A realistic program of occupational education must first involve and be supported by a philosophy conducive to the establishment of a worthwhile program. Articulation between the local public school, area vocational center, community college, and private trade or technical schools is essential. The objectives of the local public school must spell out an awareness of the need for some form of occupational education.

A Continuing Process

Specific objectives should be established at each level of instruction in the development of a total program of occupational education. An awareness of the world of work can and should begin in the early years of schooling of each child. The process should not begin all of a sudden during the last three or four years of free public education.

The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education (1968) suggested the following characteristics:

1. Occupational preparation should begin in the elementary schools with a realistic picture of the world of work. Its fundamental purpose should be to familiarize the student with his world and to provide him with the intellectual tools and rational habits of thought to play a satisfying role in it.

2. In junior high school, economic orientation and occupational preparation should reach a more sophisticated stage with study by all students of the economic and industrial system by which goods and services are produced and distributed. The objective should be exposure to the full range of occupational choices which will be available at a later point and full knowledge of the relative advantages and the requirements of each.

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3. Occupational preparation should become more specific in the high school, though preparation should not be limited to a specific occupation. Given the uncertainties of a changing economy and the limited experiences upon which vocational choices must be made, instruction should not be overly narrow but should be built around significant families of occupations or industries which promise expanding opportunities (pp. 74-75).

Just as much consideration should be given the development of an occupational education program as is given any subject area in the all-school program. It need not be a separate subject, but may be interdisciplinary in nature. It *should not*, as is so often the case, be left to chance.

Those responsible for specifying the objectives of such an occupational preparation program should be encouraged to specify the objectives in behavioral or performance oriented terms. Vague general statements make difficult the evaluation of such a program. Such performance oriented objectives should also make education more relevant to the needs of children.

The curriculum development process should determine and list both long-range and short-range objectives for such an occupational education program. One unit per year during elementary school might be included in the total program. Long-range objectives for the elementary school program would be stated. Each sub-unit making up the total program would have stated objectives consistent with the long-range objectives. Each student upon leaving the elementary school would have had certain

experiences dealing with occupational education appropriate to his needs.

All Are Concerned

The establishment of an occupational education program must involve individuals from the elementary, middle, and senior high schools within any one district. If a separate "area" type vocational education center services the district, a member from that center should be involved from the very beginning stages of planning. Likewise, should a community college be close by, a member from its staff should be involved in planning. Articulation is essential to the establishment of a really meaningful program of occupational education.

Articulation at all levels (K to 14) should assist in establishing a complete program of occupational education. This does not mean the development of another program based on the old established "manual training" or "vocational education" concepts. Fresh thinking to bring together expert teachers from all levels is much needed.

A review of the literature on various programs of occupational education that have been suggested and/or tried will help one realize the variety of approaches that are possible. On the basis of such study, educators at the local level can suggest and implement a complete program of occupational education. Just because a program is operational and useful in one district does not mean it is suited to the needs of your students.

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Parents, teachers, and educators are much concerned with articulation of subject matter in most academic areas of instruction. It does not seem to this writer, however, that the same concern exists in regard to the area of occupational education. Paycheck education should not be left to chance. We should and must develop an awareness in our students of the real world of work as it exists today and is likely to exist tomorrow.

The program suggested need not be thought of as a "hands on" experience at the elementary or middle school years. It may or may not be "hands on" at the senior high level. The program must depend on the needs of the students.

At the elementary level, such a program would be characterized by the word *awareness*. At this level, the occupational preparation program would attempt to develop in each learner an awareness of the world of work. If one appropriate unit of instruction dealing with occupational education were included each year in the elementary school program, a great deal could be accomplished. It might or might not be patterned after the Technology for Children program which is operational in New Jersey.

At the middle school or junior high level, such a program would be characterized by the word *introduction*. The program might take advantage of the materials which have been developed for the Introduction to Vocations program which has been operational in a number of New Jersey schools. Study during the middle school years should be characterized by an introduction to vocations program designed to acquaint students with a broad spectrum of occupations at all levels. The program at this level should involve all teachers and guidance personnel in the school and not be left to a small group of homemaking, industrial arts, business, and art education teachers. Such a program should involve a study of local industry, employment trends, and professional opportunities, and should make use of various members of the community who are expert in many specializations. Experiences in many cases could be of a "hands on" nature; in others, simple observation by television, film,

or a firsthand look-see making use of field trips. Yet the experiences must be related to some plan and not, as is so often the case, left to chance.

The problem exists at the high school level as to what program is best and what is available in the separate traditional vocational high school or the area occupational center. Serious consideration, at the local level, is essential in determining what is best for each student. Should a student be allowed and encouraged to prepare for a narrow specialization or a cluster of occupations? Actual paid work-experience of a cooperative nature should be an essential part of each student's high school program. The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education has included such a recommendation in its *Third Report* (1970).

A total curriculum development effort is required by each school district interested in preparing its graduates for the world of work. Each and every school district must assume its share of the responsibility in meeting the occupational needs of its students. This cannot and should not just be left to those few educators who are concerned with occupational education at the high school level and beyond.

We are concerned with articulation in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and other subjects. This concern should also include occupational education.

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