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ABSTRACT

Project EDNEED has been charged with determining empirically data needed by vocational administrators at the local, State, regional, and national levels. Reliable data are necessary to present accurate reports to various State and Federal agencies and to provide answers to questions that are of major concern to legislators. Data are needed in the areas of: (1) target groups, (2) curriculum, (3) qualifications of personnel, (4) circumstances and facilities for vocational preparation, (5) processes for assessing vocational education programs, and (6) costs and benefits of vocational education programs as compared with other educational programs. Project EDNEED focused on two areas: (1) the identification of important questions concerning vocational education and the data elements needed to provide the answers, and (2) an assessment of the extent to which States collect such data. Much of the project has already been completed and the EDNEED data classification prepared. Further needs identified by the project include: (1) policies to guide vocational educators, (2) an operating system of vocational information, (3) comparison of data to guide future data gathering, (4) an intensive study of data collection, (5) a dictionary of vocational terms, (6) coordination of data with other fields, and (7) determination of actual costs. (Author/EC)

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REPORT TO NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE DIRECTORS  
OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

"Progress in Project EDNEED, With Implications  
for Administrators of Vocational Education Programs"

--Joseph T. Nerden

American Vocational Association Convention  
Anaheim, California  
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Progress in Project EDNEED, With Implications  
for Administrators of Vocational Education Programs

It is indeed a privilege to report to the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education on the progress being made on Project EDNEED. For those of you who were present at the New Orleans meeting of the Association, you will recall that Dr. Robert Morgan and Dr. William Porter explained briefly the progress made on the project. Project EDNEED is the Office of Education funded project to determine empirically data needed by vocational administrators on the local, state, regional, and national levels.

A special point to be made here is that throughout the EDNEED Project, the State Directors of Vocational Education have been at the focal point. Your advice has been invaluable in determining the information most needed for vocational education purposes.

During the past several years, acquiring accurate data for most vocational educational purposes, - for reporting, for providing clear and defensible outcomes to the Congress, to State Boards of Education, state legislatures and federal agencies, has been a major and ever-present problem. Reliable and usable data, long a bug-a-boo of our operations, has hampered communications with the Congress, and made it virtually impossible for many states to show with pride the efficiency with which local and state programs have been organized and conducted. Project EDNEED has recognized and documented the fact that the data which are currently being collected do not begin to answer many of the questions that are raised by the Congress, state legislatures, and by many

national organizations. For example, I have here a publication of the Center for Occupational Education which lists some twelve pages of questions that are currently being asked by individuals and by committees of the Congress, for which there are few or no current data available to provide answers! Unless steps are taken to develop a data system which will provide the answers to questions of the type included in this booklet, legislation of major concern to vocational educators will suffer. Having been State Director of Vocational Education in Connecticut, I am fully aware of the problems which a State Director faces in supplying to the Education Committee of the State Legislature information relative to the quality and quantity of vocational education being provided with state funds. There is as much a problem with obtaining reliable data on the state level as there is on the national level, and the problem is undoubtedly equal in importance and intensity on the local level. In general, the broad categories of questions that are raised whenever an inquiring mind searches for information on the quantity and quality of vocational education include the categories of:

1. Who are the groups that are being served? What are the target groups? What are the characteristics of the individuals being served?
2. What curricula are provided for those being served?
3. What are the qualifications of personnel who are delivering the services? (teachers, coordinators, supervisors, and administrators)
4. In what kinds of circumstances and facilities does the vocational preparation of youth and adults take place?

5. What processes are used in assessing the effectiveness and impact of vocational education programs?
6. What are the costs and benefits of vocational education programs as compared with other educational programs?

I have been in the field of vocational education since 1926. During all those years, I have yet to see in operation a system that provides precise answers to the six basic questions which I have just indicated. I know how we aggregated data in the past, and I submit that those procedures will not suffice for the future; they are not going to satisfy the critics and they are not going to satisfy those who will appropriate the funds for vocational education.

Technically, EDNEED consists of two Part C projects. EDNEED I focussed on the identification of the most important questions concerning vocational education and the data elements necessary to provide answers to these questions. EDNEED II assesses the extent to which states are currently collecting the data identified in EDNEED I as being needed.

It should be of real interest to this group of national leaders in the field of vocational education to learn that much of the foregoing has already been completed. I am pleased to display for you the actual Classification of data files and items bound in this single publication which contains in quite some detail, the questions and their associated data elements. The preliminary document was reviewed by representatives of six organizations at the national level, each of which was directly concerned with vocational education. It was subsequently revised into the present document consisting of 323 questions, and more than 2300 information elements organized into 18 data files. Shortly thereafter, a conference was held in Annapolis, Maryland, at which time a selected group of over fifty national users of vocational education data were assembled for the purpose of reacting

to the Data Classification and its adequacy in terms of scope and depth of coverage. Discussions also took place concerning the problems that should be anticipated in relation to installing a national system based on the EDNEED Classification. Finally, conference participants suggested a number of solutions to the problems which were identified.

Since the state directors of vocational education are at the heart of the problem concerning data production and data utilization on all levels, a group of you came to Raleigh in August and provided advice, suggestions and even admonitions concerning the EDNEED Classification and its possible uses. The results of that meeting are in a conference report, copies of which are available here. More State Directors were subsequently contacted and their advice solicited with regard to the EDNEED Classification

Later, a large group of local administrators of vocational education was assembled in Chicago, at which time discussions were conducted concerning the adequacy of the EDNEED Classification and the problems that must be anticipated in the tasks of obtaining, aggregating and utilizing data for vocational education purposes.

In all, national, state and local vocational education professionals have critiqued and discussed the Data Classification and a great many of the problems attendant thereto. We of the EDNEED project staff feel strongly that we have had excellent advice from as many individuals and as many levels of vocational education as funds could accommodate. We are pleased to report at this time some of the preliminary implications of the project for the further maintenance and improvement of vocational education.

1. There is an increasing demand for policies to guide vocational educators in the operation of the programs for which they are responsible for reporting to state and national agencies. However, many policies cannot be determined until such time as the questions inherent in the needed policies have been appropriately documented with reliable and usable data. It is the hope of Project EDNEED that many of the policy questions which are unanswered at present will receive more attention through the future development of a national system which can provide accurate data.

2. An operating system of vocational education information could serve many purposes for many kinds of people. One such purpose is that of communicating with our many publics, to provide accurate answers to the searching questions raised by the Congress, state legislatures, county boards of education, city boards of education, committees of the general public, public expenditures councils, and various leagues of voter groups. All of these agencies could have available to them the data documentation needed, at such time that new policies, new procedures, and new operating practices are being considered. With these data available, such over-simplified questions as

Who should be served?

What should be served to those who get the services?

What are the qualifications and competencies needed

in the people who will do the serving?

What are the costs for quality vocational education? could be answered with accuracy and with confidence by vocational educators. These are types of questions that have arisen from the earliest days of vocational education and will continue to be raised at local, regional, state, and federal levels.

3. The refunding of EDNEED (EDNEED II) has enabled us to determine several aspects of great interest. For example, much of the data that are now being routinely collected, analyzed and/or reported in the states and territories are being compared to the data necessary to answer and/or provide documentation to the most frequently asked major questions about vocational education. The results of the comparisons being made should help decide the specific directions that will have to be taken in the future in data-gathering and data-aggregation activities.
4. Anticipated for immediate action is the intensive study of data collection and processing procedures in ten selected states. Visits to these ten states will document alternative approaches to answering the critical questions identified in EDNEED I.
5. Another implied aspect of data collection and aggregation is the production of an urgently needed dictionary of vocational terms. A preliminary step in the development of such a dictionary has already resulted in a lexicon for use in connection with the Data Classification. Definitions were obtained from a variety of sources for each item in the EDNEED Classification.

6. Another implication that surfaced early, and on which action has been taken, is one which we of the Project staff believe to be of great importance. It concerns determining who else, anywhere in the field, is producing data that might be coordinated with data needs described in Project EDNEED, and which may have uses for vocational educators in planning, organizing, and administering programs of vocational education. Elimination of costly data duplication, through active participation of agencies such as the Census Bureau, the Department of Labor, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, and many other major national agencies and professional associations, has been the focal point of this particular effort.
7. If a national data system should become a reality, an important question will be: "What will all of this data collection and aggregation cost?" Steps must be taken to obtain the documentation for that very necessary answer, in order to determine the actual costs of collecting, aggregating, analyzing and storing data. This matter has been indicated as one of particular interest to State Directors, since information that must be readily available, analyzed, and distributed for utilization by vocational educators must come largely from local and state levels. Data collection is an expensive process, and the ultimate cost for a national system is a matter of major consideration. Cost data must be supplied to the Office of

Education, and on to the Congress of the United States, in such a way as to enable these agencies to recommend legislation to provide the needed dollars to support data collection, data aggregation and data retrieval on state and national levels.

8. Other concerns associated with the possible future development of a national vocational education data system have been expressed by participants in the various EDNEED conferences.

The following questions reflect those concerns:

- a. Who would develop such a system?
- b. Where would it be located?
- c. Who would have access to the information? Who would manage the system?
- d. How will people be trained to use the information contained in the system and who would provide this training?

The answers to these critical questions are beyond the present purview of Project EDNEED, but they must be addressed prior to the development of a national information system. As a preliminary step toward such a system, EDNEED will identify the informational needs of various constituency groups at national, state and local levels. Additionally, the projects will document the extent to which data currently being collected can satisfy those needs.

Those of us who have been privileged to work on Project EDNEED are excited about the future possibilities. There might be some very useful spin-offs from our efforts, which although we are not currently funded to pursue, might be of particular value to those responsible for

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designing or up-dating state vocational information systems. We have assembled a most comprehensive compilation of vocational education data forms from the states and territories. These instruments which are current for all 50 states, D. C., and four territories could be quite inexpensively copied onto color microfiche, and disseminated either directly or through ERIC, if the needs were identified and states gave their approval. Further, special analyses might be conducted concerning particular aspects of the instrumentation of interest to individual states or groups of states, such as costs associated with either instruments or specific items. The compendium of forms currently in-house at the Center for Occupational Education is viewed as a most valuable resource. We feel that it should be utilized to the maximum while still reasonably current. We would welcome your suggestions in this regard.

We trust that each of you will see in EDNEED, possible answers to questions that may have "bugged" you in the past. If there are any questions at this time concerning EDNEED, other members of the Project staff are here to assist me in providing you with, I trust, suitable answers. Thank you for your time and I assure you that as Project EDNEED continues, we will consider it our duty to supply full information to you on its progress.

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