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ABSTRACT

When the American Vocational Association changed its name to the Association for Career and Technical Education, it underscored the need for today's vocational educators to focus on both career education and technical education. The name change reflects the fact that today's work environment, labor market, and employment opportunities are very different from those that existed in the early 1900s when vocational education first became popular. The name change should also be a call for comprehensive career education efforts at the K-12 level, combined with a call for greatly increased technical education efforts at the postsecondary level. Comprehensive career education must achieve the following goals: (1) show students the importance of assigned work tasks and how employed workers need and use the basic academic skills and other skills emphasized in the Secretary's Commission on Necessary Skills report; (2) reward work (including classroom work) when it occurs; (3) introduce variety into the workplace (classroom) by combining textbook and experiential learning and using business/industry persons as classroom resources; and (4) emphasize and reward the practice of productive work habits. The "technical education" component of "Association for Career and Technical Education" refers to all postsecondary career-oriented programs operating at the sub-baccalaureate level. (Contains 40 references.) (MN)

What's In A Name?

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Introduction

When the American Vocational Association changed its name to the Association For Career And Technical Education (ACTE), the need for some kind of combination of "Career Education" and "Technical Education" was obvious.This is a major undertaking holding serious implications for change in both role and function of persons previously known as "vocational educators". The purpose of this article is to present some challenges for change facing ACTE members as we embrace and support this new name.

Some will undoubtedly resist any operational changes growing out of this new name. Instead, they will operate under the "a rose by any other name will smell as sweet" point of view. That point of view is rejected here. Instead, this article begins with a short statement regarding the need to change not only in word but also in fact from "vocational education" to "career and technical education". This is followed by a set of suggestions for vocational educator involvement in both (a) career education and (b) technical education.

Background

The term "vocational education" first became popular in the early 1900s. At that time, the following conditions existed: (1) most jobs required no more than a high school education; (2) most high school graduates with vocational education skills could find good jobs lasting for their entire career; (3) it was common for youth to make occupational choices that were expected to last a lifetime during the high school years and (4) the career question that new high school graduates had to answer was "Should I go to college - or should I go to work?" There were few postsecondary sub-baccalaureate programs available for choice. *The vocational education movement grew and flourished during the 20th century when these conditions existed.*

Today none of these conditions is generally true. Instead, (1) a high school education qualifies most persons primarily only for low level, low pay jobs in the secondary labor market; (2) most persons can expect to change occupations multiple times during their working years due to changes in the occupational society; (3) most high school students have made no firm career

choices; and (4) the question most of today's high school graduates must answer is "Should I go to a four-year college or seek some other kind of postsecondary career-oriented program?". *Traditional vocational education is not appropriate for these emerging 21st century conditions.*

High school vocational education programs aimed at providing students with specific vocational skills required for a lifetime of gainful employment were badly needed when the vocational education movement was born. The vocational skills provided by high school vocational education, while not at a high level, were sufficient for entry into many occupations. The vocational education movement can and should be proud of the significant contributions it made to youth and adults during the 20th century.

Those days, however, are gone. If America is to compete successfully in the emerging international, high skills information society, increasing numbers of prospective employees must be equipped with a combination of thinking skills and high level, specific career skills acquired at the postsecondary level (Marshall, R. & Tucker, M., 1992). Secondary education can and must contribute to equipping almost all students with adequate levels of general employability skills - levels still not commonly seen today. If America is to compete internationally as a "high skills" rather than a "low wage" nation, sizable increases must also occur in the numbers of career-oriented programs available for choice at the postsecondary sub-baccalaureate level (National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990).

The change in name from "AVA" to "ACTE" should mean a call for comprehensive career education efforts at the K-12 level combined with a call for greatly increased technical education efforts at the postsecondary level. The basic kinds of efforts needed are discussed below.

Needed Career Education Programs

The term "career education" has been defined in various ways since publication of the first book on career education in 1972 (Hoyt, K., Evans, R., Mangum, G.). Several other career education books are included in the list of references for this article. While varying widely in specific contents, these references also illustrate a high level of consensus regarding the meaning and purposes of the term "career education". It is assumed here that those key persons voting to change the name of AVA to ACTE did so in keeping with the basic nature and goals of "career education". The most basic elements in the career education concept include the following:

The Concept of Work: Bedrock For Career Education

The first definition of "career education" appeared in a 1972 publication (Hoyt, K., Evans, R., Mangum, G, *op cit.*). That definition was:

> "Career education is the total effort of the education system and the broader community to help all individuals become familiar with the values of a work-oriented society, to integrate these values into their personal value system, and to implement these values into their lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful, and satisfying to each individual."

That definition was adopted in the first policy paper on career education published by the United States Office of Education (Hoyt, 1974) and several years later by the American Association For Career Education.

That definition obviously becomes more meaningful after the word "work" is defined. The USOE definition of "work" found in the USOE policy statement referred to above is:

> "Work is conscious effort, other than that whose prime purpose is either coping or relaxation, aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or for oneself and others."

This definition obviously includes both unpaid work and paid employment. That concept is central to the discussion of career education and educational reform below.

Career Education And Educational Reform

The "father" of career education is widely recognized as being Dr. Sidney P. Marland, Jr. who invented the term "career education" while he was serving as USOE Commissioner of Education during the 1970 - 1974 period. Marland's only book on this subject, published in 1974, was entitled *Career Education: A Proposal For Reform.* (Marland, 1974). Career education is properly conceptualized as an approach to educational reform oriented around the word "work". Those who would attempt to define and implement "career education" without recognizing the central, bedrock importance of the word "work" are not really engaged in "career education" and would do better to choose some other term to represent their efforts.

As an educational reform effort, career education advocates conceptualize the classroom as a *workplace* and both pupils and teachers as *workers*. By doing so, it is possible to discuss recommendations for improving *educational productivity* using the same general principles used in improving productivity in other settings. Such principles include, for example:

1. *Showing the worker (i.e. the pupil) the importance of the work tasks assigned him/her.* - and especially how employed workers need and use the basic academic skills and other career skills emphasized in the SCANS Report (USDOL, 1991)

2. *Rewarding work (including classroom work) when it occurs* - giving pupils some credit when they really try even when the results are less than perfect.

3. *Introducing variety into the workplace (i.e., the classroom)*-, e.g. combining textbook and experiential learning - field trips - use of business/industry persons as classroom resources,

4. *Emphasizing and rewarding the practice of productive work habits* - e.g. coming to work on time - finishing assigned tasks - doing your best - following directions - working as team members, etc..

In a comprehensive career education program, each of these basic principles would be strongly advocated and used. For example, efforts to help pupils become aware of and practice good work habits should begin in the early elementary school years. It is during those years when some kind of work habits will, of necessity, be acquired as pupils seek to complete assignments given them by their teachers. If good work habits aren't emphasized, bad work habits may result. By emphasizing the practice of good work habits during the K-12 years, chances of developing adult workers with good work habits will be increased.

If classroom teachers follow these kinds of procedures, career education advocates claim that educational productivity - i.e., academic achievement - will be improved. Some research evidence exists supporting this contention (Hoyt, K. and S. High, 1982).

Career Education and Work Values

Career educators are well aware of the fact that rapidity of occupational change taking place in the emerging information society makes it impossible for most persons to select their occupational choices only once during their working years. Instead, most will change occupations multiple times. *Work values,* on the other hand, represent that part of each person's system of personal values that combine to create work that is possible, meaningful, and satisfying to him/her. People choose to work for a variety of reasons. Among the many things that will cause some persons to *value work*, the following are examples.

- Work is a way of making money
- Work is a way to feel one has accomplished something worthwhile
- Work is a way a person can know he/she is needed by someone else
- Work is a way a person can say he/she is contributing to society
- Work is a way persons can help discover who they are and why they exist
- Work is a way for the individual to excel in something

A person's system of work values can remain strong and viable in all of the occupations in which the individual engages. *Career educators want persons to want to work.* This is an essential part of the true meaning of "career education".

Career Education and Collaboration

The career education movement places a high priority on emphasizing the concept of *collaboration* - not just *cooperation* - in devising and implementing career education efforts. If America is to become a "high skills" rather than a "low wages" society, it is essential that the development of career skills be a joint effort of education and the private sector. The education system cannot by itself create the number and variety of "high skills" workers needed in the emerging information society. Educators have neither the expertise nor the facilities to do this alone. If this goal is to be met, marked increases in private sector involvement must occur.

In career education, the term "collaboration" has come to be defined as joint *responsbility,* joint *authority*, and joint *accountability* between education and the business/industry community. (Hoyt, 1978). How much "authority" each has is dependent on how much "responsibility" each assumes. Similarly, how much "accountability" each assumes is also a function of how much responsibility and authority each takes. Taken together, these three factors - authority, responsibility, and accountability - determine the nature and effectiveness of collaboration.

The "cooperative" relationships between education and the business/industry community that existed in the past need to be expanded into true "collaborative" efforts.

Career Education and K-12 Career Guidance and Counseling

School counselors are key persons in K-12 career education programs. Their major roles include: (1) helping K-12 pupils decide to maximize their efforts to acquire the kinds of general

employability/adaptability/promotability skills needed for career success in almost all occupations; (2) helping K-12 pupils, their parents, and their teachers rid themselves of the bias that regards the four-year college degree as the "best" kind of postsecondary education for all pupils; (3) helping K-12 classroom teachers find ways of infusing a "careers" emphasis into those parts of the teaching/learning process aimed at motivating pupils to learn the subject matter; and (4) helping almost all high school leavers consider enrolling in some kind of postsecondary education.

The goal that ties "career education" and "technical education" most closely together is that of helping almost all high school leavers consider enrolling in some kind of postsecondary education. Unfortunately, this is also the goal least well met to date. School counselors need to become as good in helping high school leavers consider enrolling in 1 - 2 year career-oriented postsecondary institutions as they are now in helping pupils consider enrolling in four-year colleges and universities. Considering the fact that most of today's school counselors have never attended any kind of 1 - 2 year postsecondary career-oriented institution, this becomes a major challenge. One way of meeting this challenge is to supply school counselors with "customer satisfaction" type data collected from present and former postsecondary students. High school students will usually listen better to their peers than to adults.

Career Education And General Employability/adaptability/promotability Skills

At the K-12 level, career education aims, using the major components described above, to equip all high school leavers with a set of general employability/adaptability/promotability skills needed for success in almost all occupations. Such skills include: (1) the basic academic skills (including computer skills); (2) productive work habits; (3) personally meaningful work values, and (4) career decisionmaking skills useful in making occupational changes. No matter how much we emphasize the need for and the advantages of postsecondary education, it seems apparent that many high school leavers will be entering the labor force without considering any form of formal postsecondary academic or career-oriented education. This makes the importance of providing general employability/adaptability/promotability skills to all pupils even more apparent. Career education at the K-12 level must make this one of its priority goals.

Needed Technical Education Programs

It appears that the term "technical education" included in the "Association For Career And Technical Education" (ACTE) is intended to cover all postsecondary career-oriented programs operating at the sub-baccalaureate level. If so, this would include a wide variety of what are today recognized as postsecondary vocational-technical programs. Some persons appear to favor defining "technical education" as covering only full two year programs offered by community colleges and technical institutes and usually leading to an Associates degree. Such persons tend to call postsecondary career-oriented programs less than two years in length "occupational education".

My personal preference would be to reserve the term "technical education" to two year programs aimed at providing students with the high levels of specific career skills needed to compete with students from other nations in the international marketplace. Apparently, there is no restriction such as this intended by those who named ACTE to include "technical education". Instead, it appears that the term "technical education" in ACTE refers to all career-oriented programs offering some form of postsecondary training at the sub-baccalaureut level. Thus, it will be treated in that way in the following discussion.

In order for America to compete successfully in the international marketplace for "high skill" workers, it is essential to emphasize the importance of "high skills". It will not be possible to produce "high skill" workers who can compete with other "high skills" workers on an international basis if America's "high skills" workers have only a high school education. Thus, the "technical education" part of ACTE must be conceptualized as operating primarily at the postsecondary level.

Within any "technical education" institution, at least part of their programs will, hopefully, place special emphasis on producing graduates equipped with high quality specific career skills that will enable them to compete with their counterparts world-wide for success in the emerging information society.

The Need For Technical Education

During the 1992 - 2005 period, jobs requiring postsecondary training at less than a bachelor's degree are projected to increase by 34% - the highest *rate* of change for any level of

education (*Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 1994). The need for "technical education" graduates can be seen, in part, by considering data related to enrollment in four-year colleges. Of the 2.8 million youth who graduated from high school in 1997, 1.9 million (67%) were attending college in October, 1997. (USDOL, July, 1988) When these statistics are compared with other statistics showing that only 36% of new jobs requiring a bachelor's degree are predicted for the 1992 - 2005 period (*OOQ*, Summer, 1994), the differences are sizable. If compared to the 23.2% of all job openings expected to require a four-year college degree during the 1994-2005 period, the differences are even larger. (*OOQ*, Winter, 1995-96). It appears that, when the number of persons graduating with four-year college degrees are compared with the numbers of job openings requiring such a degree, one could say there may be a surplus of four-year college graduates on this one dimension.

This has recently been confirmed by Shelly (*OOQ*, Summer, 1996) who predicted a surplus of 300,000 four-year college graduates per year during the 1994-2005 period and by Mittelhauser (*OOQ*, Summer, 1996) who projected a surplus of 250,000 four-year college graduates per year for the 1996 - 2006 period. Both Shelly and Mittelhauser used the term "surplus" to refer to differences between the expected number of four-year college graduates compared to the expected number of job vacancies requiring a four-year college degree. Since the career skills now included as "technical education" are not a part of the typical four-year college program, the need for technical education graduates cannot be expected to be met by counting on a surplus of four-year college graduates.

The need for technical education can also be seen by contrasting projected employment changes during the 1996 - 2006 period for various kinds of education. (*OOQ*, Winter, 1997). These data make it clear that there are projected to be more jobs requiring only short-term OJT (21.9 million) than all job openings put together requiring any kind of postsecondary education (15.5 million). The short-term OJT jobs are expected to require only two to three weeks of training - far short of the kinds of "high skills" needed in the international labor market. Most of these jobs are located in the secondary labor market with low pay, few fringe benefits, even fewer opportunities for advancement, and little job security. If an adequate number of high quality technical education institutions existed, it would be possible for many of today's high school graduates to enter a technical education program as opposed to seeking employment in one of

these secondary labor market jobs. Without technical education opportunities, their prospects for long term career success are greatly reduced.

Expanding Opportunities and Enrollments in Technical Education

The number of jobs requiring an Associate degree is expected to increase by 22% and the number requiring some kind of postsecondary vocational training will increase by 7% during the 1996 - 2006 period (OOQ, Winter, 1997-1998). Together, they total a prediction of 3,943,000 job openings - 7.8% - of the 50,562,000 job openings project to exist during this period. This is not nearly enough for America to compete successfully in the international labor market. Many more technical education graduates must be educated and employed.

The largest problem to be faced and overcome is the strong bias held by both most parents and most graduating high school seniors that the four-year college degree is the "best" kind of postsecondary education. This kind of bias continues to exist in spite of statistics such as:

1. Only 51% of 1980 high school graduates expecting to receive a bachelor's degree had done so by 1992 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995)
2. In one BLS study, persons with some kind of postsecondary education averaged $491 per week while those with no postsecondary education averaged only $322 per week. (Moskowitz, 1995)
3. In another BLS study, 1 in every 6 full-time salaried workers age 25 and older who didn't have a bachelor's degree earned more than $700 per week in 1993 - close to the $716 per week earned by the average four-year college graduate. Further, in a few occupations, more than 10% of workers without college degrees earn over $1,000 per week. (Cosca, OOQ, Winter, 1994-95).

In an attempt to overcome this bias favoring the four-year colllege over all other kinds of postsecondary education, the "Counseling for High Skills" program at Kansas State University was funded with a $3.3 million grant from the DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. (Hoyt, 1999). Under this grant, data have been collected from approximately 40,000 present and former students of postsecondary career-oriented educational institutions operating at the sub-baccalaureate level and distributed on computer disks to school counselors for use in helping high school students make enrollment decisions. Data collected from these former postsecondary

students contains several positive bits of information that may make postsecondary technical education more attractive to some. These include:

- 7 out of 10 former students said that, if they had it to do over again, they would enroll in the same peogram in the same institution.
- 6 out of 10 former students rated their program as "high" and only 3 in 100 former students rated their program "low"
- 7 out of 10 former students reported they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their first job following completion of their educational program.
- 6 in 10 former students reported their first job after completing their educational program was "better" than the last job they held prior to enrollment in that program be in terms of (a) job satisfaction, (b) weekly pay, (c) chances for advancement, and (d) chances of keeping the job.

The second major challenge will be to create and implement a variety of kinds of postsecondary technical education institutions so that each prospective student will have freedom to select the kind of program most attractive to him/her. This should include at least one institution in each state that draws students from the entire state and includes dormitory arrangements. It should also include in each institution at least one program specifically designed as a "high skills" program needed for success in the emerging information society .

The third major challenge will be to collect and distribute a variety of kinds of "customer satisfaction" data to prospective postsecondary technical education students. These data will be most effective if collected from both present and former students. They will be useful both in (a) institutional self study and evaluation and in (b) career counseling of prospective students.

Closing Remarks

As America moves into the 21st century, challenges with respect to making work an important and meaningful part of lifestyle for all persons will require expanded thoughts and efforts that were not fully implemented during the last 100 years. Two of these much needed concepts are (a) career education; and (b) technical education. The American Vocational Association made an important and much needed leadership decision when it changed its name to the Association For Career And Technical Education. It is now time to follow that leadership.

The thoughts with respect to the nature, goals, and activities of both career education and technical education presented here are those of only one person. They are not presented here as "absolutely correct". Rather, they are intended to encourage others to think about the implications of this name change for themselves. If this is done, we should be able to reach some kind of consensus on the initial meaning of our association's new name sometime in the near future.

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