

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: PANDORA'S BOX OR CORNUCOPIA?

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E DUCATION for Career Development could be considered to be in the stage of "becoming." The manner in which individual programs are conceived and managed will determine whether the movement will "become" just a semantic fad or the major trend in education that it deserves to become.

It would be presumptuous of the present writers to attempt to state the ultimate definition of career development education. However, some dimensions of the term and issues to be resolved may be illustrated by citing statements from a 1972 publication of the National Center for Occupation Education at North Carolina State University at Raleigh (Morgan *et al.*, 1972). The 39 projects described in the synopsis are diverse, both geographically and in the nature of programs offered, thus providing the contrasts necessary to clarify some major issues.

The Matter of Scope

One important consideration is the "for whom" issue. Opening statements of nearly all project summaries show that most programs include all grade levels. There is apparent agreement that children must be reached early if any program is to be effective. The question of which youngsters to reach finds different answers, however. Even though some projects are being implemented

in phases, the fact that percentages of students participating at the various levels range from one percent to 100 percent suggests that this deserves considerable thought.

The stated goals and objectives reveal that some projects are limiting the target population of their programs for career development. Typical statements are: "train and place youth, particularly the actual and potential dropout"; "provide training in job entry skills to students previously not enrolled in vocational programs"; and "improve the status, scope, and image of vocational-technical education and promote expansion."

At the opposite end of the continuum are such global goals as: "develop the vocational maturity of all students"; "these goals are being reached by applying the career education concept to all courses in all grade segments"; and "the career education program spans grades 1-12 with 100 percent participation of the students."

Although each of the limited goals is commendable, one wonders if they are considered a portion of a total effort to provide education for career development for all children, as suggested in the broad goal statements. If some program developers reach a

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limited target population in the belief that they have "taken care of" career development education, then a real issue of scope does exist. A narrow coverage does not seem to harmonize with the sight of unemployed college graduates or the phenomenon of degree-holding adults entering technical schools in order to qualify for jobs.

The Change Agents

By whom should the program be generated, offered, and monitored? The telltale marks of two segments of the education community are visible in the objectives of the projects cited in the Raleigh publication. The guidance influence is evident in such terminology as: "clarify capabilities and potential," "develop a positive self-image," and "provide guidance and educational opportunities." Vocational educators have probably contributed such phrases as: "development of job entry skills," "develop a positive attitude toward vocational education," and "assistance in initial placement."

Both the counselor and the vocational educator have much to contribute to the career development movement and should rejoice in its popularity. Perhaps we are seeing a true milestone of education taking shape as it shakes the millstone of hoary academia from its shoulders. However, a jockeying for position, control, or credit by the guidance, vocational, or other segment of the educational scene is not a conflict that is needed in this "becoming" stage of career development education.

There is need for the curriculum director and administrator to assume their proper leadership roles and draw upon the best minds from all facets of community and school, utilizing guidance and vocational personnel as prime resource persons. It is evident that many of the programs reported in the Raleigh study have taken this route.

There are some very obvious characteristics of good curriculum that should need no elaboration here. However, during this period of "becoming," with its diverse activities and term definitions, some of the basic principles of curriculum and learning may be slighted

as educators struggle to meet project deadlines and other pressures.

Considering the tenuous nature of the terminology and the directions of the movement, care should be taken to define terms and state specific goals and terminal behavioral objectives within the limits of those defined terms (Mager and Beach, 1967).

The requirement that career development education begin early in the student's experience creates the problem of vertical curriculum design. It may be too tempting to divide the program into elementary, junior high, and high school segments and assign to each of them "developmental" tasks or objectives toward which to work. Education for career development should not have to make the historical mistake made by other curriculum areas by developing the three levels in isolation. Cannot these new programs be "born" as total programs, K through 12, with recurring themes, reinforced learning, common information systems, and truly developmental approaches?

It is obvious, as one reads career development literature, that there is as yet no general agreement concerning the nature of this human developmental process. Therefore, the subject matter content that would best contribute to this process cannot be identified with certainty. The variety of theories and notions upon which programs are being built, however, can be an asset. The wealth of practical information that is accumulated should bring about a refinement of our understanding of the process and identification of relevant curriculum content.

The effectiveness of various activities should also receive critical attention. "Hands-on" experiences, field trips to industry, and exposure to information about jobs will not guarantee that the desired learning will take place. Widely published evaluations of these various techniques are needed if the movement is to mature.

A Unique Role for Evaluation?

The most difficult yet the most critical aspect of any program is the matter of evaluation (Suchman, 1967). Evaluation can

play a unique role during this stage of "becoming" that is characterized by diverse meanings and activities.

Provided each program defines its use of terms and uses them in articulating specific program objectives, the mass of evaluation material generated regarding concepts, process, techniques, and materials could bring order out of chaos. Too often, low profile programs are retained because no one is threatened by their existence. Specific career education programs must be retained only if they are viable, and should be changed as required; and both decisions must be reached on the basis of sound research. Furthermore, programs need to be compared by creative research designs that are constructed during program development, not after implementation.

Dropping the Other Shoe

We have been looking at some of the issues that must be faced by the local educators who must conceive and manage the programs. The flurry of activity directed toward education for career development is all related to a larger issue in education. This issue is discussed in detail in a U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare publication that should be required reading for all educators (*Career Education*, 1971). President Nixon's 1970 call for massive reform in education is being answered in part by Sidney P. Marland, Jr., U.S. Assistant Secretary for Education, who has designated career education as a national priority.

Features of career education as outlined at the national level include: the restructuring of basic subjects around the theme of career development; extensive guidance and counseling for decision making; and studying careers in relation to major fields of occupations so that students leaving high school will be prepared for either employment in a job of their choosing or additional education in institutions of advanced standing.

In addition to this "in-house" approach to education for career development, a new direction is taking shape that is based upon writers such as Coleman. In view of "... the

drying up of family functions and the specialization of economic activities . . ." where do the young people belong? Coleman's answer is that "... if they are to have the opportunity for moving to adulthood . . . they . . . belong where everyone else is, and where the action is: inside the economic institutions where the productive activities of society take place" (Coleman, 1972, p. 17).

The "employer based" programs represent another facet of the movement to provide education for career development. During the stage of "becoming," this facet can be a nourishing activity for the total movement. The "either-or" question is irrelevant at this time. As we learn from both "in-house" and "off-campus" programs, a rational foundation may be developed for a new order of education.

In the meantime, curriculum directors and administrators will have their hands full in facing the issues that accompany any effort to provide education for career development. The manner in which these issues are met will become evident as the "in-house" facet of the movement flourishes or as it deteriorates and becomes another semantic fad. Let us make certain it succeeds.

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