

THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN
EFFECTIVE MANPOWER UTILIZATION

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Early in our history, Thomas Jefferson cautioned the people of this Nation that "if you expect to be both ignorant and free you expect what never has been and never can be."

The incompatibility of ignorance and freedom has been repeatedly and convincingly demonstrated in the developmental processes of this Nation, its people, and its international environment. The achievement and preservation of our individual and national freedoms are highly cherished goals and, as Jefferson implied, education is a prerequisite to their attainment.

Today, a century and a half later, amid the complexities of change, skill obsolescence, mobility, technological upheaval and population expansion which characterize our economy and society, an urgent problem is education of whom, for what, and in what way? Certainly educational programs which contribute to the optimum deployment and utilization of our manpower resources are essential to the freedom, growth and prosperity of our Nation and its people. Vocational education is such a program and plays a unique and vital role in effective manpower utilization.

This discussion of the role of vocational education in effective manpower utilization will be in three parts and will be limited to the role of federally aided vocational programs conducted primarily through the public schools, and administered by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare through its Office of Education. The first part will be a brief orientation to the development and identification of this role which will be followed by a review of the contemporary program. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of some emerging concepts of the role of vocational education.

Development and Identification of Role

Virtually every task and surely every occupation requires some prior instruction. In a broad sense, all education contributes to vocational competency, but vocational education refers to that part of the participant's instruction intended specifically to ready him for work. Liberal education and vocational education are both essential aspects of the problem of preparing an individual for living and for earning a living; they cannot be thought of as hostile or mutually exclusive enterprises. An educational program which recognizes value in both liberal education and vocational education is most desirable for the attainment of future individual and national goals.

The roots of vocational education extend back beyond the dawn of recorded history; its structure has changed as man's social structure has changed. Until comparatively recent times man's need for vocational education

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Great Plains Agricultural Council,
July 31, 1963

was largely satisfied by apprenticeship in one form or another. The technological development of the United States and the resulting critical need for vocational instruction gradually became problems of national concern and action. Positive action in the development of vocational education came first in 1906, when a small group of men formed the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education. Through the efforts of this Society, the need for vocational education was brought to the attention of Congress which on January 20, 1914, authorized the President of the United States to appoint a Commission to consider the subject of national aid for vocational education. In its report to Congress on June 1 of that year the Commission stated:

There is a great and crying need of providing vocational education of this character for every part of the United States - to conserve and develop our resources; to promote a more productive and prosperous agriculture; to prevent the waste of human labor; to supplement apprenticeships; to increase the wage-earning power of our productive workers; to meet the increasing demand for trained workmen; to offset the increased cost of living. Vocational education is therefore needed as a wise business investment for this Nation, because our national prosperity and happiness are at stake and our position in the markets of the world cannot otherwise be maintained.

Congress concluded that vocational education was a wise investment for the Federal government and in 1917, passed the Smith-Hughes Act. Under the provisions of this and supplementary acts comprehensive programs of vocational education have been developed. The Federal-State program of cooperation for the development of vocational education is based upon three principles:

1. That development of vocational education is in the national interest because it is essential to the national economy, defense and welfare;
2. That Federal funds are necessary to stimulate and assist the States in making adequate provisions for vocational education; and
3. That the local schools and the State exercise control of the program through State Boards for vocational education and State plans.

Vocational education, as it has developed in the United States, gives value and dignity to work! It aspires to aid the development of individual worth and dignity in all people regardless of their differing degrees of educability. Its controlling purpose is to fit persons for useful employment. Vocational education helps to give definite purpose and meaning to education by relating training to specific occupational goals. In addition to training for job skills, it also develops abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciations which contribute not only to successful employment but also to a satisfying and productive life.

Contemporary Programs

The contemporary program of vocational education, supported in part by Federal funds, is conducted under public supervision or control in the various States and provides instruction for in-school youth and for out-of-school youth and adults. The present occupational categories of vocational education consist of agriculture, distribution, home economics, trades and industries, practical nursing and related health occupations, the fishing industry, and the highly skilled technical occupations. These occupational categories of vocational education have been established by Federal legislation. In addition, vocational education programs which cut across these occupational categories are conducted under the Area Development Act of 1961 and the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962. Areas of service to vocational education, common to all of these programs, are occupational information and vocational guidance, teacher education, research, supervision and administration. The central purpose of these programs is to prepare individuals for the world of work. Four million students are enrolled annually, half of whom are adults.

The Area Redevelopment Act and the Manpower Development and Training Act have established a course of action to guide this Nation through its transition into the new age of space and technology. The need for such a course, buttressed by law, has been building up throughout the years since World War II. With each new technological advance, each new step in the direction of expanded world trade, each new shift in market demands, has come increasing need for more and better trained people to man our business and industry. At the same time, a decline has occurred in employment opportunities for people without skills or people whose skills are becoming outmoded.

The Manpower Development and Training Act sets the stage for more equitable distribution of opportunity for people to find work by providing them with the skills currently in demand in the labor market. By July 1, 1963, less than one year after the Manpower Development and Training program began operations, 1,492 training projects had been approved and 56,559 unemployed or underemployed individuals referred for training or retraining. During fiscal year 1963, 329 projects were approved under the Area Development Act for 13,754 trainees in designated redevelopment areas.

The obligation which this Government assumed through MDTA is more fraught with implications than many anticipated. The conditions that have affected many of the working people of the United States still remain, and, as long as they exist, there will be need for this Government to sustain such counter-measures as massive training and retraining opportunities. The core of the process of turning millions of unemployed people into useful, productive, self-sufficient workers is in education - vocationally oriented education. This fact is sometimes obscured by the drama that attaches to our confrontation with social and economic change.

When all the facts have passed in review, however, this one remains: The difference between a person's becoming a mere statistic on the "want work" books of the employment service and his being a useful and productively employed citizen in his opportunity to become equipped with a set of saleable skills. Saleable skills are made up, not only of the manipulative skill demanded of an occupation, but of the related knowledge and ability that

permits an individual to make judgments on the job. This kind of training comes through vocational education.

Emerging Concepts

Federally aided vocational education has contributed significantly to the welfare of the country and its people during nearly a half century of operation. But never has it achieved the recognition, support and encouragement commensurate with its task. Adjustment and expansion are necessary if vocational education is to have meaningful effect in manpower utilization within the changing environment of today and tomorrow.

Though it may be hazardous to forecast the future population growth of the United States, there is considerably less risk in predicting the number who will reach certain significant ages in the future. For example, virtually all of the 4.2 million children born in 1960 will reach their 5th birthday in 1965, their 10th in 1970, and their 20th in 1980. From 1955 to 1959, the average number of youngsters reaching their 14th birthday (the beginning of high school age) was 2.7 million annually. This total has jumped to 3.2 million in the years 1960-64, will reach 3.9 million annually between 1965 and 1970, and will exceed 4 million annually in the first five years after 1970. These population figures, which can be predicted with relative certainty, obviously have profound implications for those concerned with preparation for the world of work.

Concomitant with these challenges to preemployment training of youth are the problems of adult training and retraining arising from geographic and occupational mobility, rapid obsolescing of skills, mechanization, automation, and a whole host of associated factors.

In his February 20, 1961 Message to Congress on American Education, President Kennedy included the following statement:

The National Vocational Education Acts, first enacted by the Congress in 1917 and subsequently amended, have provided a program of training for industry, agriculture, and other occupational areas. The basic purpose of our vocational education effort is sound and sufficiently broad to provide a basis for meeting future needs. However, the technological changes which have occurred in all occupations call for a review and re-evaluation of these Acts, with a view toward their modernization.

To that end, I am requesting the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to convene an advisory body drawn from the educational profession, labor, industry, and agriculture, as well as the lay public, together with representation from the Departments of Agriculture and Labor, to be charged with the responsibility of reviewing and evaluating the current National Vocational Education Acts and making recommendations for improving and redirecting the program.

In compliance with this request, twenty-six individuals were selected to serve as members of the Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education with Dr. Benjamin C. Willis as Chairman. The report of the Panel was submitted to Secretary Celebrezze and to President Kennedy in November 1962.

In the report the Panel predicted that 87 million people will be working full-time by 1970. This 87 million will consist of 58 million now at work who will still be employed and will need training to keep pace with new methods, new materials, and new opportunities; 26 million new young workers whose aptitudes, skills and education must match the needs of a changing economy; and three million women who will switch from housework to jobs and will need marketable skills.

The Panel recognized that the most rapidly expanding occupations require the most education and training and that education and training are sound investments in people. The Panel reported that the local-State-Federal partnership in vocational education teaches skills the Nation needs but that vocational education is not available in enough schools or to all who need it. The report emphasized that vocational education is not preparing for enough jobs, and technical training after high school is a critical need.

The emerging role of vocational education was clearly established in the Panel's recommended Agenda for Action. It stated that in a changing world of work, vocational education must offer training opportunities to the 21 million non-college graduates who will enter the labor market in the 1960's; provide training or retraining for the millions of workers whose skills and technical knowledge must be updated, as well as those whose jobs will disappear due to automation or economic change; meet the critical need for highly skilled craftsmen and technicians through education and training beyond high school; expand vocational and technical training programs consistent with employment possibilities and national economic needs; and make education and training opportunities equally available to all, regardless of race, sex, or place of residence.

The Panel further indicated that to give more people occupational skills and to mesh training programs with employment opportunities, it will be necessary to diversify and expand training in each of the present occupational categories. The Panel recognized that as this expansion develops, there will be overlapping of categories and a need for training in additional occupations. To enable vocational education to meet these needs it recommended that the statutory and fiscal categories of vocational education conform to the groups of people who are to be trained and to the services assisting their training:

1. Youth in high school who are preparing to enter the labor market or to become homemakers.
2. Youth with academic, socio-economic or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in the regular vocational education program.
3. Youth and adults who have completed or left high school and are full time students, preparing to enter the labor market.

4. Youth and adults who are unemployed or at work, who need training or retraining to achieve employment stability.
5. Services required to assure quality in all vocational and technical education programs.

Specific recommendations were offered relative to these categories such as the inclusion of training for office occupations; support of preemployment training for distributive occupations; expansion of full-time post high school vocational and technical training; broadening of the vocational agriculture program to permit instruction for other agricultural occupations in addition to farming and ranching; and improved and enlarged programs of teacher training, occupational information, research and instructional materials.

Legislation currently under consideration by Congress will, if enacted, contribute greatly to the implementation of the Panel's recommendations. Early this year, within the framework of a National Education Improvement Act, the President proposed increased Federal aid for vocational education; more leeway to the States in program planning and operation; and availability of funds for area vocational school construction and for special projects in big cities where youth unemployment is most serious.

Adapting the Administration's proposals, Congressman Carl Perkins of Kentucky introduced a subsequent bill - H. R. 4955 - which called for substantially greater Federal outlay. This measure has already been approved by and voted out of the House Committee on Education and Labor.

Most recently - on June 19, to be exact - the President delivered a special message to Congress dealing with civil rights and equality of employment opportunities. Contained in this message were several recommendations to supplement earlier Administration proposals covering Federal aid for vocational education.

Even if none of the legislative proposals bears fruit in the form of additional Federal funds this year, they have already caused a sprouting of new plans in many States, new policy decisions in the Office of Education, and new interest on the part of the general public. The concentration of criticism, evaluation, recommendation and expectation on programs of preparation for the world of work is casting the emerging role of vocational education in effective manpower utilization. It must be a more adequate role, with an availability of vocational preparation, quantitatively and qualitatively, which is more closely aligned with the present and future manpower needs.

The role of vocational education belongs squarely within the role of total education. Unless all of us recognize that economic realities, at least in part, must govern the direction of our total educational effort, then we fall in our attempt to prepare human beings for their responsibilities as citizens. Education is not apart from daily living, but a part of it, and education for today's world must include training for earning a living.

It is incumbent upon all educators to join forces - and to enlist the support and welcome the views of all segments of society. Then, and then alone, will we be in a position to offer dynamic education for the new age of man.