

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 798 788

CE 026 981

**AUTHOR**  
**TITLE**

Greenan, James P.; Phelps, L. Allen  
Policy-Related Problems for Delivering Vocational  
Education to Handicapped Learners as Perceived by  
State Education Agency Personnel. Policy Research and  
Resource Series: Document 2.

**INSTITUTION**  
**SPONS AGENCY**  
**PUB DATE**  
**GRANT**  
**NOTE**

Illinois Univ., Urbana.  
Office of Special Education (ED), Washington, D.C.  
May 80  
G007900952  
31p.: For related documents see CE 026 980-982 and CE  
027 002-004.

**EDRS PRICE**  
**DESCRIPTORS**

MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
Administrator Attitudes: Adult Education: Agency  
Cooperation: Coordination: Delivery Systems:  
\*Disabilities: Educational Research: Elementary  
Secondary Education: Federal Legislation: Financial  
Policy: National Surveys: Nontraditional Education:  
\*Policy: Postsecondary Education: Program Evaluation:  
Program Improvement: \*Special Education: \*State  
Departments of Education: State Legislation: Teacher  
Attitudes: Teacher Education: \*Vocational  
Education  
\*Policy Research

**IDENTIFIERS**

**ABSTRACT**

This report presents baseline data that identifies and describes the policy-related problems confronting State Education Agency Personnel in delivering vocational education to handicapped learners. The first section sets forth these two major objectives of the nationwide study: (1) to develop a survey instrument and techniques for identifying the policy-related problems confronting state directors of vocational and special education, and consultants for vocational special needs education and (2) to identify the major policy-related problem areas and problems. In the second section these research procedures are described: instrumentation (development of an open-ended survey instrument), population determination, data collection, and data analysis. The third section discusses eight identified problem areas (and 248 policy-related problems): interagency cooperation and agreements; funding and fiscal policy; service delivery and program alternatives; personnel preparation; state legislation, plans, and policies; federal legislation and regulations; program evaluation and improvement; and attitudes. Two recommendations are presented which are addressed to policy-making and planning personnel at the federal, state, and local levels: further study of the extent and criticality of each of the areas of concern needs, and continued efforts to provide high quality research, development training, and evaluation projects. (JLB)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

**Policy-Related Problems for Delivering Vocational Education to Handicapped Learners as Perceived by State Education Agency Personnel**

Policy Research and Resource Series: Document 2

**James P. Greenan**  
Research and Development Coordinator  
Leadership Training Institute/  
Vocational and Special Education  
University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign

**L. Allen Phelps**  
Assistant Professor and Director  
Leadership Training Institute/  
Vocational and Special Education  
University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign

A Publication of the  
**LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE/  
VOCATIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

College of Education  
University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign

Sponsored by

Division of Personnel Preparation  
Office of Special Education  
U.S. Education Department

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,  
EDUCATION & WELFARE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Janet Treichel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

May 1980

The contents of this publication were developed under grant number G007900952 from the Division of Personnel Preparation, Office of Special Education, U.S. Education Department. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the agency, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

9

3

## PREFACE

Since the passage of Public Laws 93-112, 94-142, and 94-482, much attention has been focused on increasing and improving vocational education opportunities for handicapped persons. However, handicapped people continue to participate in vocational education and the work force to a lesser extent than non-handicapped people. This condition has been attributed to various kinds of problems.

Several problems often confront personnel who are involved in providing vocational instruction and related services to handicapped learners. In particular, State Education Agency (SEA) personnel are frequently faced with policy-related problems. Identifying and finding solutions to these "barriers" are necessary for providing efficient and appropriate vocational services to handicapped learners.

The Leadership Training Institute/Vocational and Special Education, University of Illinois, has conducted a study to identify the policy-related problems for delivering vocational education to handicapped learners. This report presents baseline data which identifies and describes the policy-related problems which confront SEA personnel. It is hoped that the information and recommendations presented herein will be helpful to personnel who are involved in providing vocational education services to handicapped learners.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY . . . . .	3
RESEARCH PROCEDURES . . . . .	4
Instrumentation . . . . .	4
Population . . . . .	4
Data Collection . . . . .	5
Data Analysis . . . . .	6
FINDINGS . . . . .	7
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS: . . . . .	21
Summary . . . . .	21
Recommendations . . . . .	24
REFERENCES . . . . .	26

## INTRODUCTION

A major thrust in education today is the delivery of vocational education instruction and related services to handicapped learners. Recent legislation (Sections 503 and 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973; P.L. 94-142, The Education For All Handicapped Children Act of 1975; P.L. 94-482, The Education Amendments of 1976) and numerous litigations have established the right of handicapped students to a free and appropriate public education. However, recent data (Levitan & Taggart, 1977; DOL Report, 1977; USOE Report, 1978; Federal Register, September 25, 1978) have revealed that the percentage of handicapped adults participating in the work force is significantly less than the percentage of non-handicapped adults. Howard (1979) attributed this unfortunate condition to several factors: (1) a decline in the number of handicapped students receiving special education services at the secondary level, (2) critical shortages of personnel who are trained in both special and vocational education, (3) few vocational program alternatives and service delivery options, and (4) a limited funding base.

These and other state level policy-related problems frequently inhibit or prevent the delivery of essential instruction and related services to handicapped vocational students. Unfortunately, similar problems often are not clearly identified and resolved. Consequently, students are denied an appropriate education mandated by federal laws.

Several policy-related problems and questions have been identified through investigations intending to improve vocational education opportunities for handicapped students. Howard (1979) conducted a

needs assessment with a sample of four (4) states including Arizona, Maine, Montana, and South Dakota. The needs assessment utilized an interview technique. State directors of special education, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and their staffs were interviewed. Also interviewed were individuals representing other agencies and organizations such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Division of Indian Education, vocational-technical schools, state legislatures, and CETA. The following policy-related issues were identified: interagency cooperation, personnel preparation, funding, service delivery/program options, program evaluation, and service to Native American and other minority handicapped youth. Davis and Ward (1978) also identified vocational assessment, individualized education programs, identification of students, program placement, and facilities and equipment modification as important problems. In addition, Phelps and Thornton (1979) surveyed State Education Agency (SEA) personnel, professional association officers, handicapped advocates and consumers, teacher educators, and state advisory councils for vocational education. They identified interagency planning and service delivery, individual education programming, least restrictive environment, and personnel development as significant problems confronting organizations and agencies concerned with improving vocational education opportunities for handicapped students (p. 15).

The efficient delivery of essential services to handicapped vocational students is dependent upon the identification and solutions to the various existing policy-related problems. However, few studies have been conducted and minimal data is available which indicates the scope of the problems confronting SEA personnel. Therefore, the need was apparent to identify the existing policy-related problems so

that initiatives could be undertaken to improve the delivery of vocational instruction and services to handicapped learners.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to provide vocational and special education personnel baseline data for determining policy research needs. The data could be used to develop short and long range policy research plans. In this study, policy-related problems were defined as those problems which pertain to the delivery of vocational instruction and services to handicapped students which are administrative, organizational, or fiscal in nature. The major objectives of this study were to (1) develop a survey instrument and technique for identifying the policy-related problems which confront state directors of vocational, special, and consultants for vocational special needs education, and (2) identify the major policy-related problem areas and problems.

This study was significant because it contributed to the body of knowledge on policy research in vocational and special education. Policy-related problems which inhibit the delivery of vocational instruction and related services to handicapped students were identified. Using this data, SEA personnel may design plans for policy research and activities. The plans will initiate research proposals, studies, and development activities to investigate the various problems. Ultimately, solutions to the numerous policy-related problems may become possible.



## RESEARCH PROCEDURES

### Instrumentation

An open-ended survey instrument was developed for this study. It was believed that the open-ended type survey would permit greater specificity of responses than the closed type. The survey consisted of a stamped, self-addressed post-card. On the back side of the card the respondent was asked to indicate his/her job position by placing an "X" in one of the following boxes:  Director of Vocational Education,  Director of Special Education, or  Consultant for Vocational Special Needs Education. The instructions asked the directors to list the specific policy-related problems which currently existed in their states in delivering vocational education services to handicapped students.

### Population

The population for this study consisted of all state (including the District of Columbia) directors of vocational education, special education, and consultants responsible for vocational special needs education in the United States and surrounding territories. The surrounding territories included: Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Mariana Islands, North Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. Each of these territories has one director of vocational, special, and vocational special needs education except for the North Mariana Islands which has neither a director of special or vocational special needs education (as indicated by the directories). Therefore, the population of directors from the fifty (50) states, District of Columbia, and

six (6) surrounding territories was 169. Each of the 169 directors was chosen to participate in this study.

### Data Collection

The directors' names and addresses were drawn from the current vocational education, special education, and vocational special needs education personnel directories. The surveys were mailed to the directors on October 15, 1979 and were to be returned by November 15, 1979. The response rate was 41%. On November 16, 1979, a follow-up survey card was mailed to each non-respondent and was to be returned by November 30, 1979. The follow-up increased the response rate to 55%. On December 1, 1979, a telephone survey was conducted requesting each non-respondent to return his/her survey card. December 15, 1979 was the last day that surveys were accepted and included in the data. The final response rate was 62.13% (See Table 1).

TABLE 1  
RESPONSE RATES OF THE STATE  
DIRECTORS AND CONSULTANTS

State Leadership Personnel	No. Mailed	No. Returned	Percent Returned
Director of Vocational Education	57	34	59.64%
Director of Special Education	56	30	53.57%
Consultant for Vocational Special Needs Education	56	41	73.21%
Total	169	105	62.13%

## Data Analysis

The data obtained from each director from all states, District of Columbia, and territories were analyzed collectively. The data were analyzed in this way since the intent of this study was to gain a generic view of the problems confronting SEA personnel concerned with providing vocational education services to handicapped learners. Also, previous studies have indicated that various SEA personnel identify similar kinds of existing policy-related problems, since they commonly are confronted with the same problems. Each of the problems listed was categorized into general problem areas (i.e. funding, interagency cooperation). This was accomplished by identifying key words or phrases in each problem statement that related to kinds of general problem areas. Subsequently, problem areas evolved from the problems that were listed on all surveys.

In some instances, problems could have been categorized into more than one area. When this situation occurred, subjective judgments were made based on key words or phrases for placing the problems in the most appropriate category. Each identified problem was placed in only one category. A few problem statements were unclearly written. In such cases, an attempt was made to contact the respondent for clarification. If the person could not be contacted, an interpretation of the statement was made.

The individual problems within each problem area were then tallied and assigned frequencies. The problems containing higher frequencies were generally considered to reflect greater national magnitude and importance to the field of vocational education for the handicapped.

## FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed 8 identified problem areas. These areas included: (1) interagency cooperation and agreements, (2) funding and fiscal policy, (3) service delivery and program alternatives, (4) personnel preparation, (5) state legislation, plans, and policies, (6) federal legislation and regulations, (7) program evaluation and improvement, and (8) attitudes. One hundred and five directors identified a total of 248 policy-related problems. Table 2 illustrates the frequencies and percentages of the identified policy-related problems across the problem areas. The following discussion of the findings is concerned with the identified problem areas and problems.

### Interagency Cooperation and Agreements

Interagency cooperation and agreements was defined in this study as the collaborative efforts between agencies (i.e. vocational education, special education, vocational rehabilitation, and CETA) in such areas as planning, funding, curriculum articulation, and support services. The intent of such efforts is to provide efficient and coordinated delivery of necessary vocational instruction and related services to handicapped learners.

Interagency cooperation and agreements was the most frequently identified policy-related problem area. Several individual problem statements were listed. Approximately 26% of all the problems identified in this study related to interagency cooperation and agreements. Many directors reported several problems within a single

TABLE 2

FREQUENCIES AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES OF THE IDENTIFIED  
POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS ACROSS THE PROBLEM AREAS

Policy-Related Problem Area	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Interagency Cooperation and Agreements	64	25.80%
2. Funding and Fiscal Policy	62	25.00%
3. Service Delivery and Program Alternatives	47	19.00%
4. Personnel Preparation	27	10.90%
5. State Legislation, Plans, and Policies	21	8.50%
6. Federal Legislation and Regulation	10	4.00%
7. Attitudes	10	4.00%
8. Program Evaluation and Improvement	7	2.80%
Total	248	100%

response. For ease and efficiency of reporting, the 64 responses were grouped into 3 categories and reflected the various identified problems (See Table 3).

TABLE 3

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION AND AGREEMENTS  
POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS, FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Lack of Verbal and Written Agreements	24	37.50%
2. Lack of consistent philosophies, policies, rules, regulations, guidelines, planning, funding, and dissemination	22	34.37%
3. Lack of collaboration in terms of responsibility for vocational instruction and services, development of IEPs, vocational assessment, placement, and articulation of curriculum and support services	18	28.13%
Total	64	100%

The problems were concerned with a general lack of coordination at the federal, state, and local levels between vocational education, special education, vocational rehabilitation, CETA, and other private and public agencies. The directors believe that verbal and formal agreements are needed to bring about coordinated activities and efforts between these agencies. The findings were consistent with previous studies (Davis & Ward, 1978; Howard, 1979; Phelps & Thornton; 1979).

### Funding and Fiscal Policy

Funding and fiscal policy was defined in this study as the administration or management strategies for allocating monetary resources to subsidize vocational education of handicapped students. The subsidies provide for instruction, supplementary, and support services needed for assisting handicapped students, to succeed in vocational education.

Funding and fiscal policy problems were frequently identified by the directors. Five specific problems were identified (See Table 4). The directors cited inadequate funds, funding policies, formulas, and coordination at the federal, state, and local levels as the major problems in this area. The excess cost only factor, 50% matching federal funds, and set-aside funds were also identified as important policy-related problems. Similar funding problems were also identified in previous investigations (Davis & Ward, 1978; Howard, 1979).

### Service Delivery and Program Alternatives

Service delivery was defined in this study as the availability of services and/or the processes or procedures for providing services to handicapped vocational learners. For example, vocational assessment is a service sometimes provided to students. However, assessment procedures may not be available and if they are may not be appropriate for the handicapped population to be served. Program alternatives were defined as alternative vocational programs or placements for handicapped students. Alternative programs or placements may include pre-vocational, regular, adapted, special, or individual vocational education.

Service delivery and program alternatives were found to be significant problem areas. The directors most frequently cited the lack of appropriate vocational program alternatives and services as the major problem (See Table 5). Howard (1979) reported similar findings.

TABLE #  
 FUNDING AND FISCAL POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS,  
 FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Inadequate federal, state, and local funds necessary to deliver appropriate vocational education programs and services to handicapped students	21	33.87%
2. Inadequate funding policies, formulas, and coordination between vocational education, special education, vocational rehabilitation and CETA at the federal, state, and local levels for funding the vocational education of handicapped students	15	24.19%
3. The use of vocational education funds for the excess cost only factor of vocational education services provided under P.L. 94-482	11	17.74%
4. The requirement of 50/50 matching federal funds under P.L. 94-482	9	14.52%
5. Lack of guidelines for distribution of set-aside funds by formula due to non-categorical approaches for identifying handicapped students makes it difficult to differentiate 10% or 20% set-aside funds under P.L. 94-482	6	9.68%
Total	62	100%



TABLE 5

SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROGRAM OPTIONS: POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS, FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Lack of appropriate vocational education program options or alternatives and services	17	36.17%
2. Lack of meaningful IEP's including vocational assessment and criteria for selection of most appropriate vocational programs	6	12.77%
3. Lack of policy, process, and procedures for mainstreaming students into the least restrictive environment	6	12.77%
4. Modifying curriculum and facilities	4	8.51%
5. Lack of procedures for identifying handicapped students	3	6.38%
6. Lack of screening and referral procedures	2	4.25%
7. Insufficient staff	2	4.25%
8. Lack of program and curriculum standards or criteria	2	4.25%
9. Fragmentation of vocational educations' delivery system	1	2.13%
10. Delivery of vocational education in rural areas	1	2.13%
11. Implementing technical assistance for Section 504	1	2.13%
12. Lack of advocacy groups for disadvantaged students	1	2.13%
13. Lack a class size limit policy	1	2.13%
Total	47	100%

The individualized education program (IEP) and least restrictive environment (LRE) procedures were also listed as important problems. The directors and consultants cited a lack of meaningful or appropriate IEPs for students. A need was expressed for policies and procedures in placing students into the regular vocational program or least restrictive environment. These problems were also prevalent in other studies (Davis & Ward, 1978; Phelps & Thornton, 1979). Despite the fact that P.L. 94-142 was enacted in 1975, the procedures of regulation described the terms of compliance in 1977, and inservice programs have been initiated nationwide, IEP and LRE-related problems still exist. The problems associated with IEP and LRE need to be examined more closely. The directors also indicated several other problems including modifying curriculum and facilities, identifying handicapped students, and lack of referral procedures.

#### Personnel Preparation

Personnel preparation was defined in this study as the formal education and training of teachers and other staff who provide instruction for handicapped students in vocational settings. Formal education commonly is in the forms of preservice and inservice instruction.

The directors and consultants indicated that vocational educators generally lack knowledge and training about special education, while special educators generally lack knowledge and training about vocational education (See Table 6). The findings identify a duality which

TABLE 6

PERSONNEL PREPARATION POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS,  
FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Special education personnel lack training and awareness in vocational education and vocational education personnel lack training and awareness in special education	16	59.26%
2. Lack cooperative certification requirements for vocational and special education	7	25.93%
3. Insufficient inservice training for vocational and special education administrators, counselors, and teachers regarding vocational education for handicapped students	4	14.81%
Total	27	100%

has created a void in the vocational education of handicapped students. Vocational educators tend to be technically or occupationally oriented and are commonly unaware of the special needs of handicapped students. Therefore, when handicapped students are present in their classes, they often do not know how to deal with the students' learning problems that arise. Special educators generally are student-oriented but are commonly unaware of vocations, occupations, or skills. Hence, the special educator finds it difficult to make vocational programmatic suggestions in the IEP; or suggest modification in curriculum, facilities and equipment. Howard (1979) and Phelps and Thornton (1979) have also cited personnel preparation as a major problem facing vocational and special education.

The directors indicated a need to provide cooperative certification requirements and more inservice for vocational and special education personnel. These appear to be possible solutions to the personnel preparation problem. However, several vocational and special education personnel are resistant to crossing into each others' fields. Improved personnel preparation efforts will entail changing attitudes and directions in the vocational and special education fields.

### State Legislation, Plans, and Policies

State legislation, plans, and policies were defined in this study as the state laws, and related documents that facilitate federal-state planning for the administration or management of vocational education and special education:

The findings indicate that there is some lack of specific state policies pertaining to the delivery of vocational education services to handicapped students (See Table 7). Some directors expressed a need for statewide policies, aside from the federal legislation that pertain to delivering vocational services to handicapped students. They also suggested that state and local guidelines need to be developed that vocational and special education can follow for determining the responsibilities for providing handicapped students with vocational services.

TABLE 7

STATE LEGISLATION AND PLANS POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS, FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Lack of specific statewide policies other than the requirements in P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 94-482 that addresses the delivery of vocational education programs and services to handicapped students	11	52.38%
2. Lack of guidelines that determine the legal responsibilities of vocational and special education at the state and local levels	5	23.81%
3. Lack of policy concerning access to state funded vocational facilities	2	9.53%
4. Lack of technical assistance provided by the SEA to LEA in planning and implementing policies at the local level	1	4.76%
5. Handicapped students below grade 11 or age 16 must receive a special waiver directly from the commissioner of education to be enrolled in vocational education programs	1	4.76%
6. Requirements are restrictive as to who may test for determining handicapping conditions	1	4.76%
Total	21	100%

Other problems identified include access to vocational facilities, need for technical assistance from SEA to LEA, and determination of handicapping conditions.

## Federal Legislation and Regulations

Federal legislation and regulations were defined in this study as the federal laws and rules which pertain to the delivery of vocational education and related services to handicapped students. Six different problems were identified in this area (See Table 8).

TABLE 8

### FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS, FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Lack of specific definitions and open interpretations of P.L. 94-142 and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504	3	30%
2. Lack of implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as it relates to accessibility for students with handicapping conditions in vocational facilities	2	20%
3. SEAs and LEAs need more autonomy in determining how to meet special needs	2	20%
4. P.L. 94-142 allows no exceptions for the delivery of appropriate education and related services to handicapped students who are unlikely to succeed in the competitive job market	1	10%
5. Federal regulations inhibit inter-agency cooperation	1	10%
6. Matching provision of the Vocational Education Act	1	10%
Total	10	100%

Some directors cited non-specific definitions in legislation, lack of Section 504 implementation, and insufficient SEA and LEA autonomy in serving handicapped students as important problems. The lack of specific definitions in federal legislation often causes many differing interpretations to occur. This leads to confusion and inconsistency in service delivery.

### Attitudes

Attitudes were defined in this study as the thoughts or feelings of educators and others who are directly or indirectly involved with the vocational education of handicapped students. While attitudes are not commonly considered a matter of policy, they often dictate policy. The most frequently identified attitude problems concerned education and industry personnel accepting handicapped students into vocational programs or work settings. The indifferences of teachers may be partially attributed to not wanting to be responsible for handicapped students' learning, unwilling to accept increased workloads, or a reluctance of educators to cross each others' disciplines. Industry personnel may be concerned about a cost-effect problem. That is, "Will it cost me more and benefit me less to hire the handicapped?" It appears that both educators and industry personnel have a basic lack of knowledge and awareness about the functional abilities of handicapped individuals. In some way these groups need to become more sensitive to the needs and abilities of the handicapped. Attitudes were cited in 10 problem statements (See Table 9).

TABLE 9

ATTITUDE POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS, FREQUENCIES,  
AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy-Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Negative attitudes of educators and industry personnel towards accepting handicapped students and modifying programs and environments	4	40%
2. Teachers reluctance to be held accountable for their instruction	2	20%
3. Disincentives of employment after vocational training	1	10%
4. Special education teachers reluctance to become involved in vocational education because it expands their workload	1	10%
5. "Turf" protection (1)	1	10%
6. Lack of good public relations (1)	1	10%
Total	10	100%

Program Evaluation and Improvement

Program evaluation was defined in this study as the assessment of the effectiveness of vocational programs which serve handicapped students. However, program evaluation should not be restricted to a formal monitoring and evaluation process. It should be on-going intending to provide relevant and useful information to program administrators. Program improvement was defined as the betterment of the instruction and related services provided to handicapped students in vocational programs.



A few directors indicated a need to create appropriate admission and placement criteria for vocational programs (See Table 10). The

TABLE 10

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT POLICY-RELATED PROBLEMS, FREQUENCIES, AND RESPONSE PERCENTAGES

Policy Related Problem	Frequency	Percent Response
1. Lack of admission and placement criteria policy for avoiding discrimination and inappropriate placement in vocational programs	4	57.13%
2. Lack written model programs for schools to refer to when beginning special vocational programs	1	14.29%
3. Lack effective monitoring of vocational programs to assure that handicapped students receive their entitled instruction and services	1	14.29%
4. Lack follow-up on actual job placements to assess the effectiveness of vocational programs	1	14.29%
Total	7	100%

establishment of admission and placement criteria will assist in determining the least restrictive alternative for individual students. Program evaluation activities including program monitoring and student follow-up were also reported to be needed. Howard (1979) reported similar findings.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

The purpose of this survey study was to identify the current policy-related problems confronting vocational education and special education personnel in state education agencies. An open-ended survey instrument was developed and mailed to the state directors of vocational education, state directors of special education, and consultants for vocational special needs education. In October 1979, 169 surveys were mailed to the three respondent groups in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and six territories. Recent mailing lists prepared by the U.S. Office of Education were used in this study. Two follow-up efforts yielded an overall return rate of 62.13%. At least one response was received from 56 of 57 states, the District of Columbia, and territories.

There are some limitations inherent in this study and the returns that must be noted. First, this study did not ask the respondents to prioritize the policy-related problems. In some instances, respondents listed multiple problems. However, these responses were not prioritized. There are a number of factors such as a respondent's personal views regarding the role of state and federal government in education, that could have influenced their perceptions of "specific policy-related problems." Also, as noted in the introduction, the classification of problem statements was difficult due to the complexities and inter-relatedness of the identified problems. In addition, in some instances the identification of problems may, in part, be related to state legislation policy or regulations. The nuances among states in funding and administrative regulations could not be

controlled for in the analysis of problem statements because the in-depth background information needed for such an analysis was not obtainable.

As noted in the findings, the responses received reflected eight major policy-related problem areas. These areas included:

- o Interagency cooperation and agreements
- o Funding and fiscal policy
- o Service delivery and program alternatives
- o Personnel preparation
- o State legislation, plans, and policies
- o Federal legislation and regulations
- o Attitudes
- o Program evaluation and improvement

While eight problem areas were identified from the responses, it is important to note that over 50% of the problems listed by state education agency staff fell into two areas: interagency cooperation and agreements, and funding and fiscal policy. This suggests that states are actively involved (in most instances) in working with the complexities of formal as well as informal interagency agreements. The impact of several federal initiatives (i.e. OE-RSA Joint Memorandum on Vocational Education, Special Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation) and federally-funded projects is being noted quite extensively at the state level. It is indeed positive to note the continued and expanded efforts of state agencies to work cooperatively in providing a continuum of vocational education opportunities and services for the handicapped population. Recent major changes in the federal legislation governing vocational education and special education

have caused state directors and their staffs to revise many of their state policies and program guidelines. They now appear to have instituted most of the new changes, and are able to devote their efforts to expanding interagency efforts to further enhance quality and comprehensiveness of their programmatic efforts in special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation.

The funding and fiscal policy problems identified by the respondents are focused in two areas. First, they indicate that the delivery of appropriate vocational education programs is, to some extent, limited by inadequate federal, state, and local funds. Second, inadequate funding policies, formulas, and coordination between agencies regarding funding is perceived as a major problem. The excess cost and 50/50 matching requirements, which were introduced in the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, were mentioned as a problem by 20 (19.05%) of the survey respondents.

Nearly 20% of the respondents expressed concerns related to the availability of program options and delivery of services to handicapped learners. A lack of appropriate vocational program options for different handicapped populations was clearly the major concern.

Other problems and concerns that were less frequently mentioned by the state education agency personnel included: (1) lack of appropriate preservice and inservice training for vocational and special education personnel, (2) lack of specific statewide policies and guidelines pertaining to vocational education for the handicapped, (3) the restrictiveness and vagueness of federal regulations, (4) negative educator and employer attitudes, and (5) lack of job placement follow-up and programmatic evaluation.

## Recommendations

A number of general and specific recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study. The recommendations which follow are addressed to policy-making and planning personnel at the federal, state, and local levels.

1. The extent and criticality of each of the areas of concern needs to be further studied. The extent to which teachers, parents, local administrators, and employers share these concerns at all levels (national, state, and local) needs to be examined. State education agencies could, for example, conduct a similar survey within their states to determine the major problems as perceived by local administrators and others in delivering appropriate vocational education for handicapped learners. Such a survey(s) would yield valuable information for the state planning processes, revising interagency agreements, developing teacher training programs, distribution/allocation of funds, and developing new innovative programs and curriculum or instructional materials. In the past three years several state agencies have commissioned statewide needs assessment studies that address, at least in part, several of the problems identified in this study.

Similar needs assessment and program development efforts should be occurring at the community level as well. Parents of handicapped learners, educators, employers, and community agency representatives (i.e. vocational rehabilitation counselors) need to collectively identify local vocational program employment and attitudinal barriers; and then engage in policy and program development (or revision) efforts to resolve the identified barriers.

2. At the national level a number of studies and contracts have been initiated addressing several of the identified problem areas.

Continued efforts are needed to provide high quality research, development training, and evaluation projects that monitor the fields progress in problem areas such as interagency planning and personnel preparation. The data provided herein should be helpful in formulating federal priorities for expenditure of discretionary funds for research, training, and overall program improvement. Several of the policy-related problems that were identified in Tables 3-10 could become focal points for requests for proposals (RFPs), grant program priorities, projects for national research centers and regional resource centers, and/or themes for national conferences or workshops.

## REFERENCES

Davis, S. & Ward, M. Vocational Education of Handicapped Students: A Guide for Policy Development. Reston, Virginia: Council for Exceptional Children, 1978.

Department of Labor (DOL) Report to Congress, 1977.

Federal Register, Vocational Education, Volume 42, Number 67, April 7, 1977.

Federal Register, Nondiscrimination on Basis of Handicap. Volume 42, Number 86, May 4, 1977. (Regulations for Implementing Section 504 of P.L. 93-112).

Federal Register, Education of Handicapped Children. Volume 42, Number 163, August 23, 1977. (Regulations for Implementing P.L. 94-142).

Federal Register, Position Statement on Comprehensive Vocational Education for Handicapped Persons. Volume 43, Number 186, September 25, 1978.

Howard, R. Vocational Education of Handicapped Youth: State of the Art. Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Boards of Education, 1979.

Levitan, S. & Taggart, R. Jobs for the Disabled. Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Phelps, L.A. & Thornton, L.J. Vocational Education and Handicapped Learners: Perception and Inservice needs of State Leadership Personnel. Urbana, Illinois: Leadership Training Institute/Vocational and Special Education, 1979.

United States Office of Education (USOE) Report to Congress, 1978.