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ABSTRACT

Equity in vocational education requires the provision to disadvantaged youth of such additional elements in the educational process that will enable them to take advantage of the process and join the mainstream of America's economic life. Barriers to equity for the educationally and socioeconomically disadvantaged students include too many expectations of public schools to the detriment of academic and vocational education, lack of basic skills, lack of socialization skills, lack of motivation for work, lack of adequate numbers of vocational program instructors, need for up-to-date equipment, and the current minimum wage. Possible solutions are local business and labor advisory group input into program planning, business tax credit for wages to trainees, employment opportunities for students and job placement, summer work programs, and funding for vocational research that is limited to areas demonstrating a direct benefit to students served by the local area program. The most effective operating program design addressing both the educational and employment needs of disadvantaged youth is encompassed in the Federal Vocational Education Act of 1963. (Recommendations are made for vocational education programs, the future of educational research, and changes in federal legislation.) (YLB)

Research and Development Series No 214N

EQUITY FOR THE DISADVANTAGED FROM A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Carol Schwartz

SUMMARY: Vocational educators have grappled with equity as a problem and have espoused it as a cause since 1963 when Congress issued both an equity mandate and an equity challenge with the passage of the Vocational Education Act. This paper is one of seventeen reports commissioned by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education to meet the equity challenge through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing three perspectives—academic, vocational education, and special interest group advocacy.

The following paper describes equity in vocational education from the perspective of the educationally or economically disadvantaged student, highlights the present conditions of the disadvantaged, and recommends improvements in vocational education. A discussion of barriers to the disadvantaged includes lack of basic skills and motivation, family backgrounds, need for social counseling, need for exposure to employment, students' attitudes towards work, lack of adequate numbers of vocational program instructors, and the current minimum wage rate. The author cites many examples of successful programs and strategies to counteract barriers and concludes the paper with recommendations for the future of educational research and changes in federal legislation.

- District Pupils Score Near Top In Absences (*The Washington Post*, December 18, 1979)
- There Are Approximately 124,000 Women In Washington, D.C. Who Received Assistance Through The Aid To Families With Dependent Children Program (ADFC) (*The Washington Post*, October 16, 1977, p. A 10)
- Fifteen Percent Of The City's Population Read Below Fourth Grade Level (*The Washington Post*, April 3, 1980)

- Job Prospects For D.C. Youths Bleak In 1980s (*The Washington Post*, April 13, 1980, p. A 11)

The above headlines do not refer to an underdeveloped nation or an area experiencing economic decay. They refer to the current status of the youth of the District of Columbia, the nation's capital and an area of relative prosperity. Washington, D.C. is not alone in these problems. Similar statistics can be found for almost any big city in the United States, however prosperous, where a high percentage of the population can be categorized as disadvantaged.

It is the thesis of this paper that equity in vocational education requires us to provide our disadvantaged youth with such additional elements in the educational process that will enable them to take advantage of that process and join the mainstream of the economic life of our country. Without such supplemental treatment for the disadvantaged, vocational education programs will fail disadvantaged youth, and the youth in turn, will themselves most likely fail.

Disadvantaged students in the vocational education system, as defined in the Federal Vocational Education Act of 1963 are:

> . . .persons (other than handicapped persons) who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in the regular vocational education program. (Federal Vocational Education Act of 1963 as amended, Section 110(b)).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CAROL LEVITT SCHWARTZ has been an elected member of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia for the past six years. She is the former vice-president and is presently serving as chairperson of the Committee on Educational Operations. She served on the presidentially appointed National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children from 1974-1979 and was vice-chairperson of the Council from 1976-1979. She has been a special education teacher in Austin, Texas, and Montgomery County, Maryland secondary schools. Her column appears regularly in four Washington, D.C. newspapers, and she has written for both the ***Washington Post*** *and the* ***Washington Star****. Her speaking engagements reflect participation in a variety of conferences and workshops in education, and her service on numerous advisory committees indicates a long-standing and active concern for the special problems of the disadvantaged and handicapped in urban educational settings. She completed her B.S. in special elementary education at the University of Texas.*

. . .persons residing in 'areas of high concentrations of youth unemployment and school dropouts. . .' (Federal Vocational Education Act of 1963 as amended, Section 110(e)(1)).

More specific definitions of the disadvantaged can be found in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Target groups are (1) students who are economically disadvantaged because their families' incomes are below the standard established by the most recent data of the U.S. Department of Commerce, or who are above the poverty level due to the receipt of public assistance, and (2) students who are educationally disadvantaged because their achievement in the basic skills is a year or more below the level of their peers.

Educational opportunities for the academically and socioeconomically disadvantaged student have been a major concern of mine for many years and I have sought avenues through which I could address this concern. As an elected member of the District of Columbia Board of Education, I share the responsibility for instituting those educational policies within the public school system which will provide equitable educational opportunities for the disadvantaged children of the city.

In addition to my work on the Board of Education, I served for five years on the presidentially appointed National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children. As vice-chairperson of the Council and chairperson of its Parent Involvement Committee, I assisted in developing legislative and administrative recommendations for the improvement of federal educational assistance programs impacting on the disadvantaged child. I have also been a special education teacher, with particular experience in working with the teenage disadvantaged student, and a volunteer counselor and remedial reading teacher at a drug treatment center in the city. It is from these vantage points that I offer the following observations and recommendations.

SPECIFIC EQUITY CONCERN

The proportion of youth who are unemployed in the United States has reached epidemic levels. Government figures show an unemployment rate of 34 percent among young blacks aged sixteen to nineteen (*Parade Magazine*, p. 20).

The Urban League has surveyed national unemployment among teenagers sixteen to nineteen years of age. Its survey included "hidden" unemployed youths, referring to those who want a job but are discouraged and not actively seeking employment and youths who want full-time employment but have been able to obtain only part-time employment. The Urban League survey indicates nationwide teenage unemployment of 32.1 percent, with an unemployment rate among nonwhites of 57.1 percent.

These figures are not presented as new and startling revelations. They do, however, serve as the background upon which public school systems must focus in addressing education and employment issues. Additional and alternative training assistance must be developed for the educationally and socioeconomically disadvantaged students to facilitate their exit from the cycle of poverty extending from one generation to the next. It is my belief that by providing equitable access to effective compensatory and vocational training programs, we will significantly reduce unemployment levels among disadvantaged youths.

Vocational education programs for the disadvantaged will serve their purpose only if the students (1) leave school in a state of basic literacy, and with an ability to cope with verbal and numerical concepts, (2) enter the job market with sufficient technical skills to be able to function in a particular work environment, and (3) are "socialized" so that they can deal with the norms of a work environment.

Unless the youth who enter the job market have been inculcated with *all* of these basic elements, they are bound to fail. It is today's challenge to our vocational education program both to improve delivery of these basic elements and to extend them to a much higher percentage of our disadvantaged youth. To devise an equitable system which will achieve these goals is an extremely difficult task, but one for which we should strive.

BARRIERS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO EQUITY FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

Public School Expectations

The public schools are often expected or required by the community to provide a wide variety of health, social and recreational services in addition to educational

services to all students including the disadvantaged ones. With the present limitations on educational resources, performance of these services is oriented primarily toward achievement of the minimum, rather than the maximum expectations.

It is my belief that public schools should set their priorities with education—academic and vocational—at the top of the list, and that once this is done, higher expectations in these areas will follow.

Basic Skills

"Many (unemployed youth) have not learned the necessary basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics to permit employment in the types of jobs available in the Washington Metropolitan Area" (National Alliance of Business 1978). This quotation is taken from a Profile of Unemployed Youth, A Report of the Task Force on Youth Unemployment in the Washington Metropolitan Area which was prepared by the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade and the National Alliance of Business. The survey on which it is based indicates that 26 percent of employers considered a lack of basic skills (verbal, grammar, spelling, writing) as common deficiencies among applicants. Without the basic skills necessary for qualification in entry level training programs in industry, it is almost impossible for youths to enter the work force or to remain there in the unlikely event that they are admitted.

Public school systems are attempting to serve children who are achieving below "normal," to compensate for such disadvantages, and to produce students who have advanced to their maximum potential. Current trends in educational achievement in our public schools, however, indicate a need for substantial improvement in compensatory instructional programs if the public schools are to reach their goals. It appears that students fall further and further behind the national norms for reading and mathematics achievement as they progress in school. I will use the District of Columbia as an example. A May 1979 report of reading and mathematics achievement test scores among District of Columbia elementary school students indicated the following results:

MONTHS BELOW NATIONAL NORM FOR ACHIEVERS

	3rd Grade	6th Grade	9th Grade
Reading Level	6	12	28
Mathematics Level	2	5	28

This progressive extent of educational failure among the student population has resulted in a very high number of high school graduates (or dropouts) who are unable to meet the minimum requirements for employment.

The incorporation of compensatory instruction along with technical instruction is a necessity for preparing students to enter the job market. However, comprehensive programs should be more than a few hours of technical instruction isolated from a few hours of compensatory instruction. Adolescent age students have already experienced the basic instructional approach to basic skills and have failed to achieve through this process. What is needed are comprehensive programs that emphasize the basic skills in order to reverse this failure.

Intensive counseling coupled with the motivation for success in the vocational area is a key to the design of such a program. The importance of developing motivation among students cannot be overemphasized. I saw this firsthand as a teacher. One incident comes clearly to mind. I had a sixteen-year-old student with a "normal" I.Q. who could not read. But like every other sixteen-year-old, he wanted to drive a car. I therefore went to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and picked up a copy of the driver's manual and used it as my reading textbook. The student passed his written driver's test and received his permit. In the process of meeting his goal of driving, I met mine—he learned to read.

A skilled instructional team and specialized materials are necessary for an effective vocational and compensatory instruction effort. In this era of diminishing financial resources for education, the funds available through the local educational agency and the grant under the Vocational Education Act may be insufficient to mount and sustain an effective effort. The Carter administration's proposed Youth Initiative Bill contains additional resources for instruction in the basic skills, and if enacted, should work hand in hand with existing vocational programs. The funding of other programs such as the ESEA Title I compensatory education program must be expanded to allow sufficient resources for compensatory education programs at the secondary level. Presently, only 1 percent of Title I services are targeted to secondary grades (NIE Compensatory Education Study 1977).

However, because additional funding may not be forthcoming as a result of attempts to balance the budget, we must concentrate our efforts on making better use of the resources that are now available. Careful analysis of the interrelationships of these federal educational assistance programs is necessary to ensure their compatability for deployment in a single comprehensive program within a school.

Socialization Skills

"Many (unemployed youth) have not learned the expected behavior modes of punctuality, willing attitude, dress, or the ability to communicate in the work situation" (Ibid., p. 8). This quotation is also from the Profile of Unemployed Youth, contained in the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade and National Alliance of Business Report on Youth Unemployment. Employers of youth with limited training or from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often note the inability of such youth to adjust their behavior patterns to acceptable norms. The survey among employers conducted by the Board of Trade and National Alliance of Business noted that 68 percent of those interviewed attributed attitude and social behavior problems as contributing to high unemployment (Ibid., p. 8).

The number of disadvantaged students is great as can be seen in the following statistics: Approximately 49 percent of the one hundred five thousand students of the District of Columbia public schools reside in families which are economically disadvantaged (Selection of Eligible ESEA 1980). National estimates of the number of disadvantaged students based on the criteria of the ESEA Title I Program indicate that there are approximately nine million such students (Title I 1979).

Although all disadvantaged students may not require compensatory instruction in sociocultural areas, a large percentage may require social counseling and employment exposure as a part of a comprehensive vocational education program. This need stems from the fact that in many disadvantaged families, the customs and modes associated with employment are not significantly emphasized. Such families often do not provide adequate role models for youths in the areas of work attendance, employment behavior, dress and speech patterns, and other aspects of a work environment.

Therefore, the school, in addition to its role in academic and vocational instruction, must recognize its role as social instructor. The social instruction

should lead to the students' recognition of the fact that they must get to work on time, accept a system of delayed rewards (waiting until Friday to be paid and until next year to get a raise), and accept the concept of being told what to do.

This is especially critical in vocational training programs for the disadvantaged, where career training is emphasized. The social behavior aspects of work should be an integral component of the instructional program.

Within the District of Columbia, the Dix Street Academy is an excellent example of a career readiness program for the disadvantaged that emphasizes social and employment behavior as well as basic skills instruction. Operating on the principle of career readiness and personal growth, the Dix Street Academy has served area disadvantaged dropouts, and presently has an enrollment of 160 students. For this school counseling is a primary component, along with firsthand exposure of students to work experiences through interviews on the job site with employers, through the viewing of training films, and through studying handbooks on career skills. This program was instituted in 1974 by the Urban League and is now funded by the public school system.

Motivation for Work

Closely associated with employment behavior is the student's attitude toward employment as a necessity for a successful life. An unhappy home environment, nonresponsive early school experiences, and exposure to the many negative social behaviors and attitudes of the economically depressed community may cause the disadvantaged youth to develop negative attitudes toward society and work. These attitudes are carried into the classrooms, resulting in students who are not motivated to excel either in academic or vocational programs.

Career exposure provides the educational system with an excellent opportunity to modify negative attitudes toward work and motivate students in positive directions. Career guidance and actual introduction of students to many exciting vocations are very effective teaching tools. Enthusiasm for vocation may arise either from the prospect of working with a skill that is of particular interest or from the prospect of earning a good salary for such skilled work. Additionally, vocational training programs can be easily adapted to an alternative learning environment (such as a factory, store front, or office) or provide on-the-job training opportunities for students. Career exposure, counseling, and alternative learning

environments should be given special consideration in the design of educational programs for the socioeconomically disadvantaged student.

The Division of Career Development of the D.C. Public Schools is currently operating a building renovation and construction program. The program provides live, supervised work experience for D.C. high school students enrolled in construction trades and related courses. It also has the peripheral potential to improve substandard housing conditions. Instructors on the project are certified trade school teachers of the public schools. The program provides training in architectural drafting, carpentry, electrical work, painting, plumbing, and sheet metal working. One house has already been completed and sold, and another is now in progress.

Qualified Instructors

The lack of adequate numbers of vocational program instructors is an obstacle to the expansion of quality vocational training. Presently, there are many areas of vocational training that rely on teachers with the required educational training, but who are without the up-to-date skill training necessary to prepare students adequately for the vocation of their choice. Additionally, many individuals with the skills to provide quality instruction are limited in their access to teaching positions by certification requirements of the public school system.

The public school system has done little to encourage the employment or retention of vocational program instructors. Salary levels are often below those available in industry, and these teachers are often not compensated for the additional time they devote to field trips and the after-hour preparations necessary for conducting demonstration projects such as the actual building of a house or automobile.

Allowances should therefore be made in personnel requirements to allow more flexibility in the hiring of vocational instructors. Instead of requiring educational courses of technical skill instructors, they could be observed and evaluated on the basis of their instruction to students. Consideration should also be given to the utilization of part-time technical skill instructors as a needed adjunct both to the numbers of qualified instructors and to the quality of the instruction.

In the field of auto mechanics, for example, new aspects of engine design are currently a high priority of the industry. It is unlikely that a teacher with many years of public school experience will be able to keep up with all of the latest designs and repair procedures. A more skilled instructor, either as a part-time employee or on loan from an auto manufacturer, may be able to provide such training.

In Washington, D.C., there is the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Established in 1974 as an outgrowth of Workshops for Careers in the Arts, the school presently enrolls 450 students in grades nine through twelve. "Of the ninety-three students who graduated in 1979, thirty-six received scholarships or monetary awards. Students have gone on to schools such as Juilliard, Oberlin, New York University, Pratt Institute, and Rochester Institute of Technology. In the school's six-year history, 90 percent of its graduates have entered college. Some have appeared in such musicals as 'All That Jazz,' 'Bubblin Brown Sugar,' 'The Wiz,' and 'Dancin'." (*The Washington Post* 1980)

Most of the training in the arts is provided by skilled, professional musicians, dancers, and other artists. The instructional personnel are paid on an hourly basis, rather than on the annual salary basis of teachers. Despite the low salary and long hours of preparation for productions for which they are not compensated, these instructors have dedicated themselves to the success of the school. The continuation of the students' training and their motivation for success are largely due to the influence and personal contacts of the arts instructors. Many other areas of vocational training could benefit and achieve similar results with their students if highly trained and dedicated instructors were available to interact with students.

Up-To-Date Equipment

One method of improving vocational education is to provide training opportunities with the identical equipment and tools that those presently working in such occupations utilize. Such equipment and tools may change rapidly and present an enormous expense to a public school system to obtain and maintain. To reduce such costs, industry may help by donating a piece of equipment (such as a car) that contains technological changes, and even by donating one of their skilled mechanics or engineers to train instructors and students in the application of the new technology. A more direct approach would be the training of students at the industrial site, where new equipment and products are readily available. The

following incentives to business could be offered: (I) the costs of a regular training site for the public schools could be paid to the industry, (2) a tax credit arrangement could be legislated, or (3) the school system could pay the utility and maintenance costs of the portion of the factory site used for job training.

Business and Industry

Business is not insensitive to the educational and vocational training needs of the unemployed youth. In a report by the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade and the National Alliance of Business, the following concerns about youth unemployment were cited:

> The business community wants to raise the quality of new entrants into the labor force and encourage their commitment to our economic system.
>
> It wants to help alleviate the difficulties many young people face in securing training and employment.
>
> It wants to help minimize the interrelated public problems of unemployment, welfare, community unrest, and crime.
>
> It wants to help youth acquire a sense of dignity and responsibility (Ibid, p.I).

In the area of vocational education, public schools and private industry share common concerns and goals. The concern is for the training of youths in vocational professions from which their employment and self-sufficiency can be realized. The goal is the development of a productive and well-trained work force. With such common interests, the role of private industry in the training of vocational students should be more fully pursued.

Minimum wage. Many business owners would like the opportunity to hire and train youths for vocations within their businesses. It is often impractical for them to do so, however, because of the high rate of the present minimum wage. Minimum wage rates for the District of Columbia vary at this time from $2.50 for retail clerks to $3.75 for beauty and culture operations, with wage scales for most vocational training occupations falling between these two extremes.

At prevailing minimum wage rates, a large pool of adequately trained adults is anxious to acquire the positions available. Additionally, the employer is hesitant to hire more than the minimum number of personnel necessary to produce the desired product because of the high wage scale.

The inhibiting factor of the minimum wage should be removed in the instances of bona fide entry level training programs. The relaxation of the present requirements should be applicable to all training opportunities for youths below twenty-five years of age. This age category is suggested because of the inclusion of ages fifteen to twenty-four in Sec. 103 (a)(2)(A) and (B) of the Federal Vocational Education Act.

A vast array of vocational training areas could be significantly enhanced through on-the-job training opportunities. The public school system and employers could mutually benefit from a cooperative arrangement of work and study for high school youth and young adults. In addition to the training opportunities, the additional income may give youths with economic difficulties the opportunity to remain in school and to continue their education to a point of self-sufficiency.

Local Business and Labor Advisory Group. In the area of program planning, industry leaders can be very informative sources of current and future skilled human resource needs. Such individuals are specifically required for participation on state advisory councils for vocational education. The state level, however, is too broad a level to interact directly with local agency programs. A local business and labor force organization, independent of regulation by the public schools or city agencies, should be developed to advise on vocational education program planning.

In addition to business owners and managers, such an organization should include representatives of the major union organizations that represent employees involved in traditional vocational skill areas. According to personal interviews with those involved in vocational education, only a limited number of apprenticeship positions are opened by the unions each year. Care must be taken that the disadvantaged are adequately considered in the filling of these entry level positions.

Business, labor, and the school system must work as a team. The maintenance of an effective advisory group at the local level can be encouraged through exposure of their activities and recommendations in the media and by public officials.

Work-Study Programs. Work-study programs provide a direct means of business and school cooperation. The use of federal funds for such programs, however, is specifically prohibited by Section 143. Part (a)(2) of the law states that federal funds will be given under the following conditions:

> (2) provide that employment under such work-study program shall be for the local educational agency or for some other public agency or institution and shall, to the extent practical, be related to the vocational education program in which the student is enrolled.

This section of the legislation should be modified to allow private businesses which are approved by the public schools to participate with the vocational training program through a work-study approach. Some limited opportunities do exist despite the present inhibiting legislative factors.

The Bell Career Development Center in Washington, D.C. places many of its students in work-study programs for short periods. Students may spend one week working for an employer in a skill area associated with their school vocational training, and the next week in the school. The Center offers training in air conditioning and refrigeration, cabinet and mill work, diesel engines, electrical wiring and repair, painting and decorating, machine shop practices, radio and television, sheet metal and upholstery. The program receives support from certain employers, but some skill areas are not always available for work-study arrangements. Beyond their thanks and admiration, Bell School has little to offer employers as an inducement for participation in the program. While the media will rush to the school in instances of student violence or disruption, little or no mention is ever given by the media to the programs and needs of the school.

Cooperative, on-the-job training by businesses and schools is an area of vocational program planning with a high probability of success. Students could receive a significant percentage of their training in a vocational skill at the employer's work site. Such students could receive the basic skills or other types of academic training necessary for graduation during evening hours, or the latter part of the day.

This type of program training would require modification of minimum wage levels and the times of course offerings by the school. For example, a student could work six hours a day from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and receive academic instruction

during the late afternoon, evening, or on weekends. Creative approaches to scheduling are necessary.

Business Tax Credit. In addition to a lower minimum wage requirement, industries participating in the program should receive a tax credit for the wages paid such trainees. This type of incentive will ensure a large number of prospective employers from which those with the best training and future employment opportunities may be selected.

The shortfall of tax revenues received by the local, state, and the federal government will be more than offset by the taxes paid by the trainees, the reduced costs of in-school training programs, and the enormous costs the unemployed presently place on our social systems. It will be advantageous from a tax standpoint for industry to participate during the training phase of the program for the student. Upon the student's graduation, the employer would have a well-trained and experienced worker ready to be employed at prevailing wage rates. Most employers would gladly hire such an individual.

The Revenue Act of 1978 created the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit, which gives employers an incentive in the form of a tax credit, to hire youths from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and other target groups. Eligible applicants are provided a voucher to take to employers. By hiring eligible applicants, employers qualify for a tax credit equal to 50 percent of the first year wages up to $6,000 and 25 percent of second year wages up to $6,000.

Employment Opportunities

Few incentives for students during this period of high product costs are more effective than the prospect of a well-paid employment position and a bright employment future upon completion of the vocational training program. Emphasis should be placed upon the attainment of employment fc students upon or prior to graduation.

This could be accomplished by encouraging students in their senior year to seek employment prior to graduation. The public schools could structure academic and vocational course work for periods of the day or weekend when the student is not working to ensure a timely graduation.

It could also be accomplished by staggering the graduation dates for seniors. In many instances, late May or early June witnesses the emergence of thousands of local area graduates competing for the available jobs. Summer is often a low period in the annual industrial cycle. A staggered period of graduation throughout the year would be more conducive to prompt employment of students.

A meaningful job placement service should be implemented whenever a vocational education program is in effect. Graduates who may or may not have secured an initial job upon graduation should find these referral services still available for a substantial period after graduation.

In many instances, the training received at the high school level is the end of the formal training opportunities for students. Whereas high school level training should be sufficient for entry into the skilled vocational trades, it need not be the end of the formal training cycle. Two- and four-year community colleges should be encouraged to provide additional skill training in appropriate vocational areas. This training, upon successful completion, should qualify the graduate for still higher paid employment.

The planning of additional training opportunities should be undertaken by the educational agency and coordinated to avoid duplication. The higher level skill training opportunities should prove to be a positive reinforcement for those students presently enrolled in secondary level training.

Summer Work Programs

Long recognized as an effective mechanism for exposure of students to the world of work and as a training mechanism, youth summer employment and training programs have often digressed to a point of having a negative impact on youths. Too often, such programs have become political toys. Thousands of students are recruited by the public agencies and private businesses, placed in meaningless jobs with no training or exposure, are paid late, and encouraged to stay out of the way and to keep out of trouble. The rationale of employers is that the students are at least receiving needed income during the summer. The reality is that the student learns that work is a joke and a sham and requires no amount of training, self-discipline, or sacrifice. Such attitudes are often carried with the student into the real world of work upon graduation from high school.

It is extremely necessary for the future development of youth to put an end to such programs. These sham programs must be replaced by well-planned, well-supervised training and educational youth employment programs. In appropriate instances, such useful training programs should be spaced throughout the year, with school curricula modified to accommodate a few months of absence by a percentage of students. This could be accomplished by establishment of a quarter system rather than a semester system. A summer quarter could be instituted for students who are employed during one of the other quarters of the school year, thereby enabling working students to receive instruction comparable to the normal school year.

In 1980 the federal government will have made available 1.7 million summer jobs for teenagers from poor families (*The Washington Post* 1980). This is part of a major commitment to wipe out economic disadvantage and to help young people gain valuable work experience. The eligible economically disadvantaged youths are those from families with incomes between $7,200 and $12,500. The total federal outlay will be about $1 billion.

It is hoped that this worthwhile endeavor will offer opportunities for *real* work experiences with proper supervision. Quality rather than quantity training should be the goal if we are truly to improve the opportunities for future employment success. If providing money to the poor is the motivating factor, then it would be more expedient just to pass out checks than to make a sham of the work experience.

Research

Educational research is funded far out of proportion to the benefits derived. The result has been the proliferation of many documents, statistics, and test results. Most of these research efforts are of little practical benefit to the local vocational education program administrator or teacher. Most local program operators know what it takes for a more effective vocational training program, especially for the disadvantaged student. More money, more business community and labor organization support and involvement, and better programs in basic skill instruction and social behavior are necessary. Too often, however, it is more politically feasible for decision makers to emphasize the need for new and innovative approaches, rather than face the reality of advocating the additional expenditure of public funds to support adequately the programs already in existence.

I recommend that all public funds expended in the future on vocational research be limited to those areas which demonstrate a direct benefit to the student served by the local area program. The mass evaluation of programs to detail national norms, characteristics, and results should be curtailed. Such studies provide little additional information to legislators except to reassure them that education is worthwhile. The data are far too general to provide practical information on areas of program improvement. The cost of such efforts is presently in the millions of dollars, whereas the information could be obtained by a well-planned conference of state and local program personnel assembled for a fraction of the cost.

Federal Vocational Education Act

Of the many special programs addressing both the educational and employment needs of the disadvantaged youth, perhaps the most effective operating program design is encompassed in the Federal Vocational Education Act of 1963. Specific services to students with academic or socioeconomic handicaps are mandated by the legislation. Additionally, the direct relationship of educational training to employment is the central purpose of the overall program. However, there are specific areas in which the legislation could be improved.

The Federal Vocational Education Act of 1963, as amended by Education Amendments of 1976, specifically identifies programs for educationally or socioeconomically disadvantaged persons as a priority. Section 107(a)(6) states:

> That priority in approval of applications from eligible recipients shall be given to applicants who-
>
> (A) propose programs for persons with special needs for vocational education, including persons with academic, socioeconomic, mental, and physical handicaps which require additional services to enable them to succeed in regular vocational education programs, and persons with limited-English speaking ability.
>
> (B) are located in economically depressed areas and areas with high rates of unemployment, and are unable to provide the resources necessary to meet the vocational education needs of the areas without federal assistance.

I agree with the intent of the legislation to focus program services on the disadvantaged. The guidance provided within the legislation, however, is not specific enough to ensure the direction of program resources toward the most needy youths. Without infringement upon a state's right to plan and implement appropriate vocational programs, the federal government could ensure the targeting of funds to those program eligibles who can benefit most from the resources provided. Therefore, Section 107(a)(6) should be modified as follows:

> (A) propose programs for persons *most in need of special* vocational education, including. . .
>
> (B) are located in *the highest concentrations* of economically. . .

Such language is presently a part of ESEA Title I program legislation. It has resulted in an assessment of student needs to ensure identification of those most in need of compensatory instruction. Additionally, it has requirements for the targeting of program resources in areas with the highest instance of economic deprivation. These requirements have ensured that the most disadvantaged student receives the benefits of the programs.

National priority programs are indicated in Section 110. Paragraph (b) of Section 110 provides a specific minimum percentage for the disadvantaged. It states:

> (b) For any fiscal year, at least 15 percent of each state's allotment under Section 103(a)(2) shall be used to pay 60 percent of the cost of vocational education for persons (other than handicapped persons) who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in the regular vocational education program.

The stipulation of 15 percent as a minimum will often result in applicants designing programs with targeting on this group near a 15 percent level. A far more equitable distribution would be a requirement that the minimum percent of the allotment for persons in this category (again the definitions and priorities for such persons need strengthening) reflect the percentage of persons identified within this category.

As an example, approximately 49 percent of the District of Columbia student population is educationally disadvantaged. Under such conditions, close to 49 percent of the funds expended for vocational training under the program should be earmarked specifically for educationally disadvantaged students.

The matching aspect of Section 110(b)—60/40 federal to state—should be changed to provide 100 percent federal funding, as it is written in Section 110(e) relating to high unemployment areas. Section 110(e) presently reads as follows:

> For any fiscal year, funds appropriated under Section 102(b) and allocated under Section 103(a)(2) shall be allocated within the state to areas of high concentration of youth unemployment and school dropouts, and shall be used to pay the *full cost* of vocational education for persons (other than handicapped persons) who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in the regular vocational education program.

Such a modification of Section 110(b) would strengthen the state and local educational agency commitment to increasing all program services, including vocational training, for the disadvantaged. Whereas the ESEA Title I program focuses primarily on the elementary grades, the Vocational Education Act programs must address an increased number of students with academic or socioeconomic disadvantages at the secondary levels and must assist those youths in need of services who are no longer attending the public schools.

In order to address the percentage and funding concerns which I raised above, Section 110(b) should be modified as follows:

> (b) For any fiscal year, *a percentum equal to the percentum which this target group bears to the total eligible population* of each state allotment under Section 10 Section 103(a)(2), shall be used to pay 100 percentum of the cost of vocational education for persons (other than handicapped persons) who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in the regular vocational education programs.

SUMMARY

Strong vocational education programs for many disadvantaged youth offer the only means of escaping their deprived environments. The components of a strong vocational program for such students are educational, social, motivational, cooperative, and equitable in nature. Providing such a multifaceted program is not a simple task but the need and justification are too great not at least to try.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper presents a discussion of many of the aspects of vocational education that have an impact on students who are educationally and socioeconomically disadvantaged. The recommendations for increasing equity in vocational education programs for this population are summarized below:

- The incorporation of compensatory instruction in the basic skills is a necessity in providing effective vocational education programs serving the educationally disadvantaged student.
- Careful analysis of the interrelationships of educational assistance programs is necessary to ensure their compatability for deployment in a single comprehensive program within a school.
- The social behavior aspects of the world of work should be an integral component of the instructional program.
- Allowances should be made in the personnel requirements to allow more flexibility in the hiring of vocational instructors.
- The minimum wage requirement should be lowered in instances of bona fide entry level training program for youths below the age of twenty-five.
- Cooperative on-the-job training by businesses and schools should be encouraged, with a significant percentage of the student's training in a vocational skill at the employer's work site.

- Industries participating in training programs for youths should receive a tax credit for the wages paid such trainees during their training period.

- Every emphasis should be placed upon the provision of relevant vocational training and the attainment of employment for students upon or prior to graduation with guidance services still available for a substantial period after graduation.

- A staggered period of entrance of seniors into the workforce through flexible graduation schedules would be more conducive to prompt employment by students.

- Two- and four-year colleges should be encouraged to provide additional skill training in appropriate vocational areas.

- Youth summer employment and training programs should be well-planned and well-supervised training and educational programs.

- All future public funds expended on vocational research should be limited to those areas that demonstrate a direct benefit to the student served by the local area program.

- An independent local business and labor organization should be developed to advise on vocational education program planning.

- Amendments to the Vocational Education Act of 1963 should include: a more precise definition of the disadvantaged; a priority of services for those students most in need; full funding of services for the educationally disadvantaged rather than the present matching requirement; and modification of Section 143 to allow the participation of private industry in work-study programs.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Before vocational educators can adequately meet the special needs of special groups, they must be committed to a philosophy of equitable education. The issue of equity in education has received a great deal of attention over the last ten years from the legislative, judicial, and academic sectors. As a result of this attention, research and analysis have shown that the term "equity" has a different connotation for nearly everyone who has attempted to define and apply it to educational programs. In addition, a host of related terms such as equality, disparity, and discrimination are a part of the vocational educator's daily vocabulary.

In an attempt to help vocational educators to articulate a definition of equity, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education has commissioned seventeen papers on equity from three broad perspectives—academic, vocational, and special needs. The authors in each of the three groups provide their own perceptions of and experiences with equity in education to bring vocational educators to a better understanding of this complex but timely issue.

The National Center is indebted to these seventeen authors for their contribution to furthering research on equity in vocational education.

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