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ABSTRACT

This summary report presents information regarding the 899 research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development projects conducted under the Education Amendments of 1975 during fiscal year 1981. Following an introduction, the methodology used to compile the data is described. The findings section presents the data in six tables: (1) state program improvement projects by state, (2) state program improvement projects by legislative section, (3) recipients of project funding, (4) target educational levels, (5) problem areas addressed by projects, and (6) products and outcomes of projects. These conclusions are listed: the reporting system works, more funds are obligated for support services than program improvement, states obligate about equal amounts on the three categories, amounts obligated for projects vary considerably, projects have focused on every educational level and are being conducted by educational institutions and agencies at every level, and the greatest number of projects have focused on instructional improvement. Five recommendations are made: clarification and reinforcement of responsibility of state research coordinating units (RCUs) to supply program information, RCU personnel training to improve reporting of project information, expansion of tracking system to accommodate information about state support service and administrative activities, study of results of funding patterns and levels, and planning of multistate cooperative research and development efforts. (YLB)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

A Summary of State-Administered
Projects in FY 1981

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Center for Research in Vocational Education, like every
program or activity receiving financial assistance from
the U.S. Department of Education, must be operated in
compliance with these laws.

FOREWORD

Provisions were made in the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) for state-administered program improvement projects. During the 1981 fiscal year, 899 research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development projects were conducted under this legislative provision. Information about these projects has been reported with respect to location, funding levels, funding recipients, educational levels, problem areas, and outcomes. This summary report will be helpful to legislators, federal program administrators, and state agency personnel by providing answers to questions such as the following:

- o How many projects were conducted and how much money was obligated?
- o How do states compare in the number and kind of projects conducted and the amount of funds obligated?
- o Are projects addressing critical problems and issues?
- o What is the relative emphasis on target audiences and problem areas?
- o What kinds of agencies and organizations are conducting the work?

We are pleased to disseminate this summary of state program improvement projects so that it might be used for program planning and policy development.

We wish to thank the staff members of the state research coordinating units for their cooperation in submitting project descriptions.

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for
Research in Vocational Education

INTRODUCTION

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P.L. 88-210) was the landmark legislation for vocational education program improvement because it contained broad provisions for research, training, experimental, and demonstration or pilot programs. Funding authorized under the legislation was appropriated by Congress and allocated by the Commissioner for institutional capacity building and for such priorities as program evaluation, resource development, vocational guidance and career choice, organization and administration, and new careers. The subsequent Vocational Education Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-576) authorized support of grants for research, training, exemplary programs, and curriculum development. Part of the research and exemplary programs was to be administered at the state level.

An assessment by the Committee for Vocational Education Research and Development (COVERD 1976) was highly critical of the vocational education research and development program because of its apparent lack of impact due to shifting research priorities, geographic restriction on distribution of R&D funds, lack of coordination between parts, inadequate dissemination and utilization, failure to examine impact, and slow start-up. COVERD faulted vocational education R&D for not focusing on the larger philosophical and policy issues during the previous ten-year period. Other studies by Rand and Development Associates raised concerns about other aspects of the R&D program.

The Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) responded to many of the concerns raised about vocational R&D. It provided for Programs of National Significance to be administered at the federal level and for Program Improvement and Support Services to be administered at the state level. The Act encouraged consolidation of programs, better management, and accountability. The Rules and Regulations for the Act required the state research coordinating units to submit abstracts of contracted program improvement projects to The National Center for Research in Vocational Education and to submit reports and products resulting from the projects within ninety days of completion of the project. The National Center, through its National Center Clearinghouse, publishes abstracts of program improvement projects in Resources in Vocational Education annually, as well as maintains the information in its files for review and analysis.

This database of state program improvement project descriptions can be helpful to practitioners, researchers, administrators, and policymakers. Analysis of information in the database can provide answers to many program development and policymaking questions.

This is the third analysis of the database, the first reported on FY 1978 and 1979 projects and is available through the ERIC system as ED 194 768. The second analysis reported on FY 1980 projects and is available from ERIC as ED 198 263. These reports provide summary data about projects conducted in the states and their focus. They provide information about where projects were conducted, by whom, for what purpose, and with what results. This report does not deal with qualitative and programmatic dimensions of state program improvement projects, nor with impact. These dimensions need further investigation that can be facilitated by the database.

METHODOLOGY

The database of state-administered program improvement projects has been compiled from descriptive abstracts provided by state research coordinating units. The abstracts served as the data source for the review and analysis conducted by the National Center Clearinghouse staff. The basic steps taken by the staff are described as follows:

1. Abstracts were reviewed by Clearinghouse staff to make sure that all bibliographic and funding information was complete. If some information was missing, states were asked to supply it.
2. Lists of projects were compiled and sent to research coordinating unit directors for verification.
3. Key variables were edited and indexed in the ERIC format.
4. Key variables were coded for computer analysis (i.e., state, fiscal year, legislative section number, project beginning and ending dates, amount of funding, recipient institution, legislative and federal priorities addressed, educational level, target population, vocational service area, and products or outcomes).
5. Data were sorted and tabulated by searching the program improvement (RIVE) database through the Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc., Latham, New York.
6. Data were aggregated for display in the six tables in the findings section.
7. Data in the tables were described and analyzed for conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

The methodology used can be replicated in subsequent years as more data become available.

FINDINGS

The findings reported in this section are based upon data drawn from program improvement project abstracts supplied by state research coordinating units. It is believed that the data are relatively complete (i.e., in excess of 95 percent) because lists of these project abstracts were verified as complete by research coordinating units who administer the program improvement activities. The following data were chosen for attention in this report:

1. State program improvement projects by state in table 1.
2. State program improvement projects by legislative section in table 2.
3. Recipients of project funding in table 3.
4. Target educational levels in table 4.
5. Problem areas addressed by projects in table 5.
6. Products and outcomes of projects in table 6.

The number and funding amounts of projects are displayed by state and legislative section in Appendix A.

Table 1 shows the number of vocational education program improvement projects and federal funds obligated for projects in each of the states and territories under provisions of Sections 131, 132, and 133 of P.L. 94-482 during FY 1981.

1. For FY 1981, states and territories reported 899 program improvement projects for which \$24,574,712 was obligated.
2. The number of program improvement projects ranged from zero in six states to seventy-seven in Kentucky.
3. Obligations for program improvement ranged from zero in six states to \$3,010,029 in Texas.
4. The average funding for projects was \$27,336, with a range of \$2,882 in South Carolina to \$115,924 in Michigan.

TABLE 1
 FY 1981 STATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
 BY STATE

State or Territory	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Alabama	-	-
Alaska	1	4,426
Arizona	12	161,744
Arkansas	10	115,216
California	8	585,230
Colorado	8	201,315
Connecticut	24	492,487
Delaware	11	219,798
District of Columbia	-	-
Florida	29	1,183,699
Georgia	27	727,570
Guam	-	-
Hawaii	3	29,300
Idaho	2	29,500
Illinois	54	2,609,516
Indiana	35	982,119
Iowa	9	166,681
Kansas	35	397,077
Kentucky	77	1,148,642
Louisiana	21	411,179
Maine	1	36,600
Maryland	14	509,990
Massachusetts	31	1,187,297
Michigan	4	463,697
Minnesota	10	262,289
Mississippi	8	735,836
Missouri	11	619,332
Montana	6	42,887
Nebraska	7	101,039
Nevada	9	95,528
New Hampshire	1	10,000
New Jersey	49	811,995
New Mexico	6	273,500
New York	29	1,593,870
North Carolina	-	-

TABLE 1. continued

State or Territory	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
North Dakota	12	85,999
Ohio	34	1,330,567
Oklahoma	14	229,725
Oregon	10	196,642
Pennsylvania	54	1,532,686
Puerto Rico	-	-
Rhode Island	9	99,690
South Carolina	29	83,588
South Dakota	-	-
Tennessee	9	178,978
Texas	60	3,010,029
Utah	3	21,192
Vermont	7	61,832
Virginia	16	346,353
Washington	15	71,772
West Virginia	8	126,147
Wisconsin	43	826,984
Wyoming	24	163,169
TOTALS	899	24,574,712

Table 2 shows the distribution of projects and funds obligated across the program improvement sections (i.e., research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development).

1. Overall program improvement funding was divided among sections approximately equally; however, several states still chose to fund projects under only one or two of the three sections (Appendix A).
2. The 274 projects conducted under Section 131 (research) were funded at an average of \$28,626.
3. The 328 projects conducted under Section 132 (innovative and exemplary) were funded at an average of \$22,951.
4. The 297 projects conducted under Section 133 (curriculum development) were funded at an average of \$30,987.

5. The average funding for state projects within each of the sections (Appendix A) varied considerably:
- research projects ranged from \$3,096 to \$96,106
 - innovative and exemplary projects ranged from \$3,100 to \$65,350
 - curriculum development projects ranged from \$2,115 to \$255,374

TABLE 2
FY 1981 STATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
BY LEGISLATIVE SECTION

Legislative Section under Subpart 3 PL 94-482	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Section 131, Research	274	7,843,592
Section 132, Innovative and Exemplary	328	7,527,905
Section 133, Curriculum Development	297	9,203,215
TOTAL	899	24,574,712

Table 3 shows the recipients of project funding in several categories. Percentages shown are for the amount of funds, not for projects.

1. Over 87 percent of the funding was for projects conducted by educational agencies. Four-year colleges and universities conducted 39.4 percent of the projects, followed by local educational agencies (23.1 percent), and two-year colleges (10.4 percent).
2. Noneducational agencies (i.e., research centers, private businesses, public sector, and individuals) conducted projects that were supported with 12.3 percent of the funds.

Table 3
RECIPIENTS OF PROJECT FUNDING

Institution or Agency	Number of Projects	Funding of Projects	Percentage of Funding
College or University	323	9,668,522	39.4
Local Education Agency	241	5,686,149	23.1
Community Colleges, Junior Colleges, Technical Institutes	102	2,555,249	10.4
Research/Development/ Curriculum Organization	56	2,353,018	9.6
Intermediate Education Agency	63	2,184,880	8.9
State Education Agency	87	1,403,313	5.7
Business/Industry/Labor	16	402,534	1.6
Public Sector Organization	6	178,860	.8
Individuals	2	73,000	.3
Federal Education Agency	3	49,187	.2
TOTALS	899	24,574,712	100.0

Table 4 provides information on the number of projects and funding directed toward target educational levels or combinations of educational levels.

1. The focus of 47.6 percent of the projects were specifically community college, junior college, and technical institute or a combination of high school and postsecondary.
2. The focus of less than 1.0 percent of the program improvement projects are elementary and junior high school.

TABLE 4
TARGET POPULATIONS

Educational Level	Number of Projects	Amount of Funding	Percentage of Funding
High School and Post-secondary	337	11,701,337	47.6
Secondary School	295	6,509,120	26.5
Elementary and Secondary School	49	1,620,095	6.5
College and University	83	1,451,505	5.9
Adult	44	1,173,047	4.8
Elementary and Junior High School	20	199,130	.8
Other	71	1,920,478	7.8
TOTALS	899	24,574,712	100.0

Table 5 shows the problem areas addressed by the state-administered vocational education program improvement projects funded during FY 1981.

1. The largest percentage (36.4 percent) was in the area of curriculum (i.e., management, development).
2. The curriculum, special needs, dissemination, career development, and evaluation areas account for 76.1 percent of the funding.

TABLE 5
PROBLEM AREAS ADDRESSED BY PROJECTS

Problem Area	Number of Projects	Amount of Funding	Percentage of Funding
Curriculum	311	8,958,883	36.4
Special Needs (Handicapped, Gifted, and Disadvantaged)	111	3,113,505	12.6
Dissemination	43	2,453,809	10.0
Career Development	97	2,354,631	9.6
Evaluation	73	1,854,451	7.5
Administration and Policy Formulation	63	1,542,942	6.3
Basic Skills/Bilingual Education/Rural Education	35	987,979	4.1
School/Community/Industry Linkage	37	860,836	3.6
Teacher Education and Personnel Development	65	890,698	3.6
Sex Equity	19	259,643	1.0
Adult Education	10	234,908	.9
Other	35	1,062,427	4.4
TOTALS	899	24,574,712	100.0

Table 6 shows the nature of products and outcomes of the 899 vocational education program improvement projects administered by the states in FY 1981.

1. Curriculum and instructional products resulted from 250 or 28.5 percent of the projects.
2. Training programs and inservice education were the outcomes of ninety-seven or 10.8 percent of the projects.
3. Evaluation, assessment, and follow-up was the outcome or product of eighty-two projects (8.8 percent).
4. Career and vocational counseling activities were the outcome of ninety-four projects (10.0 percent).

TABLE 6
 PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES OF PROJECTS

Product/Outcome	Number of Projects	Amount of Funding	Percentage of Funding
Curriculum and Instructional Products	250	7,024,914	28.5
Information Systems and Distribution of Materials	69	3,348,737	13.6
Research, Model Building, and Feasibility Studies	108	2,717,733	11.0
Training Programs and Workshops	97	2,653,747	10.8
Career and Vocational Counseling	94	2,459,083	10.0
Evaluation, Needs Assessment, and Follow-Up	82	2,151,241	8.8
Inservice Education	62	1,436,328	5.8
Handbooks, Guides, Analysis, and Literature Review	64	1,123,157	4.6
Information for Planning and Management	34	764,038	3.1
Placement and Employment Services	10	204,247	.9
Other	29	691,487	2.9
TOTALS	899	24,574,712	100.0

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CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions about the state program improvement effort can be drawn from the information collected and organized by the Clearinghouse for FY 1981.

1. The reporting system is working. Information is flowing from the state research coordinating units to the National Center Clearinghouse on a regular basis. States have ensured the Clearinghouse staff that all projects under Sections 131, 132, and 133 have been reported.
2. More funds are being obligated for support services than for program improvement. State program improvement projects funded under Sections 131, 132, and 133 represent \$24,574,712 or 21.9 percent of the total amount allocated to the states for program improvement and support services. It is surmised that the remaining 78.1 percent is being obligated for the support services specified in Sections 134, 135, and 136, and possibly for the administration of the state research coordinating units when this is not reported as a project. States vary in the proportion of funds that they devoted to program improvement.
3. Collectively, the states are obligating about equal amounts on research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development products. Individual states, however, vary considerably in this respect, some choosing to fund no projects in certain categories.
4. The amount obligated for each project varies considerably. There is a wide range in project size within and between states. The average funding per project is \$27,336. The range is from \$487 to \$466,419.
5. State program improvement projects have focused on every educational level. Over 47 percent of the state program improvement obligations have been at postsecondary, and combined high school and postsecondary levels.
6. State program improvement projects are being conducted by educational agencies and institutions at every level. Only 13 percent of the state program improvement funds go to projects done by other than educational agencies. The largest share of the work is being done by four-year colleges and universities (39.4 percent), local educational agencies (23.1 percent), and two-year colleges (10.4 percent).

7. The greatest number of projects have focused directly on improvement of instruction (i.e., curriculum and instruction projects, 250; research, model building, and feasibility studies, 108; training programs and workshops, 97; and career and vocational counseling, 94).
8. The level of funding and the type of program improvement activities have changed little since 1978. State program improvement projects funded under Sections 131, 132, and 133 represent 21.9 percent of the total program improvement and support service allocation compared to 19.5 percent in previous years. Curriculum and instructional materials continue to be the most common product or outcome.

Quality, redundancy, and programmatic aspects of state program improvement projects have not yet been examined. Also, there is need to examine how states are setting program improvement priorities, incorporating these into comprehensive state plans, and following through with appropriate sequences of research, curriculum development, demonstration, personnel development, and statewide implementation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications that can be drawn from the conclusions have bearing on R&D policy development at federal and state levels, on decision making related to R&D operations at both levels, and on practices at every level. The recommendations that spring from the implications suggest new or adjusted policies, procedures, and practices.

Implications

1. The reporting system, although working, could be more efficient and effective. Not all projects nor all data elements for projects have been reported. Further, it has taken repeated urging before some states responded with submission of project abstracts.
2. Little is known about support services and administrative activities funded under P.L. 94-482. Currently, states are not required to submit information about guidance, personnel development, or sex equity activities funded under Sections 134, 135, and 136. This represents approximately 78.1 percent of all discretionary program improvement and support service activities in the states.
3. States report program improvement activities in three categories (i.e., research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development), but there is little difference in the design of some of the projects assigned to different categories. Examination of project abstracts reveals that there is an uncertain mix of activities funded under each of the categories. State personnel may regard integrity of the categories as unimportant or may be funding the proposals received in each category regardless of methodology because there are no other options.
4. States have different strategies for program improvement as manifested in different funding patterns and levels. The size of projects and the proportion of projects in each category vary considerably by state. It is apparent that many states have encouraged different patterns and levels.
5. Independent funding decisions by states about projects on nationally significant problems may be increasing the chance of viable solutions through diversity; on the other hand, these independent decisions may be decreasing the chance of programmatic approaches and increasing unplanned duplication.

Recommendations

1. The responsibility of state research coordinating units to supply information about program improvement projects should be further clarified and reinforced. The legislation and administrative regulations regarding submittal of project information should be explicit. Responsibility for enforcement of these regulations should be assumed by the federal agency through information, training, and sanctions (if necessary).
2. Training should be provided to research coordinating unit personnel to improve their ability to organize, prepare, and submit accurate project information.
3. The project information (i.e., tracking) system should be expanded to accommodate information about support service and administrative activities in the states. At the present, only 21.9 percent of the program improvement and support service activity is reported.
4. A study of the results (i.e., project outcomes and products) of various funding patterns and levels would be useful. Although some states undoubtedly seek specific outcomes via certain patterns and levels, others may be less rational.
5. The planning of multistate, multiyear cooperative R&D efforts on nationally significant problems should be encouraged. The initial planning undertaken in late 1979 exemplifies this recommendation.

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APPENDIX A

FY 1981 State-Administered
Program Improvement Projects

FY 1981 STATE-ADMINISTERED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

	Sec. 131 (Research)		Sec. 132 (Exemplary)		Sec. 133 (Curriculum)		TOTALS	
	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount
Alabama	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alaska	1	4,426	-	-	-	-	1	4,426
Arizona	7	98,751	1	19,999	4	42,994	12	161,744
Arkansas	5	33,181	4	69,515	1	12,520	10	115,216
California	5	480,506	-	-	3	104,724	8	585,230
Colorado	4	66,571	4	134,744	-	-	8	201,315
Connecticut	7	93,945	13	290,858	4	107,684	24	492,487
Delaware	11	219,798	-	-	-	-	11	219,798
District of Columbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Florida	17	584,365	4	99,890	8	499,444	29	1,183,699
Georgia	15	349,187	-	-	12	378,383	27	727,570
Hawaii	3	29,300	-	-	-	-	3	29,300
Idaho	-	-	2	29,500	-	-	2	29,500
Illinois	31	1,390,999	7	457,456	16	761,061	54	2,609,516
Indiana	8	291,087	11	165,170	16	525,862	35	982,119
Iowa	5	85,456	2	60,461	2	20,764	9	166,681
Kansas	5	88,761	12	186,386	18	121,930	35	397,077
Kentucky	15	341,310	33	517,379	29	289,953	77	1,148,642
Louisiana	3	68,694	4	99,474	14	243,011	21	411,179
Maine	-	-	1	36,600	-	-	1	36,600
Maryland	2	8,000	1	9,000	11	492,990	14	509,990
Massachusetts	2	143,758	27	784,660	2	258,879	31	1,187,297
Michigan	1	50,000	-	-	3	413,697	4	463,697
Minnesota	7	187,710	-	-	3	74,579	10	262,289
Mississippi	3	203,112	3	21,977	2	510,747	8	735,836

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FY 1981 STATE-ADMINISTERED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

STATE	Sec. 131 (Research)		Sec. 132 (Exemplary)		Sec. 133 (Curriculum)		TOTALS	
	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount
Missouri	4	134,666	5	157,248	2	327,418	11	619,332
Montana	3	24,000	-	-	3	18,887	6	42,887
Nebraska	2	43,054	3	15,838	2	42,147	7	101,039
Nevada	-	-	9	95,528	-	-	9	95,528
New Hampshire	-	-	1	10,000	-	-	1	10,000
New Jersey	7	160,251	31	461,355	11	190,389	49	811,995
New Mexico	2	71,500	1	25,000	3	177,000	6	273,500
New York	5	312,831	-	-	24	1,281,039	29	1,593,870
North Carolina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Dakota	2	18,241	5	29,249	5	38,509	12	85,999
Ohio	-	-	34	1,330,567	-	-	34	1,330,567
Oklahoma	4	25,725	-	-	10	204,000	14	229,725
Oregon	5	92,856	3	99,557	2	4,229	10	196,642
Pennsylvania	19	545,667	16	541,807	19	445,212	54	1,532,686
Rhode Island	-	-	9	99,690	-	-	9	99,690
South Carolina	11	39,888	4	25,000	14	18,700	29	83,588
South Dakota	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tennessee	-	-	9	178,978	-	-	9	178,978
Texas	18	714,760	34	1,147,362	8	1,147,907	60	3,010,029
Utah	2	6,192	1	15,000	-	-	3	21,192
Vermont	5	39,283	2	22,549	-	-	7	61,832
Virginia	6	294,553	5	25,000	5	26,800	16	346,353
Washington	3	33,961	2	6,200	10	31,611	15	71,772
West Virginia	1	34,300	3	79,000	4	12,847	8	126,147
Wisconsin	12	373,179	7	103,668	24	350,137	43	826,984
Wyoming	6	59,768	15	76,240	3	27,161	24	163,169
Guam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	274	7,843,592	328	7,527,905	297	9,203,215	899	24,574,712

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