

Career Education and the Teaching/Learning Process

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If pupils are to have full access to career options, they must, through all levels of schooling, have opportunities to experience and to understand the implications of such choices.

CAREER education from its inception has been pictured as a collaborative effort involving the formal educational system, the home and family structure, and the business-labor-industry-professional-government community. As it has been conceptualized, important roles and functions have been suggested for personnel from each of these three segments of society. Career education is not something that school personnel can do by themselves.

Career education's cry for collaboration has camouflaged the crucial importance of the classroom teacher to the success of career education. Equally important, it has tended also to camouflage the many and varied implications for change in the teaching/learning process called for by career education. The greatest potential for effectiveness and the greatest challenges for change lie in the teaching/learning process.

The major kinds of changes that career education calls for in the teaching/learning process and the key importance of the class-

room teacher in effecting such changes are presented here: (a) the rationale for career education in the classroom; (b) the use of career implications of subject matter as motivational devices; (c) implications of expanding the parameters of the teaching/learning process; and (d) implications of career education for the philosophy of teaching.

A Rationale for Career Education

Career education seeks to make education, as preparation for work, a major goal of all who teach and of all who learn. To attain this goal, two broad objectives have been formulated: (a) to increase relationships between education and work and the ability of individuals to understand and capitalize on these relationships; (b) to increase the personal meaning and meaningfulness of work in the total lifestyle of each individual. Both of these objectives deserve brief discussion.

Relationships between education and work, as in the first objective, are becoming closer and closer. Demand for persons with specific learned occupational skills continues

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Children from Goding School in Washington, D.C., get a close-up look at farm animals during a field trip to nearby Maryland. The focus of their trip is not animals, but the economics and career opportunities offered in farming. The field trip is one of a number scheduled as part of a Title I Career Education Project.



to increase. The American system of formal education must accept increasing responsibility both for providing individuals with general career skills required for adaptability in our rapidly changing society and with specific career skills that can be utilized in making the transition from school to the world of paid employment. Students will be unable to take full advantage of these relationships between education and work until and unless they know about them. They will not learn about them if teachers continue to ignore the topic.

The second objective, that of making work a more meaningful part of the individual's total lifestyle, is considerably more basic to career education's call for change within the classroom.

In career education, the word "work" is not limited to the world of paid employment outside of formal education. On the contrary, "work" is defined as "conscious effort, other than that whose primary purpose is either coping or relaxation, aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or for oneself and others." Thus, in addition to the

world of paid employment, this definition covers the unpaid work of the volunteer, the full-time homemaker, and work in which individuals engage in the productive use of their leisure time. It also includes the work of the student and the work of the teacher.

In the larger society, positive relationships have been established between productivity (output per person hour) and reduction in worker alienation. There is every reason to believe that these same kinds of positive relationships can and do exist for the work of the student *and* for the work of the teacher in the classroom. If worker alienation can be reduced among both students and teachers, educational productivity—that is, increases in academic achievement—should result. Evidence justifying this reasoning has already been accumulated in career education programs operating in such widely diverse places as Hamlin County, West Virginia; Dade County, Florida; Santa Barbara, California; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

It is no secret that, today, many students are alienated from their work. They

do not like to learn in the classrooms they are in. When this happens, we often find teachers who are alienated from *their* work. They do not enjoy teaching. By applying the general principles used in reducing worker alienation to both students and teachers, it seems reasonable to assume that educational productivity will increase.

Common strategies for reducing worker alienation include: (a) increasing the variety of work assignments; (b) increasing autonomy of the individual worker; (c) providing workers with perspective regarding the importance of their work; (d) providing workers with opportunity for closer personal interaction; (e) providing workers rewards for quality work completed on an "on-time" basis; and (f) encouraging workers to use their own creativity and ingenuity in devising ways of attaining desired outcomes. Many of the classroom strategies and methods proposed by career education are directly aimed at reducing worker alienation among both students and teachers.

In career education we are trying to free both teachers and students to be as innovative and as creative as we believe they really are. We want both students and teachers to gain personal meaning and meaningfulness from their work.

Career education emphasizes education as preparation for work. *One* of the reasons students go to school is so they can engage

in work after leaving the formal educational system. If teachers can show students how the subject matter relates to work that the student may some day choose to do, then students may be motivated to learn more subject matter.

The career implications of subject matter represent a source of educational motivation that should apply to *all* of the students *some* of the time. It may apply to *some* of the students almost all of the time. If "career" is defined as "the totality of work one does in her or his lifetime" and, if "work" includes unpaid activities as well as the world of paid employment, it would seem that career implications exist for every subject.

Teachers are simply asked to consider using career implications of subject matter, where appropriate, during that time any person who deserves to be called a "teacher" takes to show students why it is important to learn the subject matter.

Expanding the Teacher/Learning Process

Career education holds that students can learn in more ways than from books, in more settings than the formal classroom, and from more persons than the certified professional teacher.



Basic to this classroom curriculum is "Our Working World," a social studies program with a strong career education thrust. Various occupational roles are touched upon as these children learn math, reading, and other subjects.

We must rid ourselves of the false assumption that the best way to ready students for the real world is to lock them up in a classroom and keep them away from that world. Many learning opportunities exist in the broader community outside the classroom and if we make provisions for students to learn in that broader community perhaps students would learn more. There are persons in every community who, instead of going through the "school of hard books," went through the "school of hard knocks"; and some of what they learned may be valuable for some students. The use of resource persons in the classroom can *supplement* efforts of the professional teacher *who will also be in that classroom*. Many instructional materials exist in the broader community that can and should be brought into the classroom and used.

Our prime concern should center on how much students learn—not on where they learn it, how they learn it, or from whom they learn it. One of career education's basic tenets is that the days of education isolationism are past. It is important that all understand, accept, and act on that fact.

Implications for the Philosophy of Teaching

Career education urges the teacher to emphasize accomplishment—productivity—outcomes for all students. Factors making for productivity have been known for years. They are, in general, referred to as good work habits. The time has come to reemphasize the practice of good work habits in the classroom and to reward those students who learn and practice them. If, beginning in the early elementary school, all students could be encouraged to learn and practice good work habits, fewer complaints would be heard from employers who hire these students after they leave us. The practice of good work habits would enhance educational achievement, and should be taught consciously, conscientiously, and proudly.

Every student has a right to know why it is important to learn that which the teacher

tries to teach. If career implications of such subject matter are not present or not valued, then the teacher has a responsibility for providing other reasons for learning to students. In short, I firmly believe that the purpose of education must extend beyond education itself—that education must be preparation for *something*—for one or more of the life roles the student will play as an adult.

The teaching/learning process would be more effective if we emphasized *success*, rather than *failure*, to students. We have spent far too much time urging our students to do better without giving them sufficient credit for what they have already done. Little children beginning school as active learners are often completely "turned off" from all attempts to learn prior to reaching the fourth grade. For many students this has been caused by teachers who tell them how they failed, what they did wrong, and how other students did better. Career education seeks to help every student understand that he or she *is* someone because he or she has *done* something. Students would work harder in the future if given credit for the work they have already done.

Finally, I believe that every teacher should be interested in and express interest in career aspirations of students. Years ago the statement that "every teacher is a counselor" was used, and it is time that the phrase be revived. Teachers should be concerned about and involved in helping students answer the question "Why should I work?" This, of course, is a matter of work values and these will be highly influenced by the culture of the home and family structure of the student. Teachers should make conscious efforts to relate more closely and more often to members of the student's family. Problems of both race and sex stereotyping are currently preventing many minority students and many females from considering, let alone choosing from, the broad range of career options that should be made available to them. Many of these stereotypes are reinforced in the textbooks used in the classroom. If teachers do not take an active interest in solving this problem, it is doubtful that it will ever be solved. □

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