



Encyclopedia of Career Development

Career Education

Contributors: Jay W. Rojewski

Edited by: Jeffrey H. Greenhaus & Gerard A. Callanan

Book Title: Encyclopedia of Career Development

Chapter Title: "Career Education"

Pub. Date: 2006

Access Date: December 11, 2015

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Inc.

City: Thousand Oaks

Print ISBN: 9781412905374

Online ISBN: 9781412952675

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412952675.n40>

Print pages: 101-103

©2006 SAGE Publications, Inc.. All Rights Reserved.

This PDF has been generated from SAGE Knowledge. Please note that the pagination of the online version will vary from the pagination of the print book.

Career education refers to both a historical education reform movement and an evolving concept that reflects a process of bringing occupational relevance to academic curriculum and informing adolescents about themselves and the world of work. As a reform movement in the 1970s, U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland Jr., initiated and sustained an effort to enact federal legislation supporting career education. Throughout that decade, the concept of career education assumed an increasingly significant role in federal education policy. In 1977, the Career Education Incentive Act (P.L. 95–207) was enacted into law, and throughout the 1970s, more than \$130 million was appropriated by the federal government for career education activities.

Kenneth B. Hoyt, appointed Associate Commissioner for Career Education in 1974, further advanced and shaped Marland's initial efforts. He defined career education broadly, viewing it as a composite of activities and experiences designed to prepare and engage individuals in paid or unpaid work during their lives. Thus, the notion of career education related not only to preparing students to earn a living (product) but also to developing a way (process) for them to learn. The *process* aspect of learning emphasized the integration of work and careers throughout the academic curriculum, making learning more relevant and meaningful to students.

While formal and informal definitions of career education have been advanced over the years, the most enduring is one proposed by Hoyt. In his 1977 monograph, *A Primer for Career Education*, Hoyt defined career education as an effort to refocus both the U.S. education system and the actions of the broader community to help adolescents acquire and use the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to make work a meaningful, productive, and satisfying part of their lives.

The underlying goal of the career education movement was a total kindergarten to Grade 12 (and post-secondary) school reform process geared to all students regardless of postsecondary plans. The career education concept was also inclusive from the standpoint of incorporating a *careers* focus throughout the entire school curriculum and serving as a means of redirecting the teaching-learning process. Two proposed strategies for achieving reform were the *articulation* of curriculum across grade levels and the *integration*, or *infusion*, of school subjects with work. These strategies were enacted to enhance the occupational relevance of education and reduce social class distinctions between students enrolled in vocational versus academic educational tracks.

Advocates of career education promoted a number of major themes, including the inclusion of career awareness, exploration, and decision-making opportunities; enhancing general employability, adaptability, and “promotability” skills; participation in private-sector education system partnerships; experiences highlighting the interconnectedness of school and work; emphasis on careers; envisioning work as a meaningful part of a total lifestyle; a reduction of bias and stereotyping; and the protection of personal freedom of choice. Philosophically, career educators emphasize the importance of work and work values and view the classroom as a workplace. From this perspective, teachers are charged with encouraging students to recognize the importance of work, rewarding academic work appropriately, introducing a variety of methods and procedures for attaining stated goals, and emphasizing the practice of good work habits.

The terms *career education* and *career guidance* are often used interchangeably. However, there are important differences between them. Career education refers to the totality of experiences (school-based and otherwise) that help individuals acquire and use the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to make work a meaningful, productive, and satisfying part of life. In contrast, career guidance typically refers to a systematic process of providing self-assessment and information about the world of work to facilitate individual career development and decision making. In this respect, guidance activities can be viewed in a support role or as one component of a comprehensive career education program.

Career education is also distinct from *vocational education* (now known as *career and technical education*), although in recent years this distinction has blurred considerably. Public vocational education was originally established in the early 1900s to prepare young people for the world of work. From its inception, a clear distinction was made between vocational and academic education, with vocational education emphasizing entry-level work skills for youth deemed non-college bound, displaying special learning needs, or otherwise placed at risk of school failure.

Education reform initiatives (e.g., the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994) and rapid changes in the workplace over the past several decades have resulted in significant changes in the orientation of vocational education. In fact, current secondary vocational education reflects many of the principles and practices embodied in the career education movement. For example, current career and technical education programs emphasize academic achievement and preparing young people for postsecondary education and work through school-based and work-based approaches (e.g., apprenticeship, cooperative education, work-based learning, career academies, and programs articulated between secondary and postsecondary institutions). Additional examples are initiatives that integrate academic and vocational curriculum and develop extensive articulation between academic and vocational or secondary and postsecondary programs. Thus, while similar, career education seeks to provide a career-based instructional emphasis for all students, while vocational programs are still, for the most part, separate from general academic curricula and targeted to a smaller segment of the student population.

Major Delivery Models

During the 1970s, the U.S. Office of Education supported the development of four approaches to implementing effective career education programs, including the school-based (comprehensive) model, employer-based (work/experience-based) model, home/community-based model, and the residential-facilities-based model. The *school-based* or *comprehensive career education model* was the most widely adopted approach to career-education delivery. At the time, it was assumed that many effective career-education programs existed throughout the country and that exemplary program components could be identified and then used as the basis for developing a comprehensive model program. The result was an approach where the classroom was seen as a work-place and both teachers and students were treated as workers. Work values, including the practice of productive work habits, were stressed and rewarded. Infusion of career-education principles in existing K-12 curriculum and instruction was the primary approach used for increasing student understanding of the connections between course content and work-place competencies. This point is important, since

many career educators view the emphasis on career as a means to an end—academic achievement, life satisfaction, and success—rather than an end in itself.

The *employer- or work-based model* was first proposed as a way to address the concerns of critics and members of the business community who charged that the U.S. education system was not preparing workers who could meet rapidly changing workplace demands. Given this context, the model assumes that overly rigid, formal educational structures make school irrelevant to substantial numbers of students. These same students, however, might be successful if substantially different methods and environments were used. Thus, this model capitalizes on experiences gained from using the community as a primary resource by making close connections between school curriculum and workplace demands. Developers advocated the operation and support of work-based programs entirely by local employers, parents, and other community organizations. In fact, the notion of joint effort, joint authority, and joint responsibility between the education and business communities was a key element of early efforts. Career educators viewed the community as a *learning laboratory* and made use of a variety of programs, such as work-study, cooperative education, and job shadowing. Another key element of this model was a flexible approach to designing individualized curriculum plans based on students' learning needs and specific work environments.

The *home or community-based model* targeted the needs of adult populations, particularly those who were homebound, women reentering the workforce after raising their children, and older adults. Model designs, inspired by the success of the children's educational program *Sesame Street*, used a multimedia approach that combined educational television and radio shows, correspondence programs, and community-based referral centers to provide career guidance and counseling. A fourth approach, the *residential-based model*, was developed to address the unique needs of disadvantaged rural families. This particular model offered intensive programs at residential centers for all family members, not just heads of household. A broad array of services was provided, including academic education, medical and dental services, independent-living-skills training, career and personal counseling, and welfare services.

While modality and context differ depending on type of approach, each model reflects the same basic sets of components or activities, such as career awareness, exploration, decision making and planning, preparation, entry, maintenance, and progression, in selected career paths. Career education offerings vary, depending on the characteristics and needs of locations and situations and may include one or more of the following: school-business partnerships, infusion of career concepts into school curriculum and instruction, delivery of comprehensive programs, and single events or practices. In addition, each of the four approaches is sequential in nature, progressing from awareness-information to accommodation-skill building to action-application. The basic assumptions and interventions represented by these four models provide a backdrop for current career and technical education and school-to-work initiatives.

Career Education: 1980s–1990s

Despite its appeal to a segment of the education community, federal legislation promoting career education was repealed in 1981 as a result of federal budget cuts and emerging national concerns over the quality of public education. For the next 20 years or so, career education was not a priority in national policy and did not match well

with the *academics first* and *back to basics* movements of the 1980s, which eschewed integrated or infused teaching-learning designs in favor of classroom-based, academic-only approaches. Even so, several enduring features of the federal initiative were evident during this period, including Career Information Delivery Systems, recognition in the 1984 Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of career guidance and counseling programs, and the visibility of National Career Development Guidelines. In addition, many local school districts continued to offer, either in whole or in part, their own career education programs.

In the 1990s, several major educational initiatives, for example, school-to-work, technical preparation (tech-prep), contextualized teaching and learning, and work-based learning programs, embraced the essential character and focus of the career education movement. While not touted as career education per se, passage of the School-to-Work-Opportunities Act in 1994 was viewed by many as a renewal of key elements embodied in the career education movement, including the belief that public schools should offer challenging educational programs for all students by relating subject matter to work, helping students identify career-related interests, and stimulating students to make educational and career plans.

Today, the broader school-to-work movement and the ongoing transformation of career and technical education encompass a number of specific career-related programs, such as apprenticeship, work-based learning, tech-prep, or 2+2 models emphasizing program articulation between secondary and postsecondary curricula, cooperative education, mentoring, job shadowing, and school-based enterprises. Other educational concepts that integrate school and work life include service learning, constructivism, and contextualized teaching-learning. All of these enhance the relevance of education by striving for common goals such as bridging the gap often encountered between school- and work-related demands and experiences, informing adolescents about themselves and preparing them for the world of work, and addressing issues related to the transition from high school to postsecondary education and the world of work.

Although numerous similarities exist in recent work-education initiatives, career education is distinct in three primary ways. First, career education promotes a substantial change in the way education is conceptualized and delivered. Second, career education focuses on work in a broad sense, not on specific job training. Third, general employability skills are stressed, for example, basic academic skills, productive work habits, and work values, as opposed to an emphasis on specific job skills attainment.

Effectiveness of Career Education

A flurry of evaluation studies and reviews of career education programs occurred in the mid-to late 1970s. The vast majority of these reports were never published, and criticisms have been raised about the lack of stringent research designs and generalizable results in many of these investigations. Many of these early studies reported mild but not totally positive increases in student performance. Some studies, particularly those conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, have shown no statistically significant advantage in either academic achievement or postsecondary outcomes of students who participate in career education. However, more recent efforts have shown that students in career education programs are more likely to take college entrance and advanced placement exams, graduate from high school, and enroll in two-year or four-year postsecondary education. Future evaluation efforts of

career education interventions should address several important questions, including the following: Who should participate in career education activities? What are the characteristics of effective career education programs? Does participation in career education affect academic achievement, high school completion rates, and college enrollment and success?

Conclusion

Traditional career education models were designed for a very different workplace, stressing developmental stages, basic and academic learning, employment skills, school-work linkages, and a need for lifelong learning. To a large extent, many of these program goals remain important. However, future career education efforts must also help students adapt to the demands of an increasingly global workforce characterized by a need to take personal responsibility for career, employability skills, interorganizational mobility, flexible work arrangements, teamwork, technology, and international relationships. Thus, *knowing how*, *knowing why*, and *knowing who* must assume greater prominence in career education experiences. Career education must also emphasize career pathways, exploration, and multiple future careers rather than specific jobs and career decision making. Finally, contemporary career education programs must continue to be client focused, mainstream and systemic, and multifaceted; actively involve students; involve local communities through work experiences; and provide relevant and accessible information about the world of work and adult life.

- career education
- careers
- school-to-work
- vocational education
- career guidance
- movement education
- cooperative education

Jay W. Rojewski

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412952675.n40>

See also

- [Apprenticeships](#)
- [Continuing professional education](#)
- [Employability](#)
- [Lifelong learning](#)
- [Vocational education](#)

Further Readings and References

Herr, E. L., Cramer, S. H., and Niles, S. G. 2003. Career Guidance and Counseling through the Lifespan: Systematic Approaches.

6th ed.

Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hoyt, K. B. 1977. A Primer for Career Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Career Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 145252)

Hoyt, K. B. 1981. Career Education: Where It Is and Where It Is Going. Salt Lake City,

UT: Olympus.

Hoyt, K. B., and Shylo, K. R. 1987. Career Education in Transition: Trends and Implications for the Future. Information Series No. 323. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 290933)

Magios, J. H., ed. 1973. Career Education. Third Yearbook of the American Vocational Association. Washington, DC: American Vocational Association.

McWhirter, E. H., Rasheed, S., and Crothers, M. "The Effects of High School Career Education on Socialcognitive Variables." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 47 330–341. 2000. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.47.3.330>

Terry, A. F., and Hargis, N. 1992. Career Education Revisited: Implications for the 1990s. Information Series No. 353. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 354389)

Wickwire, P. N. 2002. "A Perspective on Career Education in the USA." ACE Distinguished Member Series on Career Education. Paper presented at the 50th anniversary of the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance. Paris, France. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 465863)