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ABSTRACT

Equity in vocational education cannot be addressed until the question of urban cultural pluralism has been fully analyzed. This question involves problems of minorities, the disadvantaged, and those with limited English proficiency. Barriers facing urban youths enrolling in vocational education include close-knit ethnic pockets attempting to adhere to their own culture, dropping out before exposure to vocational education, and labor market changes (automation, immigrant workers, later retirement, large rural industrial parks, and increased numbers of working women). Strategies to eliminate barriers include caring teachers, administration and school board willingness to fund alternative methods and situations for problem students, remedial programs, and early instruction in employment and coping skills. Seven detailed solutions are teaching basic skills with meaning for the world of work, teaching employment skills, teaching job seeking skills, placing students in part-time civil service jobs, appointing state equity coordinators, restructuring jobs, and cultivating collaboration of social and community agencies with vocational educators. Areas for further research and policy consideration are federal government role, vocational education evaluation criteria for job placement, and delivery systems corresponding to needs of subcultures. (YLB)

Research and Development Series No 214P

EQUITY FROM A LARGE CITY DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

by

Lucille Campbell-Thrane

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 discusses equity in vocational education from the perspective of a large city director. The author's analysis of equity issues emphasizes urban youth. She defines cultural pluralism and argues that equity in vocational education cannot be addressed until the more urgent problems of minorities, the disadvantaged, and those with limited English proficiency have been addressed. The author focuses on the barriers facing urban youths enrolling in vocational education and provides many practical solutions to current problems.

As director of postsecondary education and director of a Manpower Skill Center in a large urban area, my responsibilities ranged from deciding which programs to offer and selecting qualified teachers to teach those programs, to writing proposals for state and federal funding, to working with labor unions to develop opportunities for students to enter apprenticeship, and to pursuing actively and establishing good working relationships with community-based organizations. Each of my varied roles required different and special skills that no administrator can learn from a textbook or from a college course because few college professors have been there. Large city directors acquire the necessary administrative skills only with time and experience in the large city educational arena.

My first responsibility was to meld secondary and postsecondary vocational classes, manpower training and services, adult basic education/general education diploma testing, and state retraining programs. In addition, I wrote proposals to secure funding to meet the training needs of the unemployed and disadvantaged; justified continuation of secondary and postsecondary programs; controlled a complex budget that encompassed disparate programs and funding levels; worked with the Bureau of Employment Security to develop jobs, to counsel students, and to place program completers.

The complexity of the job was often overwhelming. Justifying why our facility, in which we had invested five million dollars for buildings and equipment, should be open from 7:00 a.m. to midnight; attempting to convince the school board and the administration that facilities should be available on Saturday and Sunday to train maximum security prisoners in skill areas they might never have the opportunity to use were part of the daily routine. I worked continuously to secure funding, facilities, and equipment to serve the needs of pregnant teens. Everyone acknowledged the need to train single parents to be self-supporting, but no one wanted to pay for the service. Finding acceptable alternatives in a bureaucratic system to train adjudicated youths released from juvenile court or detention centers took time, patience, and long searching. Administrators in large city vocational systems attempting to provide opportunities for training and employment to a diverse urban population play as many roles as there are special groups served.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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EQUITY CONCERNS AND ISSUES

The greatest problem the urban vocational administrator faces is not, however, making opportunity equitable. Equity in vocational education cannot be addressed or achieved until the question of urban cultural pluralism has been fully analyzed and resolved by the school district administrator and the school board who serve many different subcultures under the umbrella of the large city vocational system.

Recognition of the need to address cultural pluralism in education first emerged in the 1960s in the book, *The Young Negro* (Proctor 1966). Educators, however, had done little to promote the study until a series of papers was published in 1973 in a volume entitled *Cultural Pluralism in Education: A Mandate for Change* (Stent, Hazard, and Rivlin 1973). A major premise of the collective authors is that the word "different" is one of the most difficult words for people to understand when they examine various cultures or subcultures. "Different" means exactly that—not better than or worse than. The mistake that many vocational *administrators* make is to attempt to rationalize or justify inequitable educational opportunities by citing individual or cultural differences. Eugene Sekaquaptewa (1973), education programs director for the Hopi tribe in Arizona has said that:

> Public education in America has been based primarily on American middle-class cultural and racial ethnocentrism. Cultural pluralism must necessarily involve philosophical realignment as well as systematic approaches in educational programs and in the development of educational personnel if we are to achieve the goals that may be established to ensure cultural pluralism.

The vocational administrator must be discreet in the middle-class values imposed on the students and the community in a large urban area. Prudence, promptness, responsibility, courtesy, and ambition are important, and indifference to people and their needs, snobbishness, and arrogance will not win their confidence but will create barriers that prohibit addressing problems in the urban vocational system. Equity concerns will be addressed and resolved only when the more urgent problems of minorities, the disadvantaged, the handicapped, and the limited-English proficient have been answered, and then only in an ancillary way and as a natural outgrowth of these more pressing solutions to more immediate problems. The important issues facing urban administrators today were clearly defined at The National Center Bicentennial Conference on Vocational Education held in 1976 and sponsored by the National and State Advisory Councils. Twenty-three papers (Pautler, 1980) from prominent authorities were commissioned to be written on issues of education, manpower, human resource development, philosophy, sociology, and education. An analysis of those papers defines six major concerns:

- Need for a national policy for vocational education
- Employment outlook for the future
- School-work match
- Vocational education delivery system
- Sex bias in vocational education
- Groups needing special attention.

As it appears now, there really is no national policy or philosophy for vocational education. Each school system attempts to serve the needs of its own clientele. Yet at the same time they attempt to comply with state and federal regulations in order not to lose any funding.

The second issue of employment outlook for the future has always been a problem. Vocational educators and administrators cannot influence the job market. However, they need to work closely with employers and industry through their advisory and skill craft committees to discern what the employment needs are. The Bureau of Employment Security offers its services to vocational educators, but the reality of the entire situation is this: if a school district has invested $10 million in a vocational plant with all its equipment and supplies, to say nothing of the additional expense of operating and personnel costs, it is reluctant to drop course offerings because the market need is down. The administrator has no immediate compulsion to switch from a diesel mechanic program to a computer program offering because that is the job market demand at that moment.

The third issue, school-work match, is another difficult one to resolve. Vocational educators have always been judged by the number of students placed in the area for which they trained. Yet no one ever evaluates the law school or the dental school or other professional schools on the number of graduates placed in their profession. On one hand we are asked to accept all students to keep everything equitable, and on the other hand vocational educators are held responsible when students do not find jobs in the area in which they trained. There are other evaluative alternatives, and these should be pursued.

The fourth issue of delivery systems deals with whether or not vocational educators can serve everyone who needs to be served, regardless of whether or not programs teach what is needed to be successful on the job, and regardless of the cost-effectiveness of vocational education offerings. Many agree that the vocational education delivery system as it operates today, cannot serve all those who need to be served. Community-based organizations (CBOs) are active opponents of vocational education because these organizations feel only they can develop innovative programs that link support services with the needs of their clientele. These CBOs feel that they alone speak a language which disadvantaged people can understand. If administrators really want to ensure equity in vocational education they need to weigh all of these factors and problems against the concept of cultural pluralism.

Many employers claim the role of vocational education should be solely to introduce students to the world of work by teaching coping skills and basic skills, because actual skill training can be taught by the employer while the student is on the job. This attitude creates a real problem for vocational educators who have designed programs around craft skills.

The fifth concern, sex bias in vocational education, is important because it is many-faceted. It involves getting parents to accept nontraditional programs for their children, getting peers to accept nontraditional students in their classes, preparing teachers to accept and to design programs to meet the needs of nontraditional students, and preparing employers to accept the nontraditional student into business. These are not easy issues with which to deal.

The last issue, groups needing special attention, relates to the disadvantaged, the handicapped, the limited-English proficient who also wish to be served by vocational education. Are there enough training slots and teachers prepared to handle in mainstream classes all the students with special needs? Are the teachers properly prepared to meet students' needs? Can vocational education afford to pay the job developer to meet with business and industry in order to plan and to create jobs for students needing special attention? Can vocational educators find the money for the support services these students need once they are placed on the job?

All of these issues cannot be addressed until the larger problem of urban cultural pluralism is understood and resolved. The barriers facing the urban vocational director are directly related to this axiom.

BARRIERS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL GROUPS

The public schools with a vocational education delivery system are invariably designed to reach a specific group of persons with middle-class needs and values. This system predicates rigid class hours, course work requiring two or three years for completion, and a tightly designed curriculum based on science and math. Yet such a system is not geared to coping or to handling the myriad of social and emotional problems of depressed, unemployed, desperate youth who view the world as a jungle of materialistic desires. It is easy for these youth to set goals of obtaining a Mark VII Continental, princess phone, a twenty-five inch colored television set, and flashy clothes, because that is what the mass media provide as examples of attainment and affluence. Everyone wants to be someone special. The material objects one can amass provide the opportunity to be important.

If only the major concern were equity and access, the problem for vocational educators could be more easily resolved. One could merely build more schools, hire more teachers, request higher budgets, and contribute more funding to help equity coordinators perform their jobs. But, let us map out this educational jungle to see just what issues vocational educators face in their attempts to provide training.

In urban America, ethnic pockets that are many blocks long and many blocks wide form struggling communities attempting to adhere to the ways of their ancestors. This often means keeping women and handicapped close to home. Asian American, Spanish-speaking populations, Africans—all find security and comfort in their own bailiwicks. The threat of outside influence or encroachment on their sacred turf causes consternation and even gang war.

Because of the close relationship within each community, community leaders feel that help can come only from within. They set themselves up as the protectors of the people. Community leaders see themselves as having the experience and capability of handling the social and economic problems of the minority and the disadvantaged. The disadvantaged persons in turn look to their own community leaders for answers to their plight. These leaders speak for the disadvantaged and enlarge their power to influence and shape the policies that come to be mandated by legislation.

One of the major problems of urban youth is that they drop out of school before they are even exposed to vocational education programs that might offer them a ticket to a more successful, rewarding, and challenging life. The common pattern is one of failure in basic education beginning with elementary and middle school, which usually places the individual two to three years behind others their

age in school. The *Dropout Report,* New York City Public Schools (Macchiarola 1979), the largest school system in the nation, reports that "The constellation of causes include alienation, history of failure, emotional and physical problems and language skill deficiencies." When the magic age of sixteen arrives, instead of being in senior high school, well on the way to preparing for a career, many disadvantaged students find themselves in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade with children several years younger than they. These students have not been exposed to occupational training or the world of work. Yet their one goal is to get out of school, into the streets, where it is all happening.

This pattern and the signs that point to failure and unemployment for the disadvantaged are found in their early school years. If it is the educators' responsibility to correct the drop-out problem, they must scrutinize its causes, and develop and apply techniques and strategies that will have the positive effect on the situation of holding students in school so that they do have an opportunity to learn a skill, to be made aware of what it takes to transfer from school life to work life, and ultimately to find a job they can perform successfully. In other words, *all youth should have the opportunity to enroll in vocational education programs.* The students that learn slowly, are uninterested, tardy, truant, or absent are marked as failures early in their school careers. At these first signs of failure, alternative methods and techniques need to be considered and adopted.

Let us consider one last group of barriers that work to exclude youth with special needs from getting jobs. These forces lie in the labor market itself.

- Automation is eliminating semiskilled positions.
- Growing numbers of both illegal and legal immigrants restrict job prospects.
- Later retirement finds older workers remaining in the job market longer.
- Increasing numbers of adults other than Caucasians now have an opportunity in the labor market.
- Large rural industrial parks take jobs away from urban areas.
- There is an increase in the number of women participating in labor force.

These forces also fight against the inner city youth in their battle to gain what they consider their equitable place in society.

STRATEGIES FOR SOLUTION

There are many ways to eliminate barriers and to create a climate that permits students to develop to the best of their abilities. The most important ingredient for solution, however, is the teacher. Over and over again we hear the student who has failed say, "Nobody cares about me. I ain't no good."

It takes special teachers who care, plus an administration and school board that are willing to pay the costs of alternative methods and situations designed to assist the "late bloomer," the slow learner, and the disadvantaged with social, economic, or language problems.

Alternative situations, in order to help the student who has failed, should be staffed with teachers whose number one desire is to help, to empathize but not to sympathize, to cajole but not to harass. Class enrollments should be small. The rigid routine followed by most systems must be adjusted to meet the needs of nonmiddle-class students whose families are unable to/or just do not care to assist in the education of their children.

The school routine should be remedial in programming so that basic reading, writing, and computing skills are learned in a manner that relates to students' lives. This program in itself would resolve the equity problem to the extent that it would place all students at the same academic level when they begin their vocational programs. As it is now, many disadvantaged, handicapped, nonEnglish-speaking, and female students do not have the science and math skills that make them equal to the male student. There should be time to play, to talk, to learn in an atmosphere of humane concern, enthusiasm, and love.

Instruction in skills needed for employment and coping with the world of work should begin early. Special arrangements with business and industry provide opportunities for these students to visit, to try out, and to perform simple job skills under the careful direction of teaching and guidance personnel who have the commitment to teach and guide and who do care.

Some skeptics believe that alternative schools are "pie in the sky" and therefore do not merit our continuing effort. Let us, however, look at the compelling statistics about urban youth taken from a report of the Congressional Budget Office. The national statistics show the following:

- One-fourth of the students completing fifth grade fail to graduate from high school.
- In 1977, one-fifth of each age group were high school dropouts.
- In 1977, nonwhite sixteen to twenty-four year-olds comprised 15 percent of labor for that age range.
- In 1990, the same group will number 18.3 percent of the labor force.
- In 1975, 13 percent of the school age population in the United States was nonEnglish-speaking. (Not bilingual, just not English-speaking.)
- In the early years of the twenty-first century, a government survey predicts that America will be bilingual.
- In 1977, 40 percent of the black teenagers who wanted to work could not find jobs.

Any one of the populations needing special attention will suffer because they are at a disadvantage even before they begin preparation for the world of work.

It is indeed frightening. And, as the economy becomes less stable, disadvantaged students of low and middle income leave school to seek employment in secondary labor markets in order to earn money to help support themselves or family. Work-study and related work experiences do help, if the disadvantaged student has reached secondary level and has had an opportunity to learn skills that are basic and transferable. Entry level jobs are not enticing enough. To be properly motivated, the student must be able to see a career ladder that offers encouragement and hope for a better life and a higher paying job that offers a secure future.

The push to have everyone move from secondary to postsecondary or four-year colleges floods the job market with degree-holding persons. Postsecondary students then replace secondary students in the job market. Why shouldn't employers take degreed students to fill vacancies in preference to the worker who holds a secondary diploma? These secondary graduates in turn find jobs in the secondary labor market, forcing the "dropout" into the position of not even having a chance to get the most menial job. Thus it becomes more lucrative for the disadvantaged individual with high expectations of what life in America is all about, to join the welfare roles where high subsidies from the public assistance pocketbook and other social programs discourage persons from assuming menial work.

If urban youth are to have an equitable opportunity at getting jobs, there are key factors that must be researched and resolved through innovative, creative activities provided by vocational educators in conjunction and collaboration with the entire school system, with social and community agencies, and with government sources that can provide the legislation, the funding, and the support services necessary.

Solution 1: Basic reading, writing, and computing skills must be taught in such a way that these skills have meaning in the world of work. Mechanics cannot repair a car if they cannot read the manual that describes the parts and the procedure. They cannot convey their knowledge to employer or customer if they cannot communicate in English. Further, they cannot compute the bill for labor if they do not have mathematical skills.

Solution 2: Whereas basic skills are important, there are other fundamental skills (employment skills) that assist the student to matriculate in the world of work. As has already been stated, our entire economic system and many social institutions as well have set up certain values and standards. The employee is expected to dress properly for the job. If the person is a welder, the proper dress is hard hat, hard-soled shoes, long pants, long sleeves, and eye protectors. There is no alternative to this dress. If the shift begins at 7:00 a.m. it means arriving at work a few minutes before 7:00 a.m. and leaving when the shift ends at 3:00 p.m. Individuals must understand the rights of the employer, other employees, and their own. They must understand the importance of team work and want to be a part of the group to which they are assigned. In other words, the possession of employment skills is essential if the job is to be satisfying and rewarding.

Solution 3: Job seeking skills must be learned so that the youth can be competitive. Learning how to dress for an interview, how to talk when being interviewed, and how to fill in an application are important skills that must be mastered.

It is not easy to compete in a sluggish labor market, so just knowing how to read want ads, where to look for a job, and how to use the Employment Service provided by the Wagner-Pyser Act are not enough. Handicapped individuals need to know what rights they have under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Women need to know and understand what rights are theirs under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In order to get more cooperation from employers who hire hard-core disadvantaged, handicapped or limited English-speaking youth, there need to be some special concessions. Jerome Rosow's article (1978), "Practical Approaches to Urban Youth Unemployment," points out that when the minimum wage for New York City youth was $2.90 per hour, they actually took home $1.68 per hour.

Chicken feed! But, to pay this same $2.90 per hour, it actually cost the employer $4.95 an hour when taxes, insurance, and benefits were added to the minimum wage. Rosow suggests some solutions to help both the youth and the employer.

- Exempt youth from social security deductions. Set the age for beginning social security payments at age twenty-one.

- Present youths with a government bonus if they remain on the job six months and are performing in a productive way.

- Provide job transportation service as a cheaper and easier way to get to job locations. Many jobs are located out of the urban areas in industrial parks, rather than on regularly scheduled public transportation routes.

- Sponsor entrepreneurial enterprises that help youth develop corporations of their own and that teach them about setting up and running their own business. After all, small business owners are an important part of our economic system.

- Present work experience records that verify the experiences in part-time work, school shop work, and volunteer activities in which a student has participated. This formal record would be useful to employers in making decisions about employment.

Solution 4: Youth should have an opportunity to work in civil service jobs on a part-time basis with a staff member as a mentor. A variety of service positions could be developed in all branches of local, state, and federal services.

There is a concern of many people that students are not permitted to enroll in nontraditional courses. Some excuses given for this situation include the following—

- there are only enough slots for traditional students;

- nontraditional workers do not remain on jobs after they are trained;

- everyone is not physically suited for every job.

Solution 5: Each state has an equity coordinator whose responsibility it is to help teaching staff cope with nontraditional enrollees. These persons develop material, present workshops, and act as consultants. In many states they have been very successful. States like California, New York, and Florida have been the most successful because they have added state monies beyond those which the federal law requires them to provide.

Urban administrators working with equity coordinators need to check continually to see if progress is being made in nontraditional programs. Together they need to work out placement, support services, and whatever other assistance might be needed. Administrators may find it necessary to work with employers to reassure them that nontraditional employees who are well trained are an important addition to their work force and to help the employers meet affirmative action requirements and/or intentions.

Many handicapped persons do have physical limitations. However, they should not be penalized by not being hired at all.

Solution 6: Job restructuring should be an important feature of the vocational program. Guidance counselors, administrators, and teachers should work with employers to define exactly what the handicapped individual is capable of performing. The job then is restructured so that the individual can perform 100 percent. Most employers are willing to work with the high school job developer in order to structure a position that the individual can perform to capacity.

Solution 7: Social and community agencies must have the opportunity to collaborate with vocational educators in the skill training and preparation of individuals in transition from training to the world of work. Community-based organizations proudly point to their original philosophy of serving the needs of the structurally unemployed—the disadvantaged, the socially and politically abandoned, the currently unemployable. Vocational educators emphasize the training and preparation of secondary and postsecondary students for the job market. Community-based organizations are committed to training the structurally unemployed; vocational educators are committed to training cyclically unemployed for the labor market. Somehow, these two philosophies must mesh.

Research and Policy Recommendations

There are problems, issues, and concerns that should be researched further.

- What should be the role of the federal government in providing funds for vocational education? Should the planning process be redefined to include a coordinated effort with specific tasks and roles defined for secondary vocational education, postsecondary occupational/technical education, CETA and other Department of Labor training programs, and community-based agencies—so that the needs of people are met, thus forcing the federal government to clearly define a philosophy, principles, and policy for vocational education?

- Vocational education needs evaluative criteria that do not consider only placement in the field of specialized training, since the most important issue is being employed. Is not employment in related areas just as important?

- The delivery system must correspond to the needs of the various subcultures. In a large urban area with different cultures and different ethnic backgrounds, the "work ethic" may have a substantially different meaning for these subcultures than it does for the middle-class vocational administrator. Should not researchers and policy makers have a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the values of these subcultures before attempting to address their educational and equity needs?

- Sex bias is viewed differently by different ethnic populations. Hispanics, blacks, and Asian Americans may not view sex bias as their most pressing equity concern, and many ethnic groups encourage female members to remain within a well-defined geographical area to seek employment. Should not vocational education researchers and policymakers be more sensitive to the expressed wish of ethnic populations to remain within their own community for employment? How does this need translate into vocational programs?

- Groups requiring special attention must have the support of special services so that they can successfully remain employed. Should not policymakers and researchers explore further support service models and systems tailored to the unique needs of specific urban composites?

PLAN OF ACTION

A plan of action for urban administrators should be coordinated, comprehensive, people-oriented, problem-specific, and long-range. It should consider approaches to resolve the problems of basic skill development, employability skill development, and coping in the world of work.

- Basic skills instruction must relate to the work environment. Employment skills which include getting to work on time, being productive, and establishing good working relationships with others are essential to keeping the individual on the job for an extended work life. Coping skills assist the individual in meeting and resolving everyday problems on the job. It is just as important to successful employment to learn where to go when one needs help as it is to be able to solve the problem by oneself on the spot.

- Economic resolutions, including special concessions designed to eliminate some of the traditional frustrations of youth in employment need to be defined. Youth from ages eighteen to twenty-one actually net a minimal amount from the entry-level job paycheck. People in this age bracket should be exemot from paying standard deductions. More advanced workers pay a smaller percentage of their total income in taxes than those young people and are therefore better able to bear the burden of tax deductions.

- The federal government should establish a fiscal incentive program to keep these young people on the job longer than six months. Many plans could be formulated with the billions that are already spent on CETA.

- Urban youth face the problem of jobs being placed in industrial parks outside the city limits. Transportation for these young people is at a premium. If they are to be able to get to where the jobs are, they need assistance with transportation problems.

- Entrepreneurship needs to be emphasized. Ninety-nine percent of the time, young people are encouraged to acquire job skills that enable them to work for someone else. Encouraging the development of entrepreneurial skills may be the answer for those populations that identify strongly with a particular geographic community.

- Record keeping is an important issue. When youth complete the vocational program, a record of work experience in the suggested form of a certificate, stating competencies reached and accomplishments achieved should be as important an item to their work future as the high school diploma. Even such things as volunteer work and community service should appear on this record so that the employer is apprised of the work already accomplished by the new employee.

- Local, state, and federal civil service opportunities should be explored by students. There is no better way than this to become acquainted with the wide variety of jobs and skills required in civil service operations. The disadvantaged, handicapped, and limited-English proficient are rarely exposed to these types of jobs.

- Equity coordinators should be appointed to oversee and ensure equal opportunity beyond the limits of sex fairness. A close working relationship between equity coordinators and urban administrators can help to resolve problems before they erupt.

- Job restructuring is a most important issue for the handicapped, disadvantaged, and limited-English proficient. Many people understand the physical limitations of the handicapped, but few realize that persons with limited-English proficiency should not be placed on a job when they have to answer questions or explain detailed instructions to English-speaking people. There is no purpose served in placing any individual on a job that is so narrowly defined that it inevitably leads to frustration and termination.

SUMMARY

The urban administrator, playing many roles for diverse clients, must examine and understand every facet and every nuance of the entire equity issue. There is no formal training that prepares the individual for this awesome responsibility. Rather, it is a question of sensitizing oneself to the concept of cultural pluralism and the role it plays in the urban environment and the effects it has on the preparation of individuals for their life's work.

The problem of equity can be resolved only as a natural result of understanding and addressing the immediate problems of cultural divergence in the urban community. In order to meet the needs of clientele equitably, the urban administrator must confront the need for ethical and philosophical realignment with the precepts of cultural pluralism.

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RD 176 **"IT ISN'T EASY BEING SPECIAL"—LET'S FIND THE SPECIAL PEOPLE: IDENTIFYING AND LOCATING THE SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS,** by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 39 pp., 1979. $3.25

Designed to assist those who need demographic data on special needs learners. Discusses how to determine program accessibility, assess performance, and do follow-up activities of special needs learners.

RD 177 **"IT ISN'T EASY BEING SPECIAL"—HERE ARE PROGRAMS THAT WORK: SELECTED VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS,** by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 245 pp., 1979. $13.00

Provides a profile of sixteen selected programs that meet the needs of special learners. Also includes descriptions of 121 additional programs for use by researchers, guidance counselors, and administrators as examples of successful projects.

RD 178 **"IT ISN'T EASY BEING SPECIAL"—RESOURCES: AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT SERVE SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS,** compiled by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 47 pp., 1979. $3.25

Identifies key contacts that can assist educators and others concerned with bilinguals, gifted and talented, handicapped, the incarcerated, older Americans, and other special populations.

BB 50 **"IT ISN'T EASY BEING SPECIAL"—RESOURCES: MATERIALS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS,** by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 147 pp., 1979. $8.75

Provides a comprehensive bibliography of resource materials for twelve different special needs populations.

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.

We are also indebted to Dr. Judith Gappa, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at San Francisco State University for reviewing and synthesizing all seventeen papers. Special thanks also go to Cindy Silvani-Lacey, program associate, for coordinating the papers and to Regina Castle and Beverly Haynes who spent many hours typing manuscripts.

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