



# A study on integration of technical education and vocational education

Margaret Tracy\*

Department of Vocational Education, University of California, California, United States

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [margaret@tracy.edu](mailto:margaret@tracy.edu)

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## ABOUT THE STUDY

Throughout the majority of the twentieth century, vocational education (now known as career-technical education or CTE) was offered as a separate curriculum in either comprehensive or specialized vocational high schools. Several efforts to "integrate" academic and vocational education began in the 1980's, with federal support. The High Schools That Work network for example, was established with the goal of guaranteeing that high school students finish both college preparatory course work and a career-technical sequence that provides practical work readiness. Career routes were created by certain institutions to codify and encourage this practice. The School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994-1999 supported career majors and a number of states are now constructing career clusters. Many comprehensive high schools now have career academies, which organize a multi-year curriculum around a career related theme (e.g., health occupations, business and information technology) and require students in each grade level to take a set of core academic classes as well as a technical class related to the career theme. According to the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, almost every high school student takes at least one career and technical education course and one in four students takes three or more courses in a single programme area. It's impossible to estimate how many of these students are enrolled in traditional vocational programs and how many are mixing CTE with college preparation. More than 1,200 sites are affiliated with high schools that work and it is anticipated that two or three thousand career academies are presently operating in high schools across the United States.

Without any curricular support, many students integrate college preparatory course work with CTE on their own. The goal is to not just motivate and enable more children to complete high school, but also to expand the

postsecondary alternatives available to low income and minority students who have historically had poor college attendance rates. The idea of merging college and work preparation appeals to many people and there is some evidence that this type of blended curriculum improves student's performance in high school and beyond. Based on the experience with high schools, the practical issues involved in implementing this technique. These practical considerations will have to be factored into policies encouraging the integration of academic and career technical education. Recent instances of institutions that have implemented a combined college and career plan successfully.

## Should Students in High School Mix Academic and Career-Technical Education

There has been much debate about whether high schools should aim to prepare all students for college and careers, rather than segregating one group of kids into an academic course of study and placing others in vocational programs, a practice known as "tracking". Around the turn of the twentieth century, an active debate on this topic erupted in the United States. Even now, the controversy rages on. Although fewer people now publicly support "tracking" some still maintain that career technical education should not focus on preparing students for college, at least not for bachelor's degree-granting institutions.

Careers in technical education address two critical issues, they meet the demands of the workforce and they meet the needs of students by providing different paths to success. A large number of students have stated that they are dropping out because they do not find anything fascinating in school or do not want to attend a four-year institution. As a result of their lack of options, many become discouraged and quit out. Career in technical education provides a wide possibility to become mechanics, nurses, carpenters, electricians, welders, cooks, lab technicians, computer techs and the list goes

on and on. Those are all extremely significant occupations. Combining academic and technical education in a career or comparable program necessitates the collaboration of

a group of professors to weave a vocation related subject, such as health occupations, business and finance or information technology, throughout the curriculum.