This issue on the general planning of vocational-technical education emphasizes that education for employment should be the main purpose of the educational enterprise, and that junior colleges should occupy a dominant position in this preparation. Vocational education was conceived of as part of the total educational structure and vocational theorists have never thought of it in any other way. It should be offered as an alternative to the "go-to-college" concept that has been so over-sold as to be taken for granted. The college preparatory program in high school and community college is probably the greatest farce ever. There can be no dichotomy between the general goals of education and vocational training. More and more the terms vocational education and occupational education are being used synonymously. This should not create confusion as both indicate preparation for the world of work. Toward the end of the 1950s a number of regional conferences directed attention to post-secondary vocational education programs. These national studies showed that the vocational needs of people are a high-priority issue. The role of the junior college in meeting these needs has been clear over the past decade, but the junior college has been slow to accept its responsibility. Career education is a national goal with high priority but it can not be achieved unless junior colleges offer more options and seek greater inter-cooperation. (Author/AL)
The Case for Vocational Education in the Junior College

with an Introductory Review of Recent Research

The Research

The development of vocational-technical education, often referred to as “career education,” has had a tremendous effect on all levels of education, especially as the federal government places greater emphasis on its development. The Junior College Research Review has reported research studies of individual vocational-technical programs. This issue is on the general planning of vocational-technical education and amplifies the special report, “The Case for Vocational Education in the Junior College,” by Melvin L. Barlow.

Vocational-technical education today must consider realistic programs for the disadvantaged, a subject covered by Schultz in Occupations and Education in the 70’s (ED 047 678). Issues raised by Schultz include traditional programs vs. the new occupational curriculum, alternatives to the associate degree, and occupational education as a “touch of reality.”

Preliminary exploration is urged by the Illinois Research and Development Coordinating Unit in a report to state educators, A Master Plan of Research: Developmental and Exemplary Activities in Vocational and Technical Education (ED 047 135). Activities that should precede master planning include: (1) K-14 articulation, (2) educational programs in all occupational areas, (3) programs for the disadvantaged, (4) in-service training to update instructors, and (5) evaluation.

Evaluation and pre-planning through community surveys are the subject of Henderson’s study, Program Planning with Surveys in Occupational Education (ED 045 087). Surveys provide information on student characteristics, manpower needs and projections, accountability, and financing. They are also useful as continuing means of evaluating the programs to see if they are meeting the needs of both the employer and the potential employee.

A state plan for vocational education using a systems approach is offered by Hilton and Gyuro in A Systems Approach—1970 Vocational Education Handbook for State Plan Development and Preparation (ED 045 829). It outlines a plan for vocational education that can be applied in any state. It is intended for use by boards of education, advisory councils, school administrators, and vocational directors.

Planning Facilities and Equipment for Comprehensive Vocational Education Programs for the Future (ED 045 829) by Larson and Blake provides information on new approaches for those planning vocational education facilities. Recommendations include: (1) more research on facilities and equipment; (2) development of visual aids for facility planning.

Eight papers, collected in Essays on Occupational Education in the Two-Year College (ED 037 210) and edited by Gillie cover curriculum development, the needs of alienated youth, and the creation of a 6-4-4 configuration of six years in the elementary school, four in secondary, and four in the junior college. It may have merit for a coordinated program within the framework of “career education” espoused by Commissioner S. P. Marland, Jr.

Several major concerns are discernible in these reports: first, vocational education for the disadvantaged; second, planning coordinated from elementary school through the community college; and third, alternatives to the traditional degree programs. Finally, research is considered a requisite to planning, whether for curriculum or for physical facilities.

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ED 047 135 A master plan of research, by Illinois Research and Development Coordinating Unit. Springfield, Jan. 70. 14pp.

The Case for Vocational Education in the Junior College

Education for employment should be the main purpose of the educational enterprise, and the junior college should occupy a dominant position in this preparation. Neither condition exists, but both are worthy goals.

While it is easy to criticize vocational education in the junior colleges, they do have many exemplary programs. Criticism, if justified, must center around comparative enrollments and the attitudes of policy makers.

The idea of the junior college’s basic role in vocational education grew concurrently with the junior college itself. Over 40 years ago, Eells, writing in Red Book, observed that young men and women were finding adequate preparation “for many life occupations” in the two years of junior college. The same observation can be made today with even more relevance, for the opportunities have been greatly expanded. The junior colleges, however, have only begun to scratch the surface of their potential for occupational education.

To analyze this potential, let us review a number of problems and concepts that bear on the development of vocational education. A brief historical note will keep things in perspective.

Vocational Education—Origin and Change

Vocational education is largely a product of twentieth-century educational needs. Its formative period was from 1906 to 1917; it culminated in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917. The vocational program was organized for high school students and employed adults. At that time, it would have been folly to develop it around the junior colleges, for only 76 of them had been established (16 in California) and the possibility of their contributing to the vocational needs of youth and adults was less than nil. Organizing vocational education around the high school was a daring move in 1917, because only about 20 per cent of those of high-school age were actually in high school. Vocational education zeroed in on the drop-out, who, in those days, was the eighth-grade drop-out, not the high school drop-out of today. Thousands of students left school to go to work. What the labor market needed then was a strong back—a weak mind was no drawback.

Over the years, many changes have taken place. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Amendments of 1968 represent two of the most constructive pieces of legislation ever passed by Congress. Current legislation considers “all people of all ages in all communities” as proper targets for vocational education. This means:

1. youth in high school
2. youth in high school with special needs and problems
3. youth and young adults in junior colleges and other post-secondary institutions
4. employed and unemployed youth and adults.

The word “all” means exactly what it says. Vocational education is concerned with people and work—nearly all people and nearly all occupations. Much of the concern must be shared by the junior college.

A Popular Dichotomy

Vocational education was conceived of as part of the total educational structure—never have the vocational theorists sought of it in any other way. Although vocational education, in both theory and practice, has sought to protect the right of an individual to his cultural heritage and his right to (and need for) a basic education, the situation has been getting out of hand.

We have so over-sold the “go-to-college” concept that few ever think of the purpose of it—they just go to college. The college preparatory program in the high school—and in the community colleges—is probably the greatest farce ever perpetrated on the public. Despite opinions to the contrary, there is not and can not be any dichotomy between the general goals of education and the vocational goals. These equally important parts of a person’s education must find equal expression on the post-secondary level. The institution that does not concern itself with the occupational future of students is not meeting its obligation to contemporary society. This failure is akin to an act of treason against the educational dream of America.

What’s in a Name?

Recently interest has been shown in changing the name of vocational education to “occupational education” or “career education.” Some want to call it “anything but vocational education.” Among junior college educators, “occupational education” has found favor, but why this is so is not clear. Vocational education is not suddenly more important under the new term. Energy devoted to changing the name is wasted.

Many use the words “vocational” and “occupational” almost synonymously. One could provide some distinction by appropriate definition, but why do so? Of all the things that ought to be done in education, changing a name ranks low on the list. Effort devoted to name changing should not replace effort devoted to providing the education and experience that give a person something to offer in the labor market. The issue is providing a program that will solve some of the nation’s need for qualified manpower.

The term “career education,” currently sweeping the nation, connotes preparation for the world of work. At the early grade levels, the emphasis is probably on awareness of careers, on the many options open to individuals, and on making students aware that work is still in vogue. Later on, career education should narrow the work interests of students to a few options—a family or cluster of occupations. At this time, the student should be allowed to explore the real world of these occupational families. Still later, at the senior high school for some and at the junior college for others, students must have a chance to select a group of jobs and begin actual preparation to help them enter those occupations. This phase of career education is vocational education.

It is incorrect to eliminate the term “vocational education” and call it “career education.” This disposes of what career education is ultimately attempting to do. It seeks to have all youth become career-conscious and to obtain enough salable skills for the work society wants done. The actual preparation—the part that determines whether or not a person is employable—is vocational education, part of the total career education effort.

National Studies

The vocational movement began in the high school many years before post-secondary programs were emphasized. The need for post-secondary vocational education was demanding attention long before it attracted leaders in the junior college. It is difficult to cite the precise time of its start, but the post-World War II technological revolution provided fertile ground for the idea’s growth. The need for technicians in national defense was a major motivating force. Toward the end of the 50s, a number of regional conferences directed massive attention to post-secondary vocational education programs. Four of them are described below.
changes in social and technological conditions. One recom-

mendation was that "...the Federal Government provide
funds to assist States in developing and operating vocational
and technical education programs at the post-high school
level" (5:259). The Vocational Education Act of 1963 en-
couraged the development of post-secondary vocational
education programs.

The Panel also issued a report by Lynn A. Emerson that
cited repeatedly the potential of the junior college in voca-
tional education (6).

The Act of 1963 provided that national studies of vocational
education be undertaken at five-year intervals. The first of
these studies was completed by the President's Council ap-
pointed in response to the Act.

Despite the fact that post-secondary institutions had had
only a short time to respond to the provisions of the Act, the
Council reported a 156.7% increase in enrollment for 1964-66.
This supported the contention of the theorists that a vast need
still existed for post-secondary vocational education.
The Council accepted the principle of expansion and sug-
gested the following legislation:

IT IS RECOMMENDED, That the act provide for at
least 25 per cent of the funds appropriated for allocation to
the States to be used for the intent set forth in pur-
pose (2), post-secondary schools, and (3) adult programs
of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 (7:198).

3. American Vocational Association/American Association
of Junior Colleges Seminar. The AVA and AAJC, recognizing
their common interests in post-secondary occupational edu-
cation, held a seminar (May 1970) to explore means for posi-
tive action. National leaders from Congress, from voca-
tional education, and from junior colleges studied the issues of
administration and planning, continuing opportunities for
occupational education, accountability, professional bonds, ac-
creditation, and quality in occupational education (1). These
two associations agreed that "community colleges should adopt
the philosophy of preparing people to earn a living," for they
could provide a reliable delivery system for vocational, tech-
nical, and manpower education.

4. National School Public Relations Association. The Asso-
ciation presented a summary of the innovations that appear to
have career training and repeated the mandate of
its: "Clearly, educators are being told, vocational edu-
a matter of national concern" (4:5).

Summary

National studies have shown beyond all doubt that the voca-
tional needs of people are a high-priority issue. The role of
the junior college has been clear over the past decade, but the
junior college has been slow to accept its responsibility. Legis-
lation now (October 1971) under discussion by Congress
could provide substantial incentive.

So What?

Information to substantiate the effort of the junior college
in vocational education has not been definitive; perhaps future
data will remedy the situation. The Council study in 1967
found that 92 per cent of the schools offering vocational edu-
cation were secondary schools. Of the post-secondary institu-
tions examined, fewer than half were designated junior or
community colleges. It is possible that these percentages have
not changed significantly.

The history of vocational education shows that roughly half
the enrollment has consisted of out-of-school youth and adults.
These groups have become prime targets for vocational edu-
cation because of the direct relationship of their needs and
wants to the social and technological well-being of the nation.

The old axiom, "when institutions fail to meet the needs of
society, new institutions arise to take their place," is relevant
to post-secondary vocational education. Within a decade, a
vast network of area vocational and technical schools has de-
veloped throughout the nation. Most are excellent and are
meeting the needs of thousands of youth and adults. Did they
develop because the junior colleges were blind to the voca-
tional needs of the people?

It is easy to berate the junior colleges, using such words as
snobbery, intellectualism, elitism, and academic traditionalism,
but the point is not the shortcomings of the junior college,
but its potential.

This potential has been recognized at the national level,
but, although the junior college has been committed to the
challenge of vocational education, on-site dedication is yet to
be achieved. An obvious need is a general policy on prepara-
tion. It is not known exactly how many junior colleges have
such a policy; unfortunately, some have none.

In 1971, California added Section 7504 to its Education
Code:

... it is the policy of the people of the State of California
to provide an educational opportunity to every individual
to the end that every student leaving school should be
prepared to enter the world of work; that every student
who graduates from any state-supported educational
institution should have sufficient marketable skills for
literate, remunerative employment; and that every
qualified and eligible adult citizen should be afforded an
educational opportunity to become suitably employed...

These are powerful words of policy, matching the preamble
to P.L. 90-576, in which Congress declared "that persons of
al ages, in all communities of the state ... will have ready
access to vocational training or retraining ... of high quality,
... realistic in the light of actual or anticipated opportunities
for gainful employment, and ... suited to their needs, inter-
ests, and ability to benefit from such training" (3).

Career education, now high on the priority list, will fall far
short of its goals unless the junior college is able to offer vastly
more options to high school graduates and to out-of-school
youth and adults. The key to the whole situation is coopera-
tion, not competition, among the vocational education insti-
tutions.

MELVIN L. BARLOW
Professor of Education
Graduate School of Education, UCLA
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ARTHUR M. COHEN, Principal Investigator and Director

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American Association of Junior Colleges
One Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

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