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ABSTRACT

The numbers of vocational education teachers, the number of institutions that provide training for vocational education teachers, and the number of schools that offer vocational education have been declining for the past 10 years or longer; at the same time, the average age of vocational education teachers has risen. As the teacher ranks and the programs to prepare them are shrinking, there are countertrends toward having vocational education teachers integrate basic skills lessons into their classrooms, and toward more technology education or tech prep programs. Among other issues that could affect not only vocational education but all teacher education programs is that with continued military downsizing, a number of highly trained ex-military personnel will be entering the workforce many of whom will look for careers in teaching. This is only one of many factors that suggest that vocational teacher education programs will have to change in order to attract more faculty and more aspiring teachers as well as more money for program improvement. Other important issues in vocational teacher preparation are the need to recruit minorities and the ability to address the special needs population. These and similar issues will continue to have an impact on universities and colleges that prepare vocational education teachers. (Contains 12 references.) (KC)

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VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CONTEXT FOR REFORM

Synopsis of presentation at the American Vocational Association Convention, December 3, 1992.

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Vocational teacher education is poised for dramatic reform. Various Federal and state reports have been issued from education and labor organizations and agencies suggesting the need to more adequately prepare youth and adults for work. Vocational teacher education, in its role to prepare teachers, is making significant changes in the nature and character of various university offerings. As expected, numerous authors have noted the challenges to be addressed in vocational teacher education reform initiatives.

Rupert Evans (1992) suggested several of the important issues to be addressed in a 'state of the union' article addressed to industrial teacher educators. Evans notes

It seems probable: (a) that the number of institutions which provide teacher education in our field has been declining for more than a decade, and that the rate of decline has increased sharply in the past year; (b) that the number of teacher educators in our field has declined even more than the number of institutions; (c) that the number of persons completing our teacher education courses or programs has declined even more rapidly than the number of teacher educators; (d) that the

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numbers of our programs and teachers in secondary schools have also been decreasing, and that the demand for new teachers is very low--perhaps lower than it has been for more than fifty years; (e) that the average age of our teachers is at an all-time high (p. 7).

It is with this backdrop that this paper offers a perspective on the status of vocational teacher education examining: the size of the vocational teacher education enterprise, traditional models for preparing vocational teachers; trends among University Council for Vocational Education Institutions; the current teaching force; issues affecting all teacher education programs; and, issues affecting vocational teacher education.

A National Perspective

Of approximately 1200 colleges and universities in the United States about 425 offer some type of vocational teacher education program. According to Lynch (1991), there were 92 agriculture education programs, 237 business education programs, 31 health occupations programs, 267 home economics programs, 89 marketing programs, 178 technical education programs, and 99 vocational special needs programs offered in 1991 in these institutions. It is important to note;

however, that having the program does not guarantee that a sizable number of students are enrolled. A good number of these programs have very small enrollments.

Through the years, colleges and universities which offer entitlement (secondary school certification) programs have used various models to prepare vocational teachers. Again, according to Lynch (1991) some institutions offer a baccalaureate degree with a major in a specific vocational field. Other institutions offer a post-baccalaureate program leading toward a graduate degree. Some institutions offer certification for non-degree teachers (mostly in the trades and industries, and health occupations).

Lynch (1991) reports that the typical vocational teacher education curriculum is composed of a 128 semester hours segmented as follows:

- 47 credits in general studies
- 43 credits in subject matter courses
- 14 credits in vocational pedagogy
- 14 foundations
- 10 credits for student teaching

At issue here is the amount of classroom time that vocational teacher educators have to prepare a vocational teacher having only 43 credits available in a typical 4 year program for subject matter

orientation. This is particularly critical given, among others: rapid changes in technology; the increasing need to focus on services to minority populations and non-traditional families; the special learning psychology appropriate for secondary and post-secondary teachers; the role of vocational education in reinforcing basic skills.

In various studies by Anderson (1991) the University Council for Vocational Education (UCVE) notes several interesting trends. The UCVE is comprised of 22 universities which offer comprehensive vocational education programs. According to Anderson, the majority of the faculty are tenure track and their average age is 49.5 years. The number of part-time faculty in UCVE institutions is growing, state departments support is declining, enrollments in undergraduate programs are declining, but increasing at the graduate level. Some departments are facing consolidation with other units in their universities and placement opportunities are decreasing. Some would suggest that the decrease in placement opportunities for vocational teachers is directly related to increases in various state high school graduation

requirements and/or admission criteria for state colleges and universities.

The Current Teaching Force

According to a major report by the National Center for Educational Statistics released in February, 1992, approximately 20% of all teachers, grades 9-12, are vocational teachers. Of this number 33% are business teachers, 18% are technical education teachers, 16% are home economics teachers. The vocational education teaching force is predominately white and the average age is significantly older than of non-vocational teachers. While 53% of vocational teachers are male, one must be careful examining these data. For example, most teachers in technical education are male and most teachers in business education are female.

The vocational teaching field appears to be rather traditionally structured. Slightly more than 7% of the teachers have less than a baccalaureate degree. About 9% teach non-vocational subjects with the average class size in a vocational classroom substantially smaller than in a non-vocational classroom.

A review of national data examining enrollments in vocational teacher education programs and data

associated with the current teaching force suggests that potential for a serious mismatch between the supply of vocational teachers and future demand. It appears that programs in various states are being eliminated due to budgetary restrictions, while at the same time the field is poised for a significant number of retirements in the next 5-10 years.

Teacher Education: General Issues

It is not useful to examine vocational teacher education without reviewing some of the issues which are affecting all teacher education programs.

Information in the Chronicle of Higher Education and from the American Association for Teacher Education suggests that on a good number of colleges and universities discussions related to revision, recession, and revocation are common.

It appears that there will be increasing competition for alternative ways to prepare teachers. With the potential for military downsizing, a number of highly trained technical military representatives will be entering the workforce many of whom will look for a teaching career.

More and more there is concern for close school

and college partnerships. Activities associated with teacher education reform suggest the need for linkages to broader school reform initiatives. Finally, a number of state accountability measures focus on the need for improving the teaching force as well as issues associated with minority recruitment and the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Issues in Vocational Teacher Education

In addition to issues in the broader field of teacher education, there are issues that are important for vocational teacher educators.

The Carnegie Foundation's National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1991) has formed a standards committee to examine standards for master teachers in vocational education.

New Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education legislation suggests the important needs for vocational teachers to reinforce basic skills. Employers are suggesting that vocational teachers also understand the need to focus on generic aspects of work. Issues associated with the culture of work, economics, diversity, and entrepreneurship are examples of important issues to be considered.

Pratzner (1988) defines clearly the implications of these changes as follows:

New programs are needed to better prepare vocational teachers to enhance and reinforce basic skills (i.e., communications and computations skills) and higher-order skills (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making skills) in vocational programs; vocational teacher educators will need to identify and develop explicit instructional strategies, student learning activities, and supporting instructional resources that can be used to infuse practice and application of basic skills into existing vocational programs (p. 51).

New types of preservice and inservice programs are needed to develop knowledge of and instruction in new generic skills and generic aspects of work in America (e.g., the nature of changing workplaces, quality-control concepts and approaches, economic and global competition, productivity improvement, entrepreneurship, and participative management) (p. 51).

Very interesting work is underway at the Colorado State University to assist teachers as they integrate basic skills into vocational teacher education curricula. New curriculum methods developed by Colorado State University (1992) offers 17 lessons to help teachers learn how to integrate basic skills instruction in the classroom.

The new Tech Prep initiative sweeping the country offers new opportunities for vocational teacher

education. However, some suggest that the teacher education programs have been neglected as an important aspect of long-term Tech Prep-associated reform. In his address to the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Technical Education Consortium, Charles Law (1992) calls for the formation of a national work group to hammer out a clear and concise pedagogy for Tech Prep. He suggests involving a divergent group of teacher educator's to clarify pedagogy and form "teacher academies" for implementing new, model curricula.

More and more differences between teaching needs of secondary and post-secondary teachers are being examined. What new and different kinds of teaching methodologies are important for community colleges serving older, non-traditional adult populations?

Moss (1992) in his writing for the Journal of Industrial Teacher Education makes several observations about the future of vocational teacher education. According to Moss, vocational teacher education only relies on the school system to deliver occupational preparation. He also notes that the number of vocational teacher education faculty has dropped

dramatically over the last 15 years and the outlook for maintaining faculty is poor. Universities and colleges question vocational education's importance when it's time for budget reductions, and vocational departments, often become hard hit.

In addition, Moss (1992) reports that the new Perkins Act provides less money for vocational teacher education. With the new Perkins Act, power will move from the state agency to the local school boards. Vocational teacher education will be losing funding that has been coming from federal dollars routed through state vocational agencies. Therefore, teacher education departments which have been traditionally oriented toward vocational education move into different, more lucrative, markets such as training in the private sector, the military, or internationally.

With the predominate number of vocational teachers being white, it is increasingly important for minority populations to be recruited and retained in vocational teaching fields. How best can vocational teacher education programs support scholarship initiatives to encourage minority students to pursue a career in vocational education?

The increase in the number of non-traditional families and the aging of the U.S. population suggests the important need for expanding number of course offerings for special needs populations. And, how does the new Americans With Disability Act (1991) impact on vocational teacher education?

Summary

These issues, and others like them, will continue to impact on universities and colleges which prepare vocational education teachers. Without high-quality and accessible programs of vocational teacher education throughout the country, there may be dilatory consequences for the thousands of public schools offering vocational education to the nation's youth and adults.

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