

Career Education Works!

CHARLES J. LAW, JR.*

"CAREER Education" is a popular, though perhaps confusing, term. Many individuals are sanctioning the approach through the authority of their expertise and/or position. Two key examples are President Richard Nixon and Assistant Secretary for Education Sidney Marland, Jr.

Other noted proponents of total education for all persons in all 50 states are raising questions concerning (a) the purpose of education; (b) the competencies for living of all persons who leave formal education at all levels, by graduation and otherwise; (c) the continued promulgation (if desired) of the "Protestant Work Ethic" by our educational system; and (d) the possible solution to some of our social and economic problems inherent in the "career education" concept.

These are good reasons for considering career education, but they alone are not sufficiently good at this time to promote this concept for all citizens. There is a better reason: that is, career education *works!*

Total Education

Career education is *total* education. There are many components, for example, social studies, mathematics, communications, science, physical education, occupational education, and others. In North

Carolina, the occupational education component is structured as shown in Figure 1. This pattern is the result of progressive, educational evolution. Each of the components indicated has been tried, modified, and found to work; and successful concepts have been implemented in subsequent components.

EVOLUTIONARY CHRONOLOGY IN NORTH CAROLINA (including implementation of federal leadership)

1957—*Formation of a Department of Curriculum Study.*

1. Made an objective evaluation of vocational education curricula; suggested far-reaching changes, pointed direction.

1957—*Development of 20 Industrial Education Centers (IEC).*

1. Upward extension (two years) of educational opportunities
2. Education for careers (paraprofessional, technical, trade, adult general education)
3. Community involvement (business, industry, agriculture)
4. Guidance oriented
5. Wide geographic coverage.

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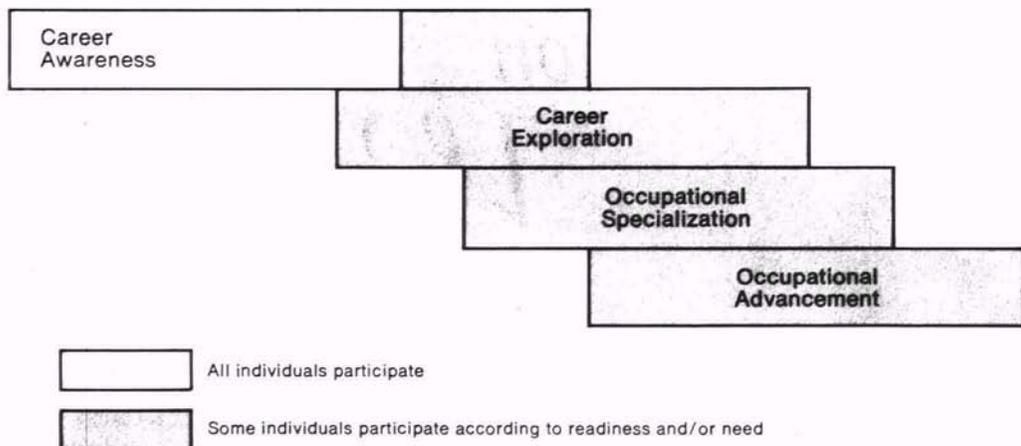


Figure 1. Pattern for Occupational Education Component of Career Education in North Carolina

1963—*Community College Act*.

1. Expanded IEC system into a comprehensive post-secondary system including two-year college parallel program (presently 14 community colleges and 42 technical institutes within commuting distance of 90 percent of populace).

1963—*Introduction to Vocations*.

1. Downward extension of concept
 - a. Career oriented
 - b. Guidance oriented (every teacher a counselor and counselor involvement)
 - c. Community involvement
 - d. Team teaching to develop "thread of continuity" among English, math, science, vocations.

1963—*Redirection of Agriculture Curriculum*.

1. Move from Agriculture I, II, III, and IV to Agricultural Mechanics, Agricultural Construction, Agricultural Business, etc.

1963—*Vocational Education Act of 1963*.

1. Greatly increased flexibility and increased funding.

1965—*Appalachian Region Commission Act*.

1. New funds for facilities accruing in many new programs.

1968—*Governor's Study Commission*.

1. Took strong stand for occupational education.

1968—*Vocational Education Act—Amendments of 1968*.

1. New responsibility for:
 - a. Disadvantaged
 - b. Handicapped
2. Increased emphasis on cooperative work experience program.

1969—*Career Exploration*.

1. Downward extension of concept (grades 7-9)

- a. Exploration by "hands-on" as well as "mind-on"
- b. Career oriented
- c. Guidance oriented
- d. Community involvement
- e. Team teaching for "thread of continuity."

1970—*Articulation Conference—Secondary and Post-Secondary.*

1. Forty conferences including administration, guidance, and teaching personnel to hear the problems of transition of students from secondary to post-secondary. These ranged in length from three days to three weeks.

1972—*Career Awareness.*

1. Downward extension of concept (K-6)
 - a. Guidance oriented
 - b. Emphasis on world of work in all subject areas
 - c. Community involvement
 - d. Team teaching
 - e. Provision of simple hand-tools in activity centers
 - f. Construction of "model" communities
 - g. Role playing of working persons.

Career education *works!* Numerical documentation is available with regard to dropout reduction, decrease in absences, and increase in interest and involvement; but perhaps the best documentation of the workability of the concept is found in the following story: A juvenile court judge in Charlotte, North Carolina, noticed that some perennial offenders had ceased to appear before his bench. Being interested, he investigated. He found the young people in



Pupils in early grades may actively explore career possibilities.

school. They told him it was because they had become meaningfully involved in the career education program. *It works!*

Persons Responsible

Many persons are responsible for these successes. A partial listing includes the following:

- Dallas Herring, Chairman, North Carolina Board of Education, whose term of leadership spans the period during which the accomplishments occurred
- Gerald B. James, President, Rockingham Community College, who began the study of curricula in the Department of Curriculum Study and laid out the format
- Honorable Luther H. Hodges, who, as Governor, promoted growth of IEC in 1957
- Honorable Terry Sanford, President, Duke University, under whose leadership as Governor the Community College System was born in 1963, "quality education" grew, and Introduction to Vocations was implemented
- Honorable Dan K. Moore, who appointed Governor's Study Commission in 1968 to achieve a "Child Well Taught"
- Honorable Robert W. Scott, who, as Governor, promoted Career Exploration



Career education introduces students to diverse vocational choices.



Young people become meaningfully involved in occupational education.

- A. Craig Phillips, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who campaigned on a promise to bring occupational education "back into the mainstream"

- Ben E. Fountain, Jr., President, Department of Community Colleges, who provided leadership in in-service education of vocational teachers

- Roland L. Roy, Central Piedmont Community College, who promoted articulation concept

- Herbert Valentine, member of Vocational Advisory Council, who kept pushing to "get on with the job"

- Frank James, Superintendent, Ashe County Schools, who gave real leadership in administering program

- Dorothy Zimmerman, Supervisor, Caswell County Schools, who portrayed so accurately the total needs of children

- Barbara Tew, Principal, Saxapahaw Elementary School, who demonstrated vividly what "Career Awareness" really is

- The 1972 Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Hargrove "Skipper" Bowles, who had as his major plank "Career Education."

Roadblocks to Career Education

If career education is to be implemented fully, certain roadblocks must be removed. These include the following:

1. Lack of commitment of educators to total education for all persons
2. Misunderstanding of concept
3. Chasm between occupational and academic education
4. Constraints (Real)
 - a. Restrictions on money
 - b. Dr. Madeline Hunter, Principal of University Elementary School, UCLA, made the following comment concerning this in Raleigh, North Carolina, in the spring of 1972: "The greatest constraint to full and total education exists between the ears of educators."
5. Teacher attitude
6. Reluctance of local leadership to take initiative
7. Lack of planning skills
8. Lack of reliable data
9. Inability to assess success or failure in classroom
10. Teacher education failure to grasp concept
11. Lack of positive response of occupational education (this would be the most tragic reason for the concept's not being implemented)
12. Finances.

In conclusion, when we believe career education is the best possible approach at this time for all individuals; when we are willing to put the welfare of the individual above our own petty professional jealousies; when we are willing to involve the total community in curriculum development and implementation in our schools; when we are willing to quit hiding behind degrees, certification, tenure, and other protective devices; and when we are willing to believe additional resources will accrue based on what we are producing with present resources—then, I believe, the concepts embodied in career education will move this nation forward. □

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