

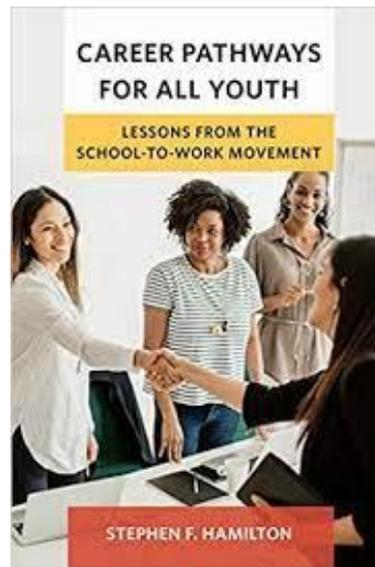
Hamilton, S. F. (2020). *Career pathways for all youth: Lessons from the school-to-work movement*. Harvard Education Press.

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What is the purpose of education, at both secondary and tertiary levels? Why are so many students ill prepared for the workplace? How do we better prepare and better educate individuals for the ever-changing, post-modern world of work, altered by such things as globalization, increased automation and mechanization, artificial intelligence, and job redesign? Can we enhance education and build opportunities between high school and college for non-superficial, work-based learning (WBL) that helps individuals to test their skills and knowledge base and allows for *deeper* and more practical learning that enhances their employability? If so, who is best served by this type of education and, with all of its links and partnerships, who should take the lead?



Emeritus professor from Cornell and former Dean of High Tech High Dr. Stephen F. Hamilton has answers. Hamilton believes we can alter and streamline educational systems, provide real work opportunities, and better prepare students for the world of work. In *Career Pathways for All Youth*, he argues for the importance of work-based learning (WBL) experiences that allow individuals to learn, *deeply*, through real-world opportunities, develop and test their skills and competencies, and prepare for the job market. After Hamilton identifies barriers and examines failures of previous initiatives, he proposes a detailed solution-focused approach for developing career pathways for all of America's youth. This approach involves the linking of systems and institutions—high schools, community colleges, universities, and private industry—into one enterprise.

The volume is logically organized and strategically streamlined. First, Hamilton declares a need for school reform and advocates for real-world work contexts to be included in a student's educational experiences. He then provides a brief history of work-based learning and a historical comparison with the failures of the 1994 School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) and the empty promise of today's career pathways (CP). The author then delves into why tertiary education needs to be a part of this equation, as an active participant in streamlining opportunities—some of them work-based learning—for students who may transition into their institutions. Then, Hamilton highlights key elements needed for the optimum success of career pathways. These elements require change, which is easier said than done, and in fact complex when dealing with well-established systems, and these changes take place slowly, methodically, strategically, and respectfully. Finally, possible obstacles/barriers individuals may encounter when altering systems and establishing career pathways are mentioned in detail, along with solutions.

Career Pathways for all Youth has multiple strengths, making it a must read for individuals involved in career and technical education (CTE); high school, community college, and university personnel (for example, in admissions and outreach positions) involved with the transition of students; government officials; and business and industry leaders. Hamilton's argument is a clear, reasonable, common-sense plea, not a diatribe. The book is written in a conversational, non-academic tone and is void of heavy-jargoned prose, making it an easy read for a broad audience. Hamilton offers a critical eye that exposes issues and problems that exist within current educational systems while preparing students for the transition from school to work.

This volume is also a resource with a clear, tangible, focused, and practical definition of WBL, which includes apprenticeships, internships, service learning, and part-time paid work, as opposed to opportunities to learn about work or work-like scenarios in a school setting. Hamilton's detailed explanation of systems, their complexity, and intricacies (flexible, broad-focused, independent, and interconnected), how to establish them (leadership teams with equal representation), and ways to change and enhance them (full commitment, incremental, subject to experimentation, and participation), is an added plus.

Hamilton's ideas regarding changes to college and university systems are both bold and daring. He proposed that tertiary education redesign itself, adjust, and stop blaming high schools for producing graduates who are neither college nor career ready. Hamilton explained the difference between dual and concurrent enrollment and advocates for expanding upon the strengths of the latter. Concurrent enrollment opportunities take place on college campuses, serving as an ice breaker that fosters college readiness and successful transition, while also leading to increased enrollment. Educational programs need to be easily navigable and capable of bridging entities, such as having high school, community college, and university coursework aligned

and streamlined for pupils interested in a specific field of study through articulation agreements. Changes to curricula, pedagogy, structures, systems, and instructional practices at the college level would increase retention and graduation rates and help students transition to internships, apprenticeships, gainful employment, and advanced opportunities for education and training.

While strengths abound, this reviewer questions the practical implementation of the author's approach. Though Hamilton provides examples, they are few, and since most educational systems will not change voluntarily, work-based learning (as defined in the volume) for *all* seems highly intangible. This volume also contains gaps in knowledge, and, in particular, a disconnect with the field of career counseling. The first two terms in the title (*career pathways*) are the foundation for the work. As a career counselor I understand them to be misused. The term career is a social construct; therefore, it requires a clear definition. While closely related with terms like *occupation* and *job*, it is not synonymous with them (Super, 1957). Career is the course of events that constitute a life (Super, 1976), and lifestyle choice (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). A career is a journey, a Homeric Odyssey, not a straightforward "path" (Preble, 2021). Importantly, much of life's events are rooted in chance, sheer happenstance, dynamic, and totally unpredictable (Krumboltz, 2009). Research indicates that students should expect to have as many as 8 to 10 jobs throughout their careers, therefore students need to develop career adaptability and career resiliency (Savickas, 2005). We can better prepare students for the postmodern world of work by focusing on developing soft/employability skills, teaching them to embrace career ambiguity and fostering a strong work ethic and respect for work in all of its various forms (Preble, 2017).

I also question the author's comparisons between American career and technical education systems and work-based learning with well-established European models. Our cultures and values are distinctly different. The American system tends to be highly litigious, thwarting the development of internships and apprenticeships for minors. When working with minors in the United States, employers have to comply with labor laws/codes, make sure opportunities are mutually beneficial, and may be asked to consider paying their interns. There is nothing wrong with exploring and floundering in one's 20s (Super, 1957). Students need not fixate on one occupation or focus on training for specific occupations with large openings, that is, filling job pipelines, which may be temporary or unfulfilling. The liberal arts also help prepare students for the world of work, albeit in a different fashion, developing individuals' unique attributes and developing many skills—creativity, critical thinking, literacy, problem-solving, among others—employers desire.

The volume also omits key players that help adolescents and young adults learn and prepare for the world of work. Career and technical education (CTE), which underwent major transformations in the 20th century, is not considered work-based learning by Hamilton's definition. Yet, CTE plays an

important role in helping students prepare for the world of work and can offer a real-world context that develops both technical (hard) and employability (soft) skills (Gray, 2004; Johnson & Duffett, 2003). Further, occupations that exist in the “civilian world” also exist in the various branches of the armed services, yet the author did not discuss the role the military plays in career and occupational development. Skills, competencies, growth, and maturation acquired through job training completed during military service can be invaluable. Finally, parents must play a role in career development. If youth value work around the house and in society, develop skills and competencies, are expected to work or volunteer during adolescence, and learn the importance of money and financial literacy at an early age, they will be better prepared for the transition from school to work.

Despite these omissions, I recommend *Career Pathways for All Youth* to educators working in both high school and community college settings as a concise, informative, solution-oriented, and useful volume. While some aspects of this volume may not be agreeable to those in career and technical education or may ruffle the feathers of liberal arts advocates, schools and colleges need multiple tools in their arsenal to help keep adolescents in school and better prepare students for the world of work. Career pathways that encompass work-based learning opportunities in multiple forms—part-time work, internships, and apprenticeships—can help serve a multitude of students, and the examples, insights, solutions to foreseeable challenges, and advice contained in this volume will help make this promise come closer to a reality.

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