DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 686 CE 007 214

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TITLE A Conceptual Framework for Human Resource Policy: Implications for Vocational Education Research and Development.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Center for Vocational Education.
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Needs; *Educational Policy; Human Development; *Human Resources; *Manpower Development; Manpower Utilization; Occupational Choice; *Policy Formation; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

Human resource policies are those courses of action designed to enhance the effectiveness of human beings in their productive roles and to make the productive role best serve the other needs of man. There are several categories of human resource policy: (1) policies designed to achieve the fullest development of human resources, (2) policies concerned with the optimal allocation of resources, (3) policies concerned with human resource utilization, (4) policies concerned with human resource maintenance and conservation, and (5) policies concerned with maintaining a high level of demand for employment in the economy. A basic relationship exists between human resource policy and vocational education research and development. However, there are several issues that need to be studied. It is important to know the proper mix of training in and out of school in generating the competence required for various kinds of careers as well as the manner by which the school system can better provide the kinds of labor market information that will allow youth to make rational occupational decisions. There is also the complex task of integrating the entire educational experience in order to achieve all of the objectives that education is designed to serve for all students. (Author/EC)

Occasional Paper No. 14

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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THE CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning and preparation. The Center fulfills its mission by:

- Generating knowledge through research
- Developing educational programs and products
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes
- Installing educational programs and products
- Operating information systems and services
- Conducting leadership development and training programs

PREFACE

The Center for Vocational Education extends its sincere gratitude to Dr. Herbert S. Parnes for his recent staff development presentation entitled "A Conceptual Framework for Human Resource Policy: Implications for Vocactional Education Research and Development."

Dr. Parnes, Chairman, Faculty of Labor and Human Resources, The Ohio State University, discusses in his presentation the meaning and the dimensions of human resource policy. He also offers a number of observations on the relationship between the framework for human resource policy and vocational education research and development. Dr. Parnes' extensive background in human resource research and development enables him to provide significant insight with regard to the presentation's topic.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Parnes holds a Bachelor of Arts (1939) and Master of Arts (1941) degrees from the University of Pittsburgh; and a Doctor of Philosophy in economics from The Ohio State University (1950). Dr. Parnes is a professor of economics at Ohio State where he has served for the past twenty-five years. During that period, he has also served as the Director, Center for Human Resource Development on the OSU campus. Dr. Parnes also served Princeton University as a visiting associate professor of economics (1954-55); University of Minnesota as a visiting professor of business administration (Summer, 1959) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris (1961-63).

Dr. Parnes has authored numerous articles, papers, and books. These include the following co-authored books and monographs: *The Pre-Retirement Years,* Volume IV, Manpower Research Monograph No. 15; *The Pre-Retirement Years,* Volume III, Manpower Research Monograph No. 15; *Career Thresholds,* Volume III, Manpower Research Monograph No. 16; *Career Thresholds,* Volume I, Manpower Research Monograph No. 16; *The Pre-Retirement Years,* Volume II, Manpower Research Monograph No. 15; *The Pre-Retirement Years,* Volume I, Manpower Research Monograph No. 15; and *The Reluctant Job Changer.*

On behalf of The Center for Vocational Education, I take pleasure in introducing Dr. Parnes' presentation, "A Conceptual Framework for Human Resource Policy: Implications for Vocational Education Research and Development."

Robert E. Taylor
Director and Associate Dean
The Center for Vocational Education

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

What I should like to do this afternoon is to think through with you the meaning and the dimensions of human resource policy, and to offer some observations on the relationship between that framework and vocational education R & D. In doing this we examine the nature and scope of our mutual interests. You are the leading vocational education R & D center in the country; my experience during the past ten years has been with the Center for Human Resource Research and, more recently, with the Faculty of Labor and Human Resources. One of the things that I hope will emerge from this seminar is a continuing interrelationship between you and us, because we have a substantial number of common interests.

Let me start by taking a look at the term "human resources." The dictionary defines "resources" as "the collective wealth of a nation or its means of producing wealth." It follows that when one talks about human resources; one is talking about human beings in their productive roles—in their wealth-creating roles. Now, there are many audiences who are either irritated or outraged that one should consider man as a means toward an end. But let's agree to bury that issue by recognizing at the outset that to suggest that human resources in this sense is an important topic is by no means to assert that the productive role of men and women is somehow more important than their other roles. Man of course plays a number of important roles in addition to that of worker; parent; spouse; member of a community; citizen of a nation and of the world; a thinking, feeling being, whose self-fulfillment is important in its own right. Moreover, the productive role is inextricably interrelated with all these others, not only because it yields income which conditions the performance of the other roles, but also because it serves as a means of self-expression and self-fulfillment.

Let us agree, then, that "human resources" is a useful albeit limited way of viewing man for certain purposes. If we agree on that definition, what does one mean by human resource policy? I would include in human resource policy all of those courses of action, either in the public or private sector, that are designed to enhance the effectiveness of human beings in their productive roles and to make the productive role best serve the other needs of man. We must pause here for a moment, because there is obviously a potential conflict between those two objectives—that is, between enhancing the productivity of human beings and assuring that their productive roles serve their other interests. This is the conflict between man's roles as producer and consumer. Our interest as consumers lies in getting the largest quantity of goods and services at the lowest possible prices; our interest as producers, on the other hand, is not to "kill" ourselves in the productive process—to make work a reasonably pleasant experience. In a simple Robinson Crusoe economy, of course, each individual arrives at a compromise between these two conflicting interests himself. Robinson Crusoe knows that the more time he spends climbing trees to collect coconuts, the less time he is going to have to spend strumming on the ukulele under the tree; conversely, the more leisure he takes, the fewer coconuts he's going to have. A complex industrial society must have institutional arrangements for arriving at that compromise collectively to some extent. In any case, human resource policy embraces all of those courses of action that are designed to deal with both of those two basic objectives.

Now let me attempt to classify, if I may, several categories of human resource policy. In doing this, I should like to suggest that the components of a comprehensive human resource policy, conceptually, are the same for any society, irrespective of its level of economic and social development. In other words, while the particular configuration of human resource problems varies from society to society, it is possible to categorize those problems in a universal way. That is what I now propose to do.

First of all, there is that set of policies closest to the interests of this audience, which are designed to achieve the fullest development of human resources—the fullest development of the productive capacities of human beings. Human resource development embraces not only the creation of vocational skills and know-how required by the structure of the economy, but also what might be called labor market skills, that is, the kind of knowledge and understanding that will permit individuals to operate effectively and successfully in the labor market—a basic understanding of the dimensions of the world of work; the occupational alternatives open to individuals and the education and training these occupations require; how one goes about looking for work; how one presents one's self to an employer; and so forth. Human resource development also includes the creation of a set of attitudes, habits, and behavior patterns that are consistent with the requirements of an industrialized system—the development of the kind of motivation that is consistent with coming to work each day, being punctual, accepting a niche in a bureaucracy, or, in other words, being able and willing to accept the degree of regimentation that is inherent in a complex industrialized system.

A second major category of human resource policies relates to the optimal allocation of resources—that is, attempting to assure that individuals who have achieved the kinds of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that I've just described are allocated among those occupations, industries, firms, and localities in which their contribution to the social product will be maximized. This means making certain that the structure of incentives in the economy is consistent with the needs of the economy. It means also making certain that workers and prospective workers have adequate job information. Finally, it means developing institutional arrangements that will promote desirable kinds of occupational and geographic mobility and that will discourage dysfunctional types of mobility.

A third category of human resource policies can be subsumed under the heading of human resource utilization. This is a concept which can be defined in a number of different ways—broadly or narrowly. In its broadest definition it would encompass virtually everything else that I am discussing. In a narrower sense, human resource utilization may refer to those policies at the level of the employing establishment that are designed to avoid a variety of kinds of waste in the use of human resources. For instance, the elimination of discrimination is an aspect of effective human resource utilization. I am suggesting, of course, that discrimination based on race, on age, on sex—indeed on anything other than productive capacity--is bad not only because it is immoral, but also because it is wasteful of resources.

Under the heading of human resource utilization I would also include effective personnel and industrial relations policies, not only because through such policies it is possible to minimize such forms of waste as absenteeism, but, more importantly, because they are a means of effecting the compromise that I referred to earlier between the individual's needs as a producer and his needs as a consumer. Although there isn't time to go into this, I simply suggest to you that the institution of unionism and collective bargaining is precisely that—a mechanism for compromising the conflicting aims of efficiency on the one hand and reasonable psychological and physical comfort in the work arena on the other.

A fourth category of human resource policies is human resource maintenance or conservation. I would include in this category all of those processes that are related to the maintenance of the

health and vigor of the members of the society, from adequate nutrition through remedial and preventive health care, including industrial safety and hygiene. Also included under this heading are income maintenance schemes—that is, arrangements designed to protect the productive efficiency of individuals during periods in which, for one reason or another, they are unable to work. From this point of view, programs like unemployment compensation, workmen's compensation, and disability compensation are important not only because of their humanitarian implications, but also because they protect valuable investments in the productive capacities of human beings during periods in which they are not working.

Finally, I cannot conclude this list without mentioning the vital importance of maintaining a high level of demand for employment in the economy, although this is a matter of general economic policy rather than of human resource policy, per se. In other words, unless general economic policies maintain a high level of effective demand for goods and services, and consequently high levels of employment opportunities, there is clearly not much point in concerning one's self about efficiencies in the productive process.

Now, it seems to me to be evident from what I've said that the field of human resource policy is a highly interdisciplinary one. It should be obvious that there is no single human resource specialist. There are rather a host of human resource specialists: the teacher, the trainer, the educational planner, the health planner, the training program administrator, the employment service director, the vocational guidance counselor, the personnel director, the industrial relations practitioner, the labor market researcher. Consequently, there is no single curriculum that will create all of these. However, each of these functions, I would argue, can better be performed if the practitioner has a global view of the total field. Many of our present human resource problems have developed, or at least have been exacerbated by, the compartmentalization of interest and expertise. For example, educators very frequently have meager knowledge about the world of work, while at the same time the labor market specialist has generally been unmindful about what goes on within the educational system and what it can or cannot accomplish. If I may be permitted a brief "commercial" in this context, I believe that the principal strength of the instructional programs that the Faculty of Labor and Human Resources has developed is precisely that they provide the kind of global understanding that will permit a variety of human resource specialists to operate more effectively in their individual domains.

Now let me turn to some observations about the relationship between all of this and vocational education R & D. Specifically I should like to suggest three lines of thought or investigation that seem to me to promise substantial payoffs. I warn you in advance that I am not intending to develop any of these very far, both because of time constraints and, more fundamentally, because I am not able to without the collaboration of people like you. They are, however, matters that are exceedingly important from my perspective, and I hope that my observations about them will generate responses from you both during the discussion period and over the longer-term future in the form, perhaps, of joint research efforts.

First, we know surprisingly little about the nature of the link between education and labor market success. We know incontrovertibly that there is a link—that the more education a person has the better off he or she is likely to be in the labor market—but precisely why that is we do not know. We do not know to what extent it results purely from credentialism. We do not know to what extent it results from the fact that the educational process creates a kind of docility in human beings that makes them more appealing to employers. We do not know to what extent it results from the fact that education contributes kinds of wisdom and understanding that make people more productive. We do not know to what extent it results from the implantation of specific kinds of skills. In point of fact, we don't know what the educational "production process" really

is, and it would seem to me to be self-evident that unless one does know that, one builds curricula rather blindly.

Let me take just one example that happens to be very close to your interests. There has been a long-standing question about the relative merits of vocational versus general education in contributing to the labor market capabilities of young people who do not go on to college, and a number of studies have attempted to shed light on this question. Some of these have purported to demonstrate that vocational education as a pure investment in creating work skills does indeed pay off—that the graduates of vocational education programs do better than the graduates of general programs. However, much of the research that has focused on this question has been plagued by very serious methodological problems. One of my colleagues, John Grasso, has recently completed a study of this issue utilizing the National Longitudinal Surveys of the labor force experience of young men. He has concluded that, at least for individuals who went through high school vocational education programs in the 1960's, there is no evidence, holding other things equal, that they did any better in the earlier portions of their careers than individuals who went through the general curriculum.* Now I do not wish to assert that Grasso's study is definitive. I juxtapose his findings against those of other studies largely to illustrate the extent of our uncertainty, rather than to profess what we know. My general thesis is that we need to know a great deal more than we do about the specific relationship between what goes on in the classroom and what goes on later in the world of work. We need to know what is the proper mix of training in the school and out of school in generating the competencies that are required for various kinds of careers.

A second major topic that requires our attention is how the school system can better operate to provide the kinds of labor market information that will allow youth to make rational occupational decisions. The economist uses a model of occupational choice that suggests that individuals, as the result of fairly careful calculations, choose those occupations that maximize the individual's total happiness. What is absurd about that model—and I speak as a member of that fraternity of economists—is that even if one were willing to assume that human beings are hedonistic pleasure maximizers, they come nowhere near having the kinds of information that would permit them to make occupational choices in that manner. The Appalachian coal miner's son or daughter cannot compare the limited number of occupations that he or she happens to know about with the occupation of, say, atomic physicist, because such youngsters are unlikely to know what an atomic physicist is. If they do know what an atomic physicist is, they almost certainly do not know what perquisites attach to that occupation. I am not referring only to earnings; to be sure, they don't know how much an atomic physicist earns, but what is more important, they do not know how an atomic physicist lives—what it really means to be an atomic physicist.

Now this has a number of implications. From a purely human resource point of view, it means that we possibly are denied the productive services of some very talented individuals. But from another point of view—and this is the one that happens to concern me most—it means the deprivation of equality of opportunity. We tend to recognize that equality of opportunity means having equal financial access to higher education. But if youngsters do not have the kind of knowledge and understanding that enable them even to consider this alternative, nothing is accomplished simply by making financial resources available to them. We must be much more imaginative than we have been in creating an understanding of the total dimensions of the world of work among young people; and this is a process that cannot be left to high school counselors, because many of the factors that are crucial

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*John Thomas Grasso, *The Contributions of Vocational Education, Training and Work Experience to the Early Career Achievements of Young Men.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1975.

to the process of occupational choice operate long before the youngster gets to high school. The process must start in the kindergarten, and it must be directed at parents as well as children, for much of the understanding that affects the kinds of choices young people make is generated in the home rather than in school.

The third line of endeavor that I should like to mention is the most difficult to articulate. One way of defining it is to say that we must discover how to integrate the entire educational experience in order to achieve all of the objectives that education is designed to serve for all students. I can perhaps best illustrate what I have in mind by asserting that there is no subject matter that is not vocational. We do not ordinarily think of reading, writing, and arithmetic as vocational subjects, but it is clear that the extent to which people master those techniques has substantial implications for vocational success. That's fairly obvious; what is less obvious, but I think nonetheless valid, is that any subject—e.g., history—either does or can have vocational implications. I am suggesting, for instance, that the way in which a history teacher teaches history can embody a problem-solving approach that, if captured by the students, will make a substantial contribution to occupational careers that have nothing to do with history. From this point of view, vocational education should not be conceived as a curriculum, but as a broad objective that should permeate the entire educational experience. Moreover, although this isn't central to our focus, I would also argue analogously that laying the foundation for informed citizenship is not the exclusive function of a "problems of democracy" course, but is a basic objective of education which ought to be served by every educational experience that a youngster has. Finally, whatever one means by self-fulfillment, this is an objective that ought consciously to be pursued in every course that the student takes.

I realize that many of the people who talk about career education these days seem to have in mind something like what I am saying. On the other hand, my admittedly limited reading of the literature on career education has led me to believe that many of its exponents have considerably more limited horizons. In any case, whether it is "career education" or something else, if we can develop an educational system in which every teacher consciously and continuously pursues all of education's objectives in every classroom, we would make a very substantial contribution not only to solving the nation's human resource problems, but to solving many of our other social problems as well.