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CAREER EDUCATION: WHAT IT IS NOT AND WHAT IT MIGHT BE

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Abstract

The sudden popularity of career education may prove to be its own worst enemy, for almost everyone will try to use it for his own ends. The key question may be, what is *not* career education and how may it be prevented from masquerading as the real thing. With this in mind, several current approaches which have at times been labelled career education are examined and found to be somewhat atheoretical and inconsistent with accepted definitions of career education.

In an attempt to clarify this situation some general notions derived from career development theory are examined. Finally the implications of these notions for practicing counsellors are discussed.

Résumé

La soudaine popularité de l'"éducation à la carrière" risque d'être éphémère si tous et chacun l'utilisent sans discernement. Une façon de démasquer les abus possibles consiste d'abord à définir ce que n'est pas l'"éducation à la carrière". C'est dans cette optique que sont passées en revue diverses approches faussement représentatives du fait qu'à l'analyse, elles s'avèrent inconsistantes et sans fondement théorique par rapport à la notion acceptée d'"éducation à la carrière".

Dans une démarche de clarification, l'auteur considère quelques notions générales issues des théories du développement vocationnel et en discute les applications pertinentes pour la pratique du counselling.

"Be it resolved that the Canadian School Trustees Association promote and recommend that the Full Members (provincial associations) take the following actions to improve the employability of youth, and the effectiveness of career guidance in the schools:

(a) that they recommend to their departments of education and local school boards that each student should have access to a comprehensive career education program, from K – 12/13, which clearly outlines desired learner outcomes, and (b) that they recommend to provincial departments of education the certification of career guidance counsellors, and the establishment of minimum requirements which will ensure the proper delivery of career education."

This resolution was passed unanimously by the Canadian School Trustees Association (1980). In a position paper (1980) prepared by this same organization supporting this resolution it was suggested that movement in this direction was supported by "widespread public dissatisfaction with the manner in which schools prepare young people for jobs" (p.1). Much of the blame for this lack of preparation, it may be intimated, lies squarely on the shoulders of counsellors. If they want to hold

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their jobs in these times of economic restraint, declining enrolments, and increasing demands for accountability, it was further suggested that they will have to take steps to define their roles in more relevant terms and improve their qualifications.

After years of criticism (McTavish, 1974; Huff, 1974; Ahrens, 1977; Lennard, 1978) and this latest blast, it would seem that counsellors are being put on the spot to do something. This is not to say that they have not been concerned about these negative evaluations. They are concerned. In an attempt to improve these services, counsellors in the past few years have instituted some helpful and important innovations which will be mentioned briefly later. This is good.

As useful as these changes have been, the School Trustees are insisting that these changes are simply not enough. In proposing career education, they are calling for some rather fundamental changes with respect to the provision of career guidance services. In a recent cross-Canada survey by Bedal (1979), it was found that a majority of provincial directors responsible for guidance is also not only stressing the need for career education but also is indicating that it is their present priority in guidance.

As interpreted by Super (1976), Herr (1976), Hansen (1977), and Hoyt (1977), the adoption of career education implies that these guidance services should be modified to treat career choice as a developmental *process* extending over many years rather than an *event* occurring largely at the high school level. The achievement of the goals of such a program would necessitate the implementation of a career education program K – 12/13. Later in this paper the details and the implications of this proposed innovation will be discussed more fully.

There is no question that many counsellors are, or will eventually be, pressured to become involved in career education. But before counsellors move in this direction, it is necessary that they start asking some rather important questions such as: Why the sudden urgency for career education? If guidance services go this route, how is this new emphasis going to affect me as a counsellor? Do I continue as I have in the past, or will I have to change my thinking about career guidance? The writer believes that counsellors might make a start in answering these questions by finding out what career education is *not*. The utility of this approach is supported by Evans, Hoyt, and Magnum (1974) who suggest:

> "The sudden popularity of career education may prove to be its own worst enemy, for almost everyone will try to use it for their own needs. Thus the key question may well be: what is *not* career education and how *can* it be prevented from masquerading as the genuine article thus diverting attention and resources from the goals and activities to which real career education is addressed." (p. 272)

With the above approach in mind, attention in the first section of this paper will be focused on, *Career Education: What it is Not*. As a first step in determining what career education is not, it will be necessary to establish a rather important distinction in terminology.

"Career" and "Occupation" are not Synonymous Terms

In common usage the term *occupation* is often used interchangeably with *career*. For example, "John has chosen dentistry as his future career" or "John has chosen dentistry as his future occupation." In commenting on career education, Super (1976) suggests that the term *career* should be defined as a sequence of roles in the life of an individual of which *occupation* is only one. That this is also the interpretation of the term *career* preferred by the writers of the CSTA position paper is obvious when they define it as:

> "... the total series of roles and work experiences a person occupies throughout life. It includes schooling, continuing education, employment, volunteer work, homemaking and retirement." (p. 1)

This definition would appear to be in sharp contrast to one proposed by Sidney P. Marland (1974) who is often given credit for starting the career education movement in the United States. He contended that "their occupation is really their career" (p. 43). As will be seen later, making this distinction between *career* and *occupation* has some important implications in determining the nature and the direction career education may take.

At this point, the writer will turn his attention to some approaches which he believes, though helpful in assisting our youth enter the world of work, *do not* in themselves, or in any combination, constitute what he

believes to be a comprehensive career education program.

It is Not Just Providing Job Skills

As noted by Hansen (1977), the equating of career education to occupational training represents the narrowest conceptualization of career education. The writer is reminded of the school principal who suggested that all students should graduate from high school with at least one readily saleable work skill. For some boys this might be welding and for girls typing. In a broader perspective, this orientation might appear to be somewhat consistent with some important objectives commonly attributed to vocational education. Hoyt (circa, 1977), however, makes an important distinction when he suggests that whereas:

> "... vocational education represents a body of substantive knowledge designed to provide students with specific vocational skills necessary for entry into the occupational society, career education's main thrust is on providing students with skills and attitudes necessary for changing with change in the occupational society." (p. 7)

That this distinction is not always made is evidenced by comments made by Dellefield (1974), the former U.S. Executive Director of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education.

> "There is nothing mysterious or esoteric about Career Education. If it means anything at all, it means preparing for entry into the world of work. We can theorize it to death, or we can get down to the business of giving people job skills." (p.11)

There is no question that in a time of high unemployment this focus may become increasingly favorable to those desiring a more immediate and supposedly more practical form of career guidance. There will also be those who will question whether schools should assume a responsibility for providing this type of education. As will be seen, this orientation not only equates *career* to *occupation*; but it is also atheoretical in terms of the career development notions of Super (1957) and Tiedeman (1975). The major point, however, as indicated by Hoyt (circa, 1977) is that "vocational education and career education represent two distinctly different thrusts towards attainment of the goal of education, as preparation for work" (p. 8).

It is Not Just Providing Information

Further along the continuum is the notion that work is pivotal, and that preparation for it can be facilitated by accurate up-to-date occupational information. Some of the flavor of this very popular orientation is captured by Sankey (1978) who, in commenting on career guidance in Canada, suggested:

> "Yes, we have provided them with answers to questions: what are my interests and aptitudes, what are the occupations that are most compatible with my interests and aptitudes, and how can I prepare for and advance in these occupations? These are important questions that need to be answered. In providing this information we have used tests, occupational monographs, college and university bulletins, career nights, field trips to industry and post secondary training institutions, guest speakers..." (p. 14)

To further help Canadian youth wade through this plethora of information, computerized career exploration programs have been developed (CHOICES, VPIC, & CAOE) in Canada. To provide up-to-the-minute data on the occupations surfaced in this exploration, computerized information systems such as SGIS have been developed.

Implicit in this use of materials and methods seems to be the notion that many of the problems associated with entry into a world of work can be resolved if only our youth can be provided with factual up-to-date information about self and the world of work. There is no question that many of our Canadian youth have been assisted by these well-developed information materials and exploration programs.

Inasmuch as this very popular approach is almost entirely confined to the high school level, however, one is led to the conclusion that career choice must indeed be an *event* and not a *process* extending over the lifetime of an individual as described by Super (1957). By implication, this orientation of concentrating largely on occupational and educational information at one point in the school program seems to be stressing *occupational* rather than *career* education.

In summary let it be said that much of

this current information provided at the high school level, whether it be about self, occupations, or training is important to many youths; it has to be! But by itself, no matter how well-developed, it may not be very useful to many other Canadian youth struggling with long standing unresolved developmental concerns associated with poor attitudes about self, others, and work (Breton, 1972). More about this later.

It is Not Just Providing Work Experiences

Another orientation further along the continuum that is often equated with career education is experiential education or work experience programs. This approach suggests that in preparation for entry into the world of work it is valuable for youth to combine school and actual work experiences. This need, according to Toffler (1974), is necessitated in societies such as ours which isolate their youth from direct involvement in adult activities of the real world for the first 16 to 20 years of their lives. In doing this, he further indicates, we may very well be doing a great disservice to our young people by delaying needed experiences for promoting their social and vocational maturity.

Woodsworth (1974) suggests that such an experiential component may take the form of credited work experience, part-time attendance at schools combined with part-time work, volunteer work, and summer employment. The work study program, limited largely to slow learners and potential dropouts, is a very common feature in many of our Canadian schools.

As can be seen, the popular notion combining work and school experiences is not new. However, the most recent approach, Experienced Based Career Education (EBCE), funded by the National Institute for Education (NIE) (1976) represents a rather significant change in the typical format. In EBCE programs the youth do not typically continue as regular members of a high school, but rather in external workaday settings they acquire knowledge and basic skills through carefully planned experiences.

Recent evaluations of EBCE by Bucknam (1976) suggest that it has resulted in improved student attitudes and that its effect on preparation for further education and the job has been positive. There is no question that such a program may help some of our youth see more meaning and purpose in acquiring competence in the basic academic skills which currently, as Sprinthall (1979) indicates, they see as largely irrelevant.

As attractive as EBCE and other experiential education programs may appear to their supporters, they nevertheless seem to have their shortcomings. First, inasmuch as the availability of work stations in business and industry would of necessity be somewhat limited, the number of youth participating in such a program would likewise be very much restricted. Second, confining this program to high school would seem to ignore Super's contention that career development is not an event but an ongoing process continuing from the cradle to the grave. Finally, Hansen (1977) suggests that as attractive as EBCE and other experiential work programs may be, they represent just one strategy among many which will be required in a comprehensive model of career education.

It is Not Just Career Development with Work as Focus

Further along the spectrum is the approach that embodies the notion that career development is a process that needs to be facilitated throughout K-12 and beyond. Of the orientations presented up to this point, this is clearly the only one that appears to be more consistent with Super's notion of career choice as a *process* and not an *event*. Because of his position and his publications elaborating on this orientation, Kenneth B. Hoyt (circa 1977), as Director of Career Education in Washington, has become probably one of the most influential persons in delineating this approach to career education.

Hoyt's orientation has much in common with an approach which will be discussed later in this paper, and will be mentioned in more detail at that time. It should be noted, however that in spite of the fact that Hoyt's model represents a breakthrough in terms of theory, Hansen (1977) is still critical of his approach because:

1. it puts too much emphasis on work and the economic role;
2. while it says (mentions) unpaid work, the emphasis is really on paid employment; and
3. it pushes the traditional work ethic. (p. 17)

In summary let me suggest that in preparing our youth for the world of paid employ-

ment I believe that the acquisition of job skills is helpful, the provision of up-to-date accurate occupational information has to be important, and the inclusion of work experience where possible is desirable. Furthermore, I believe that Hoyt's model of career education based on career development theory represents a gigantic step forward in programming. However, it is my considered opinion that if each separately and/or combined were instituted fully the result would not include all the outcomes considered important in a comprehensive program of career education. More about this later.

What then should we be doing differently? In an attempt to answer this question, attention will now be focused on the second aspect of this paper, namely, *Career Education: What it Might Be.*

In delineating the form that career education might take, the writer will concentrate on conceptual notions derived largely from theories and research generated by Ginzberg and associates (1951), Super (1957), and Tiedeman (1975) as well as the interpretations of these theories and recent developments in career education by Herr (1976), Hansen (1977), and Hoyt (circa 1977). In particular, attention will be concentrated on some general notions about career development which seem to be relevant with respect to the form that career education might take.

Notion n^{O} 1.

> *Career development is an ongoing process which extends from infancy through adulthood (Super, 1957). Therefore programs implemented to facilitate career education should not begin later than elementary school (Hansen, 1977; Hoyt 1977, and Herr 1976).*

Thus career development, a very important component in any career education program, should not be treated merely as an *event* occurring largely at the high school level but as a process extending over the entire life of individuals. As a consequence one might expect that the previously described programs (skill development, information dissemination, and work experience) concentrated at the secondary school level may be somewhat limited in facilitating this lifelong ongoing process of career development.

As reported in recent issues of *COGNICA*, many provinces are either discussing or having already instituted programs of career education K – 12/13. As a general impression, though not easily documented, it seems to the writer that much of this activity, however is still concentrated at the high school level. If this continues to be the trend, it would appear that this gap in a supposedly ongoing process may be the very undoing of what otherwise may have been effective programs in career education.

Notion n^{O} 2.

> *Career development can be described in terms of learning tasks which are differentially important at different life periods (Super, 1957; Havighurst, 1964; Tennyson, 1975).*

Typical of these learnings are the sequential developmental or management tasks outlined by Tennyson, Hansen et. al. (1975) and summarized in Table 1. The titles of these tasks are suggestive of sequentially ordered

Table 1

Career Management Tasks

Attending Stages –– Grades K-3

1. Awareness of Self
2. Acquiring a Sense of Control Over One's Life
3. Identification With Workers
4. Acquiring Knowledge About Workers
5. Acquiring Interpersonal Skills
6. Ability to Present Oneself Objectively
7. Acquiring Respect for Other People and the Work They Do

Responding Stage –– Grades 4-6

1. Developing a Positive Self-Concept
2. Acquiring the Discipline of Work
3. Identification With the Concept of Work as a Valued Institution
4. Increasing Knowledge About Workers
5. Increasing Interpersonal Skills
6. Increasing Ability to Present Oneself Objectively
7. Valuing Human Dignity

Asserting Stage –– Grades 7-9

1. Clarification of a Self-Concept
2. Assumption of Responsibility for Career Planning
3. Formulation of Tentative Career Goals
4. Acquiring Knowledge of Occupations, Work Settings and Life Styles
5. Acquiring Knowledge of Educational

and Vocational Resources
6. Awareness of the Decision-Making Process
7. Acquiring a Sense of Independence

Organizing Stage –– Grades 10-12

1. Reality Testing of a Self-Concept
2. Awareness of Preferred Life Style
3. Reformulation of Tentative Career Goals
4. Increasing Knowledge of and Experience in Occupations and Work Settings
5. Acquiring Knowledge of Educational and Vocational Paths
6. Clarification of the Decision-Making Process as Related to Self
7. Commitment With Tentativeness Within a Changing World

behaviors which appear consistent with the developmental theories of Piaget, Havighurst, Erickson, Super, Tiedeman and others. Such a temporal ordering of learning tasks, it is suggested, would not only be helpful in determining behavioral objectives but also in selecting materials and techniques that might be employed to achieve these objectives. Hopefully, attention to such a systematic listing might avoid the indiscriminate use of kits and programs which appear on the market and are highly promoted by their designers. Yesterday it was CHOICES, today, it is Holland's S.D.S. (1973) or Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute?* (1977) and who knows what tomorrow. This is not to say that these resource materials and procedures may not be helpful. Many are! Rather than having these kits and other commercially prepared materials determine the program, however, these listings of learning tasks should make it possible for the professional to make more discriminating decisions to ensure a well-rounded ongoing K-12/13 career education program.

This selection may be further complicated for career education workers by the fact that they will need to take into consideration differences in readiness to cope with these tasks because of certain socioeconomic, physical, and psychological factors peculiar to their area (Herr, 1972). Thus, the program required for the Tony Pasianos of Hamilton may be quite different from that which may be appropriate for the Joe Goldbergs of Eglington (Toronto).

Notion n^{o} 3.

Career development is modifiable. Efforts to intervene in the process can accelerate or strengthen the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Super 1957, Herr 1976)

By implication not only is career development modifiable, but it would seem also that intervention in this process is desirable. This is not to say that career development will not proceed without it; it will. Rather, the argument is that this development can be promoted more efficiently if children from an early age are provided with deliberate planned experiences designed to strengthen their knowledge, attitudes and skills in this area.

As indicated in Table 1, it is also important to note that this intervention appears not to be confined to dispensing information about self and the world of work. Rather it includes a new emphasis directed towards helping youth acquire skills and attitudes which are considered important in promoting career development. At the elementary school level, this emphasis often takes the form of helping young people develop a more positive view of themselves as well as becoming more proficient in their interpersonal skills. For secondary youth this may include developing skills in job seeking and job holding, and skills in understanding and facilitating growth in self and others in both social and work situations (Herr, 1976; Hansen, 1977).

In view of the previous discussion, there seems to be developing a trend away from stressing occupational and educational information. Indeed, work experience programs may do little for some youth who lack interpersonal skills. Career exploration programs used to surface many tantalizing occupational alternatives may only frustrate students further if they feel that they have very little control over their lives. Attractive up-to-date information about possible educational and occupational opportunities will be of little use to still other youth who lack confidence and or skills in decision-making necessary to process this data in a meaningful way.

Finally, in contrast to occupational and educational information that so often becomes quickly outdaded, it would appear that these transferable skills and attitudes are less likely to become obsolete and will better prepare our young people to meet the challenge of changing with change in their future world of work.

Notion n° 4.

> *Career development is influenced by many stimuli. Therefore to compartmentalize or isolate programmed experiences to influence it is to overlook all types of potential experiences which weave throughout life (Herr, 1976).*

As previously indicated, career development cannot be separated from personal and social development. In other words it would appear impossible to separate "making a living" from "living itself". Thus, in Table 1 one is not surprised to see learning tasks listed in all three areas. With this in mind Herr and Cramer (1979), Young and Borgen (1979) and Van Hesteren (1978) suggest that career educators may find it useful to consider the interface between career education and other movements like psychological education, humanistic education and effective education. Herr and Cramer (1979) further suggest "that some merging of them might strengthen all of them rather than allowing them to fragment and compete among themselves" (p. 370).

In keeping with this notion there is also the suggestion that an effective program in promoting this development should not be confined to a distinct course taught in a certain block of time by a specialist, presumably the counsellor. Movement in this direction is prompted by certain considerations. If career education, as commonly conceived, is to be taken by all students on an ongoing basis K-12/13 (Tennyson *et al.*, 1975; Herr 1976), it becomes obvious, as Mitchell (1975) indicates, that the counsellor can no longer be expected to be the sole deliverer of this undertaking. Much of this staffing will have to be taken over by others, namely, teachers. With this in mind, it is suggested that as far as possible much of career education be fused into the regular school subjects, especially at the elementary school level (Tennyson *et al.*, 1975). To meet this need many useful units designed for the regular elementary classroom teachers are now appearing (Saskatchewan Department of Education, 1979; Gysbers, 1974). At the secondary level several career education guides are also becoming available in the academic subject areas of English, Mathematics, Home Economics and Industrial Arts. (Roseville Area Public Schools, 1977; University of Minnesota, 1974).

Notion n° 5.

> *Career development can be seen as a central theme of education at all levels since its elements embrace the acquisition of career identity, self-identity, and purposefulness with which educational opportunity can be viewed (Herr, 1976).*

It is suggested that in the process of mastering many of the learning tasks associated with career development, the attainment of some goals of general education may at the same time be facilitated. As a consequence, career education, instead of being just another course added to the already overburdened curriculum, may be just the thing that is needed to overcome some of what Sprinthall (1979) calls the negative effects of our schools. Could it be, as Hoyt (circa, 1977) has suggested, that:

> "Since *all* students perceive themselves, from a very early age, as individuals who will work someday; and since the basic academic skills can easily be pictured as necessary for almost *all* kinds of work, career education can be a motivational approach that is *appealing to almost all students on a long term basis.* It is a way of giving a long term and a deeper sense of purposefulness to both students and teachers. If this can be done, achievement should increase." (p. 9).

It is not then surprising to discover that Bhaerman (1977), after reviewing the findings of thirty-eight studies, found supportive information indicating that corresponding improvements in reading and mathematics appeared when career education programs had been instituted.

At this point it would seem appropriate to return to one of the original questions posed at the beginning of this paper. How might it affect me as a school counsellor if career education is introduced in my province?

If we accept the premises that the introduction of K-12/13 Career Education into our schools is desirable, and that all students are to have access to this program, it becomes obvious, as Mitchell (1975) suggests, that counsellors can no longer be expected to assume sole responsibility for its implementation and delivery. Much of the actual teaching will clearly have to be taken over by regular classroom teachers. Inasmuch as most teachers will neither have the training nor, in some cases, the inclination to become involved in career education (Suhor 1973; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1973), Mitchell (1975) suggests that highly skilled professional leadership in this area will be necessary. Thus, she sees the role of some counsellors changing from one of delivering specific services to youth to providing this

required leadership as program directors, consultants, staff developers, workshop organizers, curriculum designers, implementors and evaluators to whom teachers and other regular counsellors can turn for assistance. With this in mind, Herr (1972) and Mitchell (1975) suggest that counsellors in such positions will need to have a broad understanding of all aspects of human development as well as competencies in curriculum development, implementation strategies, staff development and evaluation.

In summary it has been suggested that it will not be enough to do a cosmetic job on current practices (skills acquisition, information dissemination, and work experience) and label it career education. Also as Mathews (1975) indicates "the career education movement, if it is to grow and to impact society, can no longer afford to be a random set of materials in search of a philosophy" (p. 652). What is needed is an ongoing deliberate career education program built around learning tasks related to not only vocational but also personal and social development. Clearly such a program would tend to play down the current emphasis upon *content* and emphasize *process* skills and attitudes which are more enduring.

In addition, it is conceded that it is not going to be easy for all counsellors to accept the argument presented above and become involved in career education as conceived in this paper. Indeed, for many it may require not only a fundamental change in their thinking about career guidance but also a drastic change in the definition and interpretation of their professional roles.

The position of this writer is that whatever the initial cost the dual shift from *content* to *process* and from a one-time intervention to a continuous process of career development must be made. To do less is to consign career education along with some counselling positions to the fate of the do-do bird.

Finally, the above conclusion and warning not withstanding, this paper is not presented as the last word. It will hopefully provide a springboard for further discussion as to the direction career education may take.

The confusion in the area of career education cannot be clarified if no one dares to try. If the writer succeeds in stimulating discussion and an honest examination of the issues, the evidence and the realities motivating the concerns of groups like the CSTA, his purpose will be well served.

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