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## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND REQUIREMENTS OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION FOR THE 1980's

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper will provide an overview of vocational education and its requisites for in-service education in the 1980's. First it will examine the most probable environment or likely context for vocational education in the 1980's. Secondly, it will identify some present trends in the field and it will raise questions about whether these trends should be endorsed, reversed or ignored. Thirdly, it will discuss a number of "work force" related issues which will gauge the credibility of vocational education in the decade ahead. Finally, it will focus on some specific needs which could be central to the existence and functioning of professional development as well as the field of vocational education.

Why should vocational educators wish to look to the 1980's or 90's or as far as the next century? Is it merely to try to get a clearer vision of the future? Perhaps so, but a more important reason is to improve present decisions! By projecting present trends into a foreseeable future it is possible to capture the double advantage of obtaining a clearer perception of the present, and it is possible to ascertain whether alternative decisions in the present might result in a more or less desirable future. And there are some other advantages: attempting to look at the future often leads to some planning, an exercise which always seems to remind us how awful our data are and also how important it is to be clear about goals and values. Those who undertake planning are the first to learn that many other groups are involved in the game and that the winners are rarely without a plan.

There is the preliminary question of how one should go about an attempt to examine the 10-15 year future of a field. Is there a basis

for inferring the likelihood of events or activities a decade or more hence? Indeed, there are solid factual bases for making realistic 10-year estimates. Seen as selective scenarios and episodes, the future is already here. We need only to know how to capture the significance of the view. There are already some trends which will lead to inevitable and irreversible consequences, some which can be accelerated and others which can and should be reversed by collective intent and concerted action. It is not the purpose of this presentation to assess the future, but to consider possible futures in the light of present choice and alternative decision. Nor is it claimed that this paper will be so objective as to be clear of value judgment. Even the categories which one chooses to examine are reflections of value orientation. Such choices are among the ways which an author of this kind of paper intrudes on the indulgence of others.

### THE CONTEXT OF THE 1980's

The context of the 1980's will include a number of dynamic forces which have already begun to operate and to attract attention. It would be foolhardy to try to catalog all of these forces. It is sufficient to reiterate that some of the 1980 context is already here or already clearly visible.

The most visible of these is the inevitability of worldwide famine in the 80's. That it will arrive no longer seems in doubt. It has already arrived in Asia's subcontinent and in Subsahara Africa. The body of factual data and responsible opinion about its growth to global proportions is impressive.<sup>1</sup> Still questionable are the possible consequences of famine on such a scale. Isolated instances of famine have occurred many times but it has never occurred before on a scale of worldwide disaster. It is not known, for example, how much permanent intellectual degeneration will occur among the undernourished surviving children. Nor is it possible to estimate the extent to which food will be used as a political or economic weapon. Even without addressing oneself to such speculative corollaries, it is awesome to contemplate that no one will escape the cost or the other consequences of famine in the 80's.

Similarly visible in the context of the 80's is the possibility that America, and perhaps the entire world, will still be in the recovery stages of widespread recession. With little doubt that we are now surrounded by such phenomena, it is at least hopeful to contemplate that recovery is possible and, if so, it will extend into the 80's.

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More difficult to gauge are the circumstances which are likely to surround recovery. In the past, recovery from widespread multinational recession has been accompanied by expressions and manifestations of nationalism, international conflict and mounting defensiveness. International cooperation and aid is often the aftermath of widespread war. But nationalistic pride and defensive interaction are traditionally the handmaidens of recovery from world wide or regional recession. These problems associated with recovery will be with us in the 80's.

A third element of the context of the next decade will be a move from ostensible to real population distribution policies. The need for it has been observed in the inhospitable nature of the expanding urban physical environment, the inadequacy of political institutions to serve the urban and rural poor and diminishing vitality of many rural towns. For several decades a number of public policies have operated to influence population distribution.<sup>2</sup> An implicit policy has been to award large defense contracts to firms in the western and southern states. Of more intrastate interest have been the population policies intended to share the tax benefits of industrial development among the jurisdictions providing public services to the employees of the industry.

Population distribution policies of the 1980's can be expected to take the form of federal finance for local public services as have been initiated already through Title II of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, the establishment of a variable scale of minimum wages to account for regional variations in price levels, and the continued refinement of welfare through nationalization along the lines of the negative income tax or some variation of the Family Assistance Plan. That more intensive population distribution policies will be operative in the 1980's is unquestionable. Whether they will include efforts to establish proportional mixes of ethnic or income groups is, and will be, matters of controversy and anxiety.

The context of the 80's will certainly include continued redefinition of democracy at all levels of government and education. Since democracy is a journey rather than a destination, it can be safely predicted that the journey will continue and be marked by significant milestones. New roles for women in the world of work, reexamination of the criteria for judging educational opportunity and new approaches to redressing disadvantage can be expected to emerge.

The four features of the context of the 1980's mentioned in this discussion—famine, the problems of economic recovery, population redistribution and the continued definition or elaboration of democracy are obviously incomplete and undoubtedly imperfect. The

interesting conclusion which one can draw from them is that each taken singly, or all of them taken together, have important implications for vocational education. They signal the need for vocational education to be dynamic, flexible, ready, and responsive as time and events unfold.

#### THE IMPACT OF PRESENT TRENDS

Even more clearly in view are a number of the present trends in vocational education, trends which may be accelerated, retarded or redirected as a response to understanding them clearly and devoting leadership and vision to any needed change.

The first and most obvious trend is the decline in the average age of enrollees in vocational education. This is a recent phenomenon and a reversal of the opposite trend toward rising average age which had been occurring for several decades. In the 1960's the average age of vocational enrollees increased rather rapidly with the expansion of the post-secondary vocational enrollment. At the beginning of the 70's it began its decline. Although total vocational enrollments continue to climb, the nature of the rise is interesting. Adult education enrollments continue to become a declining proportion of the total. Post-secondary enrollments are increasing at very modest rates. It is the secondary-level enrollment that is rising most rapidly and, most of all, the *enrollment below the 9th grade level*.

The reasons for the decline of average age are undoubtedly related to the categorical emphasis on industrial arts and homemaking, fields which have been traditionally comfortable in the junior high school. The decline may also be related to the relative ease with which career education has been accommodated at the lower grade levels.

There are many important questions. How much will the average age decline? Will it stabilize at some level or will average age begin to rise again? What are the consequences of a decline in average age?

Corollary trends involve a widening time-gap between vocational instruction and employment in an occupation and the apparently diminishing need for instruction in occupational competence as there is an increased separation of vocational education from the problems of the work force. This trend may continue, it may stabilize at some equilibrium point or it may be reversed. The direction of the trend is available to present planners and policy makers. Their decisions will determine the nature of vocational education in the 80's.

A second trend involves a rapid growth of interest-group politics. This trend is seen in the rapid expansion of state-based public employee legislation providing, *inter alia*, teacher access to collective bargaining with binding arbitration or the right to strike. It is also seen

in the growth and elaboration of occupational licensing and certification to cover an expanding spectrum of occupations, paraprofessions and professions. It is further seen as a manifestation of revenue sharing and decentralization of federal programs. The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, for example, has resulted in a rapid growth of interest-group politics within and across jurisdictions involved in the program.

This trend is not one which can be greatly influenced by vocational educators, but it may have a significant effect on vocational education. It is likely to increase training requirements needed for various types of occupational licensing and it may tend to restrict the mobility of the labor force, particularly if licensing requirements differ among jurisdictions. It will undoubtedly generate the need for instruction in coping with political and bureaucratic environments. The growth of interest group politics is a trend which necessitates accommodation and informed response, not apprehension or rejection. It will continue into the 80's.

A third trend of significance to the field is the rapid expansion and proliferation of in-service teacher education. With expanding enrollments in vocational education, pre-service teacher education enrollments are increasing very modestly while in-service enrollments are increasing very rapidly. It is known that in-service education is being provided by a growing number of institutions and agencies. It is also known that it consists of a growing variety of different types of instruction. Little else is known about the trend.

It is not known, for example, whether the growth in in-service education is a response to new incentives, new requirements or new commitments. Nor is it known whether it is prompted by inadequacies in pre-service programs and, if so, whether there is any feedback for improving pre-service programs. Most importantly, it is not known whether the expansion of in-service teacher education is strengthening the capacity to provide vocational teacher education or whether it is dispersing and diminishing the capacity to provide it.

Projecting this trend into the 1980's leaves many unresolved questions and issues. If the trend continues, will it do so by resolving these unresolved questions or will it continue without resolving them? It is a trend of great significance to vocational education, primarily because it is not known whether it is enhancing or diminishing the credibility of the field.

#### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND THE WORK FORCE — ISSUES INVOLVING CREDIBILITY

The issues which involve the contributions and thus the credibility of an entire field such

as vocational education are worthy of special study. There are some periods of time when such issues are of greater magnitude than others. The context of the 80's described earlier in this paper and also the trends described above are adequate signals to warn that the credibility of vocational education may be severely tested as the 1980's are approached and entered.

The issues identified in the following paragraphs are limited and selective. Although they are presented as though they have been accepted already as credibility-related policy issues, this is not true—they have been given very little attention by policy makers. None of the issues mentioned have been addressed, for example, by the National Advisory Council for Vocational Education. They are presented here with the explicit intent of urging specific policy and program attention as vocational education moves toward and into the 1980's.

#### Concern for the Entire Work Force

It is useful to begin with the earlier question of whether the average age of vocational enrollees can continue to decline or whether vocational education should begin to deal with the entire age range of the work force. More pointedly, the issue should be confronted by raising the question of whether the field of vocational education can comfortably accept the policy implications of a vocational education enrollment whose average age is declining while the average age of the work force is rising.

There is a substantial body of responsible educational opinion urging the implementation of "lifelong" education or, as it is sometimes called, "recurrent" education. Vocational educators often join this discussion and point out that workers are now changing jobs as many as 5-7 times during a working career. Yet vocational education continues to be focused on the young whose average age is slightly beyond the junior high school years.

It is not solely an issue involving average age, it is also an issue involving the nature of instruction. Vocational education concentrates mainly on the problems associated with entry to the labor force, rarely on the problems encountered by workers after entry or on the problems associated with exiting the work force. The main concentration is on problems of pre-employment and initial placement.

As vocational education approaches and enters the 1980's, the credibility of the entire field will be in jeopardy unless its policies and programs begin to focus more broadly on the entire work force, from entry to exit. The present enrollment of *de facto* and *de jure* compulsory education is about 44 million persons. The present work force numbers about 88 million. The present focus of vocational education is mainly on the former and only peripherally on the latter. By the 1980's, the credibility

of the field will be judged by its concern for and its instructional effectiveness with both.

#### More Focus on Productivity

The issue of work force productivity is likewise crucial as a credibility-related problem. It is not merely an issue whose importance is magnified during a recession. It is a long term training question of essential importance.

With comfortable detachment, vocational educators have observed that the economy has been moving from a "goods" oriented economy to a "service" oriented economy, from farm and factory employment to employment in the service sector. The arrival of a recession illustrates the bitter lesson that it is much more difficult to measure or to demonstrate productivity in the service-oriented sector of society than in the goods producing sector. There is the further lesson that vocational education has been so preoccupied with entry-level skill training that it has given almost no attention to the nature and focus of competence needed to deal with the problems and processes involved in maintaining or increasing productivity. The luxury of tending to such a narrow range of worker-related problems is not likely to continue into the 80's.

#### More Concern for Planning

The central concern for planning is a further issue for renewed attention as vocational education moves toward and into the 80's. Concern for the planning of vocational education was highlighted in the Vocational Education Act of 1963. Again in 1968 the Vocational Amendments specified the need to focus on planning. New language began to emerge such as "needs assessment" and "special needs." The importance of planning arose again in 1972 when the Higher Education Amendments authorized the creation of another planning and advisory mechanism at state levels. In 1973 the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act authorized the creation of yet another planning body at state levels and numerous similar bodies at sub-state levels.

This legislated preoccupation with planning has had a very limited effect on planning vocational education or manpower programs. It has had a more important effect on the complexities of governance in both fields.

In vocational education as well as in manpower programs, the traditional focus of planning has been on the most comfortable basis of accountability, namely, enrollment. Yet data on enrollment continues to be opaque and almost meaningless. It provides little or no information on length of enrollment or on the nature and intensity of instruction. Nor is it accompanied by information on whether the enrollment occurred in a comprehensive school, a vocational school or as a special course offered by a school or an individual contractor.

The nature of accreditation or the nature of any alternative approach to credibility is rarely known.

The recurrence of legislative attention to planning and the creation of overlapping planning bodies has been a curious phenomenon of the past decade. Its consequence is more easily seen in bureaucratic structure than in actual program. Programs have undergone some linear expansion and special groupings as reflected vaguely in enrollment data. By legislation or by leadership within the field, planning is likely to continue as a growing concern as the field of vocational education approaches and enters the 80's. Its growth is likely to be paralleled by more attention to evaluation and if present trends continue, to a type of evaluation which is increasingly political and decreasingly analytical.

#### Confronting Policy Issues

A fourth issue involves the extent to which vocational education leaders are willing to confront an array of policy questions which are central to training and employment policy but which have not been central, or even significant to the policy or program deliberations of vocational educators. Examples of these questions include the close relationship between training policy and tax policy. As an important determiner of training policy, the Internal Revenue Service controls powerful incentives and disincentives for vocational education and training by determining the conditions under which training is deductible from worker or employer income tax. Worker training provided by employers is invariably deductible from employer taxes regardless of the purpose of the training as long as it satisfies employer purposes. When workers bear the costs of their own training, the costs of training are deductible from individual income taxes only when endorsed by employers as necessary for job retention. When costs of training, retraining or updating are borne by workers for the purpose of upward mobility and thus to higher remuneration within the occupational hierarchy and are not endorsed by employers, the costs of training are not deductible from individual income tax. This last situation restricts occupational advancement, it is a powerful disincentive to training, and it represents a policy of the Internal Revenue Service which is counter to the incentives which are essential adjuncts to public vocational education and training.<sup>3</sup>

Related examples include the various public policies associated with transfer payments linked with income maintenance and welfare. Income subsidies linked with vocational training tend to establish artificial and stigmatizing relationships between the purposes served and the people involved, between training and welfare. Vocational training does not diminish

the number of low income jobs nor does it have any influence on the rate of unemployment in them.

The point to be emphasized here is that vocational education and training policies are implemented by numerous public agencies. These policies are not linked together nor combined as a mutually compatible overall policy. As the field of vocational education approaches the 1980's, it should terminate its role as a casual or a disinterested observer of present anomalies and disjunctions in vocational education and training policies. It should become an advocate of defensible policies as well as an active participant in policy development.

#### Summary

The four issues described above are compelling issues, compellingly close to any measure of determining the credibility of the field of vocational education in its relationship to the work force — its employability, its productivity, its rewards and its quality of life. A longer and more elaborate list could be assembled to add to the argument. More elaboration is not necessary. It is already clear that vocational education will be a marginal activity in the 1980's unless it confronts issues which are central to workers as well as those which are important to schools.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Reacting to the trends in the field and confronting the types of issues described above is a formidable challenge. It requires priority and pivotal attention to the quality and commitment of people and institutions.

Vocational education has always functioned as the administration of programs prescribed by legislation and supported by activities regarded as ancillary. The ancillary activities, including teacher training have been more ancil-

lary in approach than in character. Yet they have been central to the quality and credibility of the personnel and the institutions associated with vocational education. As the field moves into the 80's, the aspects of the field heretofore regarded as ancillary will need to be refocused in the light of emerging demands in the field. Indeed, such demands are likely to be gauged by the capacity of the field to provide the inputs traditionally and casually viewed as ancillary. Under the rubric of professional development, the next section of this paper will be addressed to these problems.

#### Expanding Concern for Pre-service Teacher Education

From the viewpoint of present trends and the likely expectations for vocational education in the 1980's, the most difficult problem may be the creation of institutional capabilities for generating a flow of adequately trained instructors, teachers and leaders. If it is possible to accept the premise that vocational education will be available to the full age-range of the labor force, and will deal with productivity as well as employability, then it is necessary to conclude that present institutional capability is seriously inadequate. Several kinds of changes will need to occur, either through the strengthening of programs in existing institutions or through the creation of entirely new institutional arrangements.

First, it will be necessary to add vocational realism to the present preoccupation with competency-based teacher education. Added realism will begin when it can extend beyond the pedagogical competence of the teacher trainees to include the occupational competence of those who will be taught by the teacher. Competency-based teacher education which adds a vocational dimension, occupational competence, will place many added burdens on the institutions which train teachers.

Second, it will be necessary to reexamine the reality of the traditional preoccupation of many fields of vocational education with skill training and its ritualistic steps of job task analyses. Business and industrial productivity is determined by the efficiency of production processes, not on a preoccupation with the refinement of entry-level individual skills. Some of the needed reexamination has already occurred. Agricultural Education has begun a "management approach" and Business Education is using "model offices." But most of vocational education, as well as its teacher preparation, is still tied exclusively to a skill training view of occupational competence. Vocational skill training may be sufficient if vocational education is to deal only with entry level skill training for those seeking initial em-

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ployment. If it is to also include instruction of the labor force for updating, upgrading and retraining workers preparing for increased productivity, then it must include instruction in processes as well as in skills. Teacher education institutions do not have a sufficient capacity for such training.

Third, it will be necessary to establish closer linkages between in-service education and pre-service education. In-service education which does not have a feedback to pre-service education is a costly proliferation. Moreover, a program of pre-service education which cannot or does not feed forward to in-service education will soon lose its relevance and will soon become sterile. The credibility of both in-service and pre-service education is diminished if they are not linked together in institutions having a central commitment to vocational education. Vocational education may now be at a stage of its historical development where the field of medicine was 40 years ago. Plagued with proliferation and diminishing quality, the field of medicine decided to follow the recommendations of the famous Flexner Report and to reduce the number of institutions and concentrate on a smaller number which could be relied upon for quality and leadership.

Finally, it will be necessary for the field of vocational education to fully embrace a professional development concept. Still in its infancy, the growth of the concept is central to the realization of program adequacy in the 80's. The test of its growth will be whether it can develop as a field of policy development and leadership, scholarly inquiry, a field which sustains a flow of competent leaders and teachers at the highest level of competence, and one which can relate to the training and employment needs of the entire work force.

As the field of vocational education prepares for the 1980's, its most rewarding effort will be its attempts to enhance its limited capacity for looking to the future. Policy-makers, planners and other leaders can be expected to be among the first to indulge in such in-serv-

ice training. This is clearly the most important requirement for in-service education for the 1980's and beyond.

1. Examples of this opinion are:

- a. Bundy, McGeorge, "After the Deluge, the Covenant," *Saturday Review of Literature*, August 24, 1974
- b. Dumont, Rene, *The Hungry Future*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1969

2. Major studies include the following:

- a. U. S. President's National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty, *The People Left Behind*, (Wash. Gov't. Printing Office, 1967)
  - b. U. S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Urban and Rural America: Policies for Future Growth*, (Wash. Gov't. Printing Office, 1968)
  - c. U. S. National Gov't. Research Staff, *Toward Balance Growth: Quantity with Quality*, (Wash. Gov't. Printing Office, 1970)
  - d. U. S. Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. *Population and the American Future*, (New York: New American Library, Signet Books, 1972)
3. This issue is further elaborated by Rupert Evans in *Career Education for Gifted and Talented Studies*, Hoyt and Hebler, editors, Olympus Publishing Co., Salt Lake, 1974, p. 249