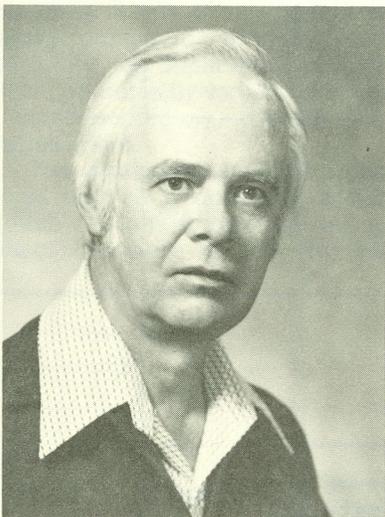


Lane has searched for substantive criticisms of career education and found them.

Negativism in career education

by William Lane



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Against a background of spiraling educational costs, an increasing student clamor for greater relevance in both courses and subject material and the growing dissatisfaction of both the home and the world of work with what they see as the diminishing productivity of the educational process, it is clearly evident that there is an urgent need for a higher level of performance in educational outcomes. To many educators, parents, businessmen and respected leaders in all phases of American life, the answer to the current ills of the educational process seems to lie in the promise of what the former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. Sidney P. Marland, Jr., introduced in January, 1971, as "Career Education."

As much as many educational leaders and laymen may believe that Career Education holds unusual promise, it is important to be realistic enough to recognize that even this new idiology may not be the complete solution to all of our problems, and that not all of the criticisms of Career Education are unwarranted and without foundation. Not even the staunchest advocate of Career Education should be blind to the fact that some misjudgments in concept, content, context and application can be present in even the best of ideas and their implementation. It is important, therefore, that Career Education exponents objectively review and respond to even the slightest criticism, for only in so doing can they satisfy themselves and the critics that the concept has been soundly conceived and is being effectively implemented.

It is with these cautions in mind that the author recently reviewed the 115-item Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) listing of reports, texts and studies under the subtitle of Career Education. That research produced only three articles substantially critical of Career Education. This collection was augmented by three additional articles secured from personal and professional contacts. The six papers critical of Career Education are items number five, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and eighteen in the bibliography.

Each of the six negative papers was reviewed at least twice for purposes of obtaining an overall reaction and to assure at least a basic understanding of each point of criticism. In total, some 41 critical points were identified and listed by individual author. A conscientious effort was then made to detect and eliminate from the listing those points which were obvious duplications. Some tendency toward duplication may still exist, however, by virtue of differences in breadth or depth of inclusiveness of comments of individual authors on a given point. Where possible, any comments that were precisely duplicative appear only once in the listing, but may, of course, be attributable to two or more authors if such was the case.

Next, each article was reviewed a third time for the purpose of attempting to correlate each criticism of the policy and practice statements, or quoted references, with one or more of the six texts, articles or other items favorable to Career Education for comparative or analytical purposes. The six items favorable to Career Education are items number three, six, seven, nine, ten and seventeen in the bibliography.

TABLE 1
Listing of Critical Comments
by Functional Categories

Item No.	Paraphrase of Critical Comment	Weighted Qualitative Value
Political and Social		
2.	Sources of funds and leadership too heavily vocational	6
10.	Minority mistrust of Career Education concepts and practices	2
12.	Vocational education considered inferior and degrading	2
25.	No program to change parental aspirations for children	1½
41.	Administrative mistakes, financial problems and scandals and political intrigue	1½
Implementational		
1.	Some schools not applying concept in early grades	1
13.	Old, ineffective techniques still used	1
19.	Obsolete work concepts taught	1½
32.	Predeterministic materials used	1
Developmental		
3.	Haste in development sacrifices professionalism	3
5.	Curriculum development by levels not coordinated	1
6.	Insufficient knowledge on human development	1
7.	Need more experience with "hands on" techniques	1
8.	Need more work on evaluative process	1
9.	Need more stress on employer-based model	1
14.	Need more work on career selection techniques	1½
16.	Does not stress upgrading of personal goals	1
21.	Sexist and racial discrimination in materials	2
23.	Need more implementation methodology and specifics	2
24.	Need for teacher retraining and motivation staggering	2
26.	No way to combat teacher resistance to new, packaged, canned material	1
27.	Inadequate preparation for change, per se	2
28.	Insufficient funding	1
29.	Inadequate professional, political, legislative and public support	1
34.	Eliminate moralistic pronouncements (inequalities and undemocratic)	1½
35.	Failure to consider, discuss or influence value systems	1
36.	Need greater student participation in decision-making	1½
Conceptual		
4.	Objectives, terms and definitions vague or incomplete	5½
11.	Helps to preserve "status quo"; not agent for social change	4
15.	Preserves old track methods and teacher prejudgment	2½
17.	Fosters anti-intellectualism	3½
18.	Does not treat avocations seriously	1
20.	Over-emphasis on work objectives	6½
22.	Eliminate cluster concept, scientific techniques and tools	2
30.	Advocator differences, no concensus on concepts and methodology	1
31.	Advocator claims too broad, become meaningless	1
33.	Objectives too limited	2
37.	Fosters manipulation and exploitation of students	1
38.	Over-emphasis on cost-benefit, evaluation of outcomes	2
39.	Over-emphasis on success in work; none on culture	1
40.	Student "locked-in" on career choice	1

The next step was to analyze the criticisms in somewhat qualitative terms. Each of the 41 points were identified, insofar as the analyst's skill permitted, into one of four major categories—criticisms related to conceptual matters, criticisms of the developmental process, criticisms relating to the implementational phase, and criticisms that involved political or social considerations. The results of this categorization process appear in Tables 1 and 2. Table 3 also attempts to categorize critical comment in numerical and proportional terms, by source.

Non-Evaluative Discussion

From Table 1 it can be determined that, exclusive of any possible duplication or overlap between items, only items number two and four were mentioned in five of the six articles reviewed. Item number three was noted in three of the six papers and seven other criticisms were found in two of the six articles. Critical item number twenty attained the largest weighted total chiefly because it was a major argument of one particular author. The remaining 31 criticisms appeared only once in any of the papers studied. This lack of substantive duplication by item would tend to imply that the possibility for duplication or overlap was present in the remaining items by variations in context that were permitted to stand separately in order not to distort the author's precise intent.

The statistical weighting process was obviously artificial but, as it develops, a quite logical and generally equitable means to develop the qualitative aspects of total critical comment (except for item twenty, for reasons

previously stated). As Table 2 indicates, close to half of the weighted 41 criticisms dealt with matters relating to program concept. These criticisms seem to lean heavily in the direction of complaints that Career Education objectives are too narrow, that they put too much emphasis on the work ethic and career success, and similar inferences of anti-intellectualism. Next in order of magnitude were criticisms relating to the developmental aspects of Career Education which represented slightly less than one-third of the total negativism. These comments generally related to the lack of appreciation for the mechanics and magnitude of the changes that must be achieved in school and at home if Career Education is to be successful in the opinion of the respective authors. Criticisms of the manner in which Career Education is being implemented were negligible at 6 per cent. This leaves only the critical comments related to socio-political considerations inherent in the concept and program which constituted roughly 17 per cent of the total. These comments came from all six papers and were a relatively small number of comments that tended to be repeated more frequently than others in other categories.

The categories and numbers of times a given criticism tended to be mentioned by more than one author, or more than once by the same author, are as follows:

Category	Extent of Duplication
Political-Social	3 of 5 items mentioned at least twice
Implementational	0 of 4 items mentioned at least twice
Developmental	2 of 18 items mentioned at least twice
Conceptual	6 of 14 items mentioned at least twice

TABLE 2

Analysis of Critical Comments
by Author, by Category

Author	Number ^a / Percent	Political and Social	Implemen- tational	Develop- mental	Conceptual	Totals	
						Number ^a	Percent
Strohmenger	No. Comments Percent	1 11.1%	1 11.1%	6 66.7%	1 11.1%	9 11.8%	100.0%
Harris	No. Comments Percent	2½ 100.0%	- -	- -	- -	2½ 3.3%	100.0%
Sproull	No. Comments Percent	3 16.2%	2½ 13.5%	3½ 18.9%	9½ 51.4%	18½ 24.3%	100.0%
Shimberg	No. Comments Percent	3 21.4%	- -	10 71.5%	1 7.1%	14 18.4%	100.0%
Smith	No. Comments Percent	2 7.0%	1 3.5%	4 14.0%	21½ 75.5%	28½ 37.6%	100.0%
Washington Monitor	No. Comments Percent	1½ 33.3%	- -	2 44.4%	1 22.3%	4½ 4.6%	100.0%
Totals	No. Comments Percent	13 17.1%	4½ 6.0%	25½ 32.2%	34 44.7%	77 100.0%	-

^aStatistically weighted (value of one first mention any author; one-half value each additional mention by same author).

TABLE 3
Post-Analysis Summary of Negativism in Career Education

Item Number	Ranking		Discussion Category					C. E. Related		Valid Criticism		Invalid by Reason of -			
	Raw	Wtd.	Political / Social	Developmental	Implementational	Conceptual	Yes	No	Entire	Partial	C.F. Policy	Logical Discuss.	Contradictory statements	No	Proof
1. Some schools not applying concept in early grades	1	1			X		X		X						
2. Sources of funds and leadership too heavily vocational	5	6	X				X			X					
3. Haste in development sacrifices professionalism	3	3		X			X		X						
4. Objectives, terms and definitions vague or incomplete	5	5½				X	X				X				
5. Curriculum development by levels not coordinated	1	1		X			X		X						
6. Insufficient knowledge on human development	1	1		X				X	X						
7. Need more experience with "hands on" techniques	1	1		X			X		X						
8. Need more work on evaluative process	1	1		X			X		X						
9. Need more stress on employer-based model	1	1		X			X		X						
10. Minority mistrust of Career Education concepts/practices	2	2.	X				X				X				
11. Helps to preserve "status quo"; not agent for social change	2	4				X	X				X				
12. Vocational education considered inferior and degrading	2	2	X					X	X						
13. Old, ineffective techniques still used	1	1			X		X		X						
14. Needs more work on career selection techniques	1	1½		X			X		X						
15. Preserves old track methods and teacher prejudgment	2	2½				X	X							X	
16. Does not stress upgrading of personal goals	1	1		X			X				X				
17. Fosters anti-intellectualism	2	3½				X	X				X				
18. Does not treat avocations seriously	1	1				X	X			X					
19. Obsolete work concepts taught	1	1½			X		X				X				
20. Over-emphasis on work objectives	2	6½				X	X				X				
21. Sexist and racial discrimination in materials	2	2		X			X		X						
22. Eliminate cluster concept, scientific techniques and tools	2	2				X		X			X				
23. Need more implementation methodology and specifics	1	2		X			X		X						
24. Need for teacher retraining and motivation staggering	1	2		X			X			X					
25. No program to change parental aspirations for children	1	1½	X					X	X						
26. No way to combat teacher resistance to new, packaged canned material	1	1		X				X		X					

Item Number	Paraphrase of Critical Comment	Ranking		Discussion Category				C. E. Related		Valid Criticism		Invalid by Reason of -						
		Raw	Wtd.	Political / Social	Developmental	Implementational	Conceptual	Yes	No	En-toto	Partial	C.E.	Policy	Logical	Discuss.	Contradictory statement	No	Proof
27.	Inadequate preparation for change, per se	1	2		X			X										
28.	Insufficient funding	1	1		X			X										
29.	Inadequate professional, political, legislative and public support	1	1		X			X										
30.	Advocator differences, no consensus on concepts and methodology	1	1				X	X				X						
31.	Advocator claims too broad, become meaningless	1	1				X	X							X			
32.	Predeterministic materials used	1	1			X			X	X								
33.	Objectives too limited	1	2				X	X							X			
34.	Eliminate moralistic pronouncements (inequalities and undemocratic)	1	1½		X			X								X		
35.	Failure to consider, discuss or influence value systems	1	1		X			X				X						
36.	Need greater student participation in decision-making	1	1½		X			X							X			
37.	Fosters manipulation and exploitation of students	1	1				X	X					X					
38.	Over-emphasis on cost-benefit, evaluation of outcomes	1	2				X	X					X					
39.	Over-emphasis on success in work; none on culture	1	1				X	X					X					
40.	Student "locked-in" on career choice	1	1				X	X				X						
41.	Administrative mistakes, financial problems and scandals and political intrigue	1	1½	X				X		X								
TOTAL		59	77.0	5	18	4	14	35	6	15	6	4	11	3	2			
% TOTAL				12.2	51.2	9.8	56.2	85.4	14.6	(51.2)	(28.6)	(20.0)	(48.8)	(15.0)	(10.0)			

Post-Analysis Summary of Critical Comment

The rank order of each area, based on the number of criticisms found valid after analysis was:

Number of Items	Category	Per Cent Valid
14	Developmental	66.7
4	Political and Social	19.0
3	Implementational	14.3
0	Conceptual	0.0

These data imply that the most serious deficiencies are in the Developmental, and Political-Social areas, both in terms of number of criticisms and in the percentage validity of the criticisms. Though only half of the valid criticisms in the Political-Social area are not directly relatable to Career Education concept, as such, failure to resolve these problems (largely matters of adult attitude toward vocational or occupational education training and employment) will continue to impede the full and effective implementation of Career Education until effectively overcome.

It is perhaps also significant that the criticisms of haste in developmental products have produced some less than professional results and the general inadequacy for preparation for change has been costly in terms of support. These, together, with other valid criticisms of a lesser nature, undoubtedly form a focal point for remedial action.

Three of the four Implementational area criticisms survived the analytical procedure to remain valid deficiencies. While these appear to be a small number of complaints and may represent only isolated problems, nonetheless their early correction is considered highly important.

The failure of a single conceptual criticism to be judged valid appears to be largely a matter of insufficient logical support, for the respective contentions. Further, there are strong implications that much of the criticism in this area is little more than pure rhetoric.

Slightly over 60 per cent of the negativism was concerned with conceptual and socio-political type disagreements and problems; these are areas in which philosophy and politics abound, and present many non-

specifics that are most difficult to analyze and/or resolve as differences between fact and opinion. This leaves only about 40 per cent of the criticism in the more factual range that can be more objectively dealt with; all of these items are, of course, in the remaining areas of development and implementation. The nature of this balance tends to imply that critics of Career Education, and the issues they raise, could be highly emotionally charged, but are less substantive in factual character.

Summary Comment

Obviously, a substantial portion of the report pertained to the reasons why individual criticisms were either found valid or were rejected. Those are obviously too lengthy to comment on here even in capsule form, however, Table 3 gives a box-score summary of the results. The full report also contained 17 specific recommendations in acknowledgment that there are varying degrees of deficiencies in the Career Education conceptual, developmental and implementational phases.

Since, however, the purpose of this paper has been primarily to demonstrate that there are some substantive criticisms of Career Education and not how they have been judged or may be remedied, that latter point could be covered in a follow-up article or may be obtained by direct contact with the author through this publication.

In summary—yes, there are flaws in some phases of Career Education and some remedial action is necessary. By and large, however, the concept has more going for it than against it, provided we correct the flaws promptly and monitor our critics in a wholly respectful and objective manner. It is up to those of us who believe in Career Education to correct its deficiencies in a manner which turn its few critics into staunch supporters.

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