DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 702 CE 040 682

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TITLE Next Steps in Public-Private Partnerships. Occasional Paper No. 103.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus. National Center for Research in Vocational Education.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 26p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Center Publications, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090 (OC103--$3.00).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Programs; Educational Cooperation; Educational Legislation; Employers; *Federal Legislation; Industry; Institutional Cooperation; *Job Training; Postsecondary Education; *Role of Education; *School Business Relationship; Secondary Education; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Partnerships; *Private Industry Councils; Public Private Relationship

ABSTRACT

A well-designed public-private partnership can be a powerful tool to solve pressing education, employment, and economic development problems. Eight steps in building partnerships are (1) review the community's context, (2) define a specific issue, (3) organize a local team, (4) determine whether a new vehicle is needed or an existing mechanism is acceptable, (5) analyze the issue, (6) identify options, (7) negotiate agreement, and (8) implement the plan and follow through. The Private Industry Council (PIC) was established with support that should enable these principles to work. National Alliance of Business studies show that in the initial action year more PICs formed strong partnerships than did not, and the partnerships are flourishing. Business-education partnerships are growing in popularity. Benefits include understanding of what lies behind an organization's point of view, constraints under which it operates, and its strengths and weaknesses; expansion of participating institutions' capacity to deal with challenges; and increased knowledge, access, time, and human and financial resources. Three features in the vocational education legislation now before Congress will better define the employer's role in vocational education: creation of a strengthened State advisory council, provision for information exchange, and creation of a program to fund training in high technology occupations. (Questions and answers are appended.) (YLB)

Next Steps in Public-Private Partnerships

Madeleine B. Hemmings

Occasional Paper No. 103

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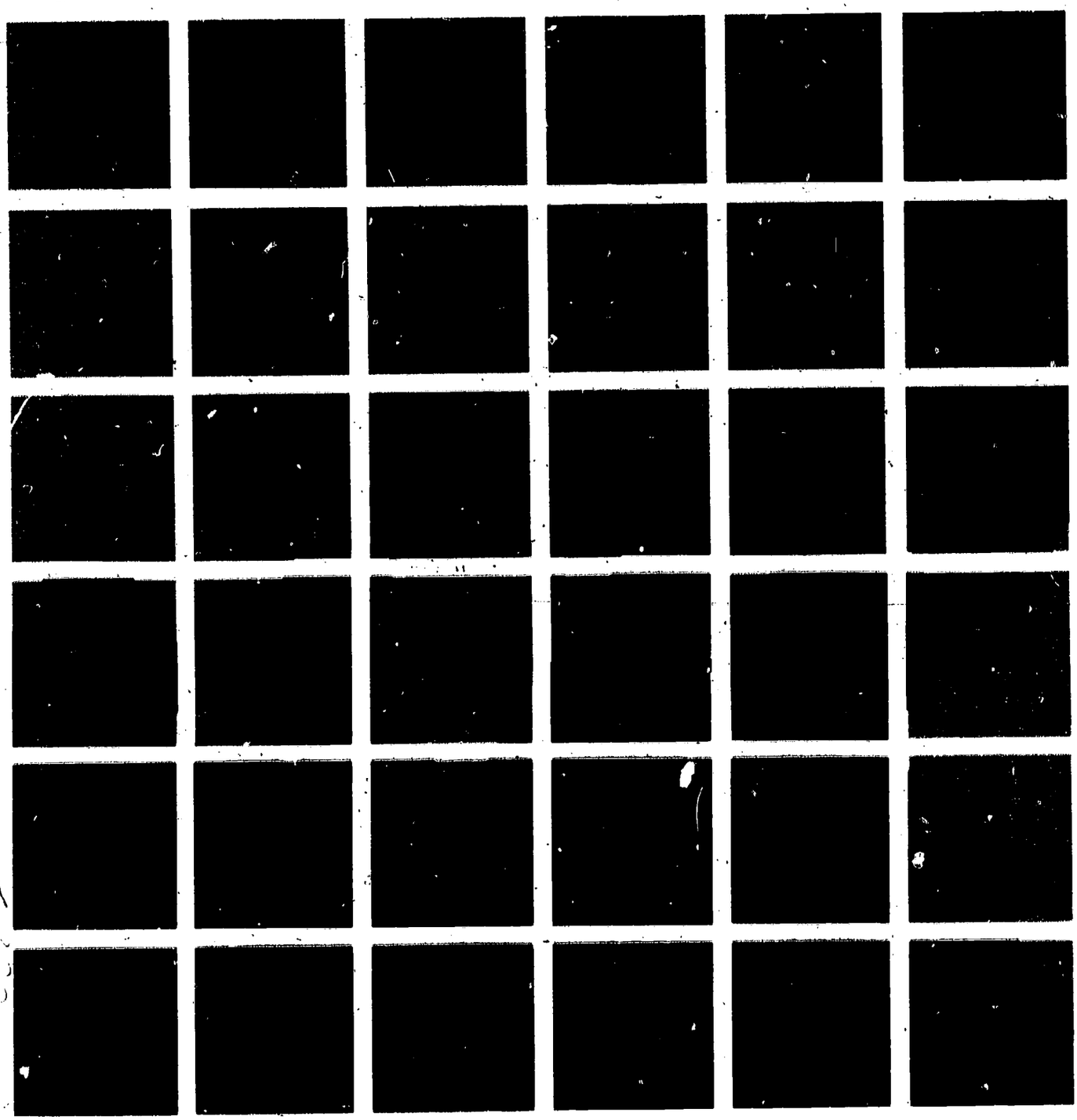

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OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 103

NEXT STEPS IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

by

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1984

FOREWORD

In this era of increasing expectations in the labor market, public-private partnerships are more important than ever. Current demands for excellence include calls for a greater responsiveness to the changing needs of society, and close collaboration and linkages between business, industry, and education make that responsiveness more attainable.

Madeleine Hemmings, Vice-President for Policy, National Alliance of Business (NAB), is highly qualified to address this current and vital topic. Ms. Hemmings attended the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and graduated from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. Her career has been interesting and varied. She has been owner-manager of a private employment agency, was Assistant Director of Personnel at Cornell University, and was Legislative Assistant to the Honorable Constance Cook, then Chair of the Education Committee of the New York State Assembly. Later, she served as Director of Benefits and Compensation for the National Association of Manufacturers, and as Director of Personnel for George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Before joining the National Alliance of Business, Madeleine Hemmings was Director of Education, Employment, and Training for the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. She served as staff director for the Chamber's Policy Committee on Education, Employment, and Training. While at the Chamber, Ms. Hemmings was an active member of the Business Working Group on Human Resources, a coalition of business organizations that includes the Chamber, the Business Roundtable, NAB, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Committee for Economic Development. She was also a resource person to the 1982 White House Conference on the Aging, served on the Federal Committee on Apprenticeship, and on the Advisory Committee on Implementation of the Job Training Partnership Act.

In April 1983, Madeleine Hemmings was named Vice-President for Policy, National Alliance of Business. NAB is an independent, business-led, nonprofit corporation whose mission is to increase private sector training and job opportunities for the economically disadvantaged and long-term unemployed by building and strengthening public-private partnerships among business, government, labor, education, and community-based groups.

The Ohio State University and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education are pleased to present Madeleine Hemming's seminar address "Next Steps in Public-Private Partnerships," as it was delivered at the National Center.

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

NEXT STEPS IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

What I want to share are some thoughts that we, at the National Alliance of Business, have on the state of public-private partnerships at the moment and to ask you to think with me about how we might learn to make them work better.

Public-private partnerships are increasingly mentioned as a key component to a wide array of domestic social programs. As some hear this, they may cynically speculate that we are passing through one more trendy political fashion. Others may say "partnerships" are unworkable because they have been poorly defined and one-sided initiatives that had no clear results. However, we at the Alliance think that a well-designed public-private partnership can be a powerful tool to accomplish goals no one group can reach alone. We are more aware today than ever before that government cannot meet the collective needs for which it has assumed responsibility solely through its own facilities and taxing powers. Pressing education, employment and economic development problems are so complex and entrenched that no one element of society—either public or private—is really equipped to handle them alone. As a society we are beginning to accept the need for individuals and institutions to reach out for help from other individuals and institutions. Today, virtually every community has, at its disposal, an impressive array of individuals and resources that can be used in the development of effective public-private links to resolve a variety of community challenges. These resources need to be tapped. And when tapped, we need to know how to apply them so the problem will be solved and the community's confidence in its own ability to solve problems will be enhanced. If we do, the ability to work together becomes an additional community resource.

What Is a Partnership?

It is a continued, cooperative effort of two or more institutions in which each partner shares in the designing of projects and programs planned to meet a mutual need and contributes a part of the resources needed. This definition is useful because it focuses on substantive relationships, not situations where one entity is a passive partner or money merely changes hands.

What Are the Steps in Building Partnerships?

There is a growing body of experience in how public and private leaders can use community resources creatively and effectively to achieve employment and economic development objectives. We think much of that experience can also be applied to the rapidly growing relationship between employers and schools. An organized and systematic process to develop new public-private strategies will make it much more likely that priority objectives are met. We find that success in a significant linkage effort is not likely to be produced by an ad hoc approach. In a joint National Alliance of Business/SRI International project on molding the employment and economic development connection, we identified eight steps that should be mastered if a public-private partnership is to flourish. These steps are described next.

Step 1: Review the community's context to determine where it stands, what opportunities it can tap, and what obstacles it must overcome before moving in new directions. The history of partnerships in a community and the degree of trust between business and the various public and private institutions are key factors that will determine the kind of new partnerships and links that are possible.

In some places antagonism or lack of understanding among important institutions and individuals may constrain any opportunities for significant new collaboration. In such cases, it may be necessary to start with some moderate efforts and build a record of success before embarking on major new initiatives.

Some elements to consider in examining the community's context or atmosphere are as follows:

- The impact of local organizational arrangements and turf issues. Progress in linkages is limited in many communities by disputes over who does the work, who spends the money, and who gets the credit.

- The actual and perceived quality of public programs. Where problems do exist in public programs, steps need to be taken to rebuild confidence in the public programs.

- Examine local social and economic conditions. For example, it's harder to obtain job commitments in a declining industrial area; it's more difficult to target on a particular group when social tensions are high.

- Find the neutral turf. Local organizations and processes probably do exist that enable the different sectors to come together on neutral turf and so facilitate the development and implementation of collaboration efforts.

So I am saying it is really necessary to assess that community and identify its strengths and weaknesses.

Step 2: Define a specific issue on which to focus the partnership. The issue could well be an aspect of a problem the community wants to address. Get the community to consider where it is on that issue, then let it decide where it wants to go. Although the focus may be broad or narrow, communities should work on something well-defined and tangible and should avoid endless, unfocused planning exercises that result in paper instead of action.

Step 3: Organize a local team. The right mix of people must be mobilized. Once an issue has been identified, the efforts and resources of several different actors in the community will need to be activated. To determine who the essential actors are, first identify the organizations that have a direct stake in seeing that the issue at hand is resolved and get their commitment to work in the partnership. Try to draw individuals from organizations with people who will be recognized in the community as having authority to make commitments for the organization. Any partnership depends on the authority of its key actors.

Commitment of the public or private chief executive officer (CEO) is essential. Only if the CEO has seen that the project is important to his or her interests and the community's interest will such a person throw his or her whole weight behind the project. The CEO will then appoint appropriate people as representatives, and give them authority to commit such resources as time, expertise, connections, money, and so forth.

There should also be an effort to build diversity into a broad-based team. There is frequently a role for a neutral "third party" who speaks the language and commands the trust of both the public and private communities.

Step 4: Determine whether a new vehicle is needed or whether an existing mechanism is acceptable. New vehicles may be especially useful in communities without a strong history of partnership. Often establishment of a new group can help ensure a fresh look at problems and new thinking about potential solutions. If partnerships or linkage activities are a tradition in the community, an existing institution may have the status and leverage needed to release resources toward the desired goal. Whether a new or existing vehicle is used and whether the initiative comes from the public or private sector depends on the local situation.

Step 5: Analyze the issue. Once the partnership is organized, it should diagnose a problem or situation to understand its underlying causes and to lay the groundwork for developing a strategy to deal with it. Problems must be carefully described and the participants in the partnership—with their various viewpoints and perspectives—need to express and explain their views of the problem. The group then needs to work toward a consensus in defining the problem and clarifying the objectives.

Step 6: Identify options. Once the problem is defined and current approaches have been reviewed, the challenge is to identify and develop new options for addressing the problems. Any discussion of alternatives with a diverse group of actors will generate a range of options. Some will be more appropriate than others. However, all options should be considered. Diplomatic consideration of all points of view enhances the credibility of the process. It will show where agreement and disagreement arise. People will be better able to support the final plan if their options were heard and held in respect throughout the discussions.

Step 7: Negotiate agreement. Move from a list of possible options to an agreed upon plan of action. That requires negotiations among the key public and private sector actors. In the overall process of negotiating agreements, members of the community's problem-solving partnership need to examine the feasibility of each option, select those that seem to have promise, negotiate specific agreements with those who will implement the policy options, and develop a work plan for the implementation phase of the initiative.

Step 8: Implement the plan and follow-through on it after negotiating agreement on a plan of action. Considerations in the last and most important phase should be as follows:

- How to structure the linkage activity and give it an organizational home
- How to provide strong support for implementation
- How to make midcourse corrections as needed
- How to build on today's momentum to develop tomorrow's program
- How to build new institutional arrangements from successful projects

The Private Industry Council as Partnership

It is interesting to look at the Private Industry Council experiment in order to see what has happened using this eight step process analysis as a basis for analysis. The Private Industry

Council (PIC) in the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) was established with support that should enable the principles we described to work. The law required an initial review of the local community's needs, both labor market and targeted population. It gave initial funding for analysis of previous job training efforts in the community. And PIC membership was drawn from those who had a stake in seeing the disadvantaged obtain economic independence. Staff was supplied to enable the PIC to develop its own individual working relationships and systems.

NAB studies show that in the initial action year, more PICs formed strong partnerships than did not. Where there were problems, they appeared to arise from an unwillingness to share authority under mutually defined conditions.

The National Alliance of Business (NAB) has tracked the progress of the Job Training Partnership Act since its inception with these questions in mind. Last fall, when the framework for this new partnership was put in place, NAB undertook the first comprehensive National survey of the nearly 600 Private Industry Councils. This preliminary review revealed that business was throwing its support behind the partnership. One of the questions we had was whether they would continue with this support. At least 9,000 business volunteers serve on local Private Industry Councils and State job training coordinating councils. The actual membership of business people on the Private Industry Councils is 56 percent whereas the law requires only 51 percent.

Following this initial study in May 1984, NAB's regional service offices studied the Nation's 100 largest service delivery areas, which include key cities, major metropolitan areas, and large rural areas. On the average, each serves a community of 750,000 people. Together, they administer more than half of the funds allocated for the JTPA. The information gathered during this second analysis shows that, in the majority of cases, the public and private sectors have been successful in working together to develop a viable and effective local program.

There are many positive signs that the partnership is flourishing: Private Industry Councils are playing a pivotal role in one-fifth of the service delivery areas. In those localities, the PICs are active in managing the program and play much more than a policy and program oversight role. These PICs often serve as grant recipients or program administrators through agreement with the local elected officials. They are usually incorporated and are supported by staff that report directly to the PIC.

An additional 60 percent of the PICs are exercising their mandated role to develop policy and provide administrative and program oversight. Such PICs are also working well with local government (which is usually the grant recipient or program administrator) and are knowledgeable about the programs they are funding, but prefer using an existing organization, public or private, to run the program. We think that this arises out of the fact that there were a number of communities with very fine organizations in place when CETA was phased out and JTPA begun. It was logical that those organizations should continue.

Our survey shows that in over three-quarters of the service delivery areas, the agreement between the council and the local elected official, which outlines their major roles and responsibilities, is satisfactory to both sides. In more than half, staff support was provided by the program administrators, and council members characterize their working relationship with the administrators as "good" or "excellent." There has been little turnover on the average Private Industry Council, and approximately three-quarters of the councils are believed to be comprised of influential and top-level business leaders who accurately represent the industrial and demographic composition of the local business community.

Performance standards are expected to be met in two-thirds of service delivery areas this first year, and about half have reported no problems with recruiting and maintaining planned enrollment levels, despite some initial problems in the first months of the transition.

There are, however, some areas of concern. It appears from our study that approximately 10 percent of the key areas face serious problems. A common thread runs through these difficulties: the Private Industry Council usually plays a very limited role in the decision-making process, the agreement with the local elected official often limits the council's authority, and tension frequently exists between the council and local government staff. The rules of equally shared authority and responsibility appear to have been breached, and so the relationship is not as strong as it might be. It will take further study to determine exactly what has prevented formation of full partnership in these cases.

It will take at least another year before the success of the transition to a more private sector, job-oriented training system can realistically be assessed. NAB conducted another comprehensive, nationwide survey of Private Industry Councils in the late summer of 1984. The results will be closely analyzed to determine the strengths, the successes, and the problems facing the job training partnership. More will be learned from that study about how to work effectively in these new relationships.

However, we can see now that some 7,000 business volunteers are working with an equal number of public sector counterparts to put together programs to help a population with serious barriers to employment get and keep jobs. This represents an enormous release of energy and resources toward a specific human and community problem.

One issue which clearly needs further study and possibly more time and experience is how to help private and public sector representatives understand the decision-making processes the other uses. Business people are used to working in a hierarchical system with a clear goal and without the need to create public support for their decisions. Once they begin to work in a public-spirited effort, possibly using public dollars and working with public officials, their frame of reference must change. Business people will need an understanding of the public agency decision-making process to work effectively in partnerships. They will need to understand and accept as necessary public officials' need to move more slowly than private organizations in order to build support for their decisions within their own agencies, among other public officials, and with the public. Business people need to know that the step-by-step process is not always red tape. Public officials, on the other hand, need to communicate clearly with their private partners what they are doing and why. Meetings must be about policy issues and strategies—not about procedures, organization charts, and immutable deadlines.

Communication depends on trust based on mutual respect, which brings us back to our earlier concern about partnerships being created from among those who have a stake in the outcome and the power to make the commitments necessary to get the job done. But more thought does need to be given to techniques to help this communication and understanding occur.

Partnership in Education

Partnerships in job training are in their infancy, but they are institutionalized. Job training is very different from education because it involves limited activities for a very specific population and cause. Employer involvement in job training programs for the disadvantaged is, by its nature, somewhat defined. A limited number of employers may serve in a policy-making role in State or

local councils. Some employers can provide training services. More can hire their graduate trainees. In other words, everyone knows what employers are expected to do.

The broad scope of public education offers almost unlimited opportunities for educators and employers to seek each other out to address mutual needs. Business-education partnerships existed long before job training partnerships. Once again they are growing in popularity. Whether these partnerships are a passing fad or will grow into relationships with strong practical and political benefits to education and to the community depends on whether the principles of successful "partnering" are understood and how the partnerships are shaped. Success or failure will depend on the individuals in each State and locality who take the risk.

The initial question is, of course, why have a partnership? The education community alone contains numerous diverse elements: students, teachers, counselors, principals, school boards, parent groups, administrators and their staffs (and that is just at the local level)! These parties all have different interests that must be negotiated and reconciled daily. Educators may question the need to complicate their lives with another set of actors who could by their involvement delay or impede an already complicated decision-making and implementation process.

There are, however, benefits to partnerships that should overcome the inconveniences:

- Participation in a partnership gives other individuals and institutions an opportunity to understand what lies behind an organization's point of view, the constraints under which an organization operates and to learn its strengths and where it needs assistance. This understanding can lead to increased political support for the educational system in the community at a time when the system is being questioned. The business community, in particular, can be a powerful ally with local political leaders and in the State capital where key funding decisions are made.

- A partnership expands the capacity of the participating institutions to deal with the challenges that each entity must meet in its line of operations. The challenge to educators is infinite as they must deal with almost every element of life. Perhaps more than any other public system, education needs the active support of the entire community. Partnerships can help build the understanding that brings that support.

- The challenge to business is to continue to face an increasingly competitive world market. The essential ingredient to the success is human resources: thinking, responsible, productive, committed, skilled employees who can learn, grow, and adapt to changing markets and working technologies. Business has a survival-level stake in appropriate quality education.

- Partnership brings increased knowledge, access, time, human resources and financial resources from other sectors in the community to a cause. In doing so, partnership may reduce the costs and liability of doing business for each participant.

The catch, of course, is that one must ask for this support. A partnership will require understanding, consensus building, negotiations, giving as well as taking, and time. Increased demands will be placed on leadership—in education and in business.

Partnerships with education are being implemented through a variety of activities. For example, employers participate on school boards, local advisory councils, craft committees, and in work-study and cooperative education programs.

As you well know, these activities are taking place more frequently in all our communities as employers continue to realize their stake in the capability of the public education system to prepare students for the transition from school to work. This stake is particularly visible in vocational education.

There is a long history of employer involvement in vocational education. Employers have worked with vocational educators by serving on local advisory councils, craft committees, and education-work councils. At the program level, they may participate in work-study or cooperative education programs, and make staff, facilities, and equipment available for school use.

Certainly, these contributions by employers are needed and have been useful to date, but their existence has been uneven. Business input has generally been of an advisory or volunteer nature and limited to individual ad hoc projects rather than systematized and integrated. Similar to their experience in employment and training programs, employers have not shared responsibility for the products of our educational institutions. This has created an "us/them" situation where the business community can stand back and point to failure while taking minimal responsibility.

Because employers are concerned about the future work force and feel closer collaboration with vocational education would help vocational education, the National employer organizations are now working to create an appropriate public-private partnership in vocational education. Much time, effort, and careful thought have gone into defining the terms of the partnership so it will be most constructive for vocational education, for students, and for their future employers. We believe it is difficult to ask business people, who are volunteers, to take an active role in any program unless they can be sure their opinions will be heard and considered. For their part, employers cannot stand back and criticize our public institutions if they are not willing to work with them.

Opportunities for Partnerships in Vocational Education

We believe three features contained in the vocational education legislation now before Congress will better define the employer's role in vocational education.

First, a strengthened State advisory council is created. It has a majority private sector membership that is involved in the development of State vocational education plans. The council's special contribution is to advise State educators and elected officials as to whether proposed programs and services meet State labor market needs. It is difficult for States or regions to obtain accurate labor market data in an organized fashion from employers. But, we believe a strong state-level council can help employers realize how much education needs this information. The council is also the place to bring outstanding business leaders in the State together to share their reaction to the plans developed by the education community and to help support these plans. It is hoped that support will be built to establish ongoing communication as the plan is developed.

Our experience is that the real business leadership in a State or locality that could gather strong support for State plans is not likely to participate in government or nonprofit advisory councils that have no specific mission or authority. States should bear the following in mind if they want effective councils:

- Appoint high-level individuals with policy-making authority in their own companies to serve on the council. Advisory councils gain much prestige from the stature of their members.

- Councils that are appointed by the Governor need the support of the Governor. We've had some problems in tha regard with JTPA. If the education community, which may at first be concerned about the council, perceives the State council as merely a public relations device or a ritual to be performed to meet the requirements for Federal funding, the council will quickly become meaningless and business leaders will refuse to serve.

- Spare the council as much bureaucracy and red tape as possible. Business volunteers will want to focus on policy issues, not on processes to fulfill regulatory requirements. Business volunteers must be given clear issues to examine and information about the options available if they are to address the issues.

A committed and supported council is more likely to be an effective advocate for vocational education and more willing to take on building the sustained public support necessary to carry out quality vocational education programs. Participation on a State council will allow business leaders to take a broad look at how vocational education can meet State goals for education, equity, industry, economic development, and employment policy and to throw its weight behind vocational education as it works to meet these goals.

But even more is needed. We believe that the employer's greatest value to vocational education is in sharing the knowledge of the education and skills that are needed to enter and progress in their own industries and occupations. Both House and Senate vocational education bills make provisions for this type of information exchange to take place. The House legislation requires States to establish a limited number of occupationally specific technical committees. The committees are composed of business and labor specialists in a specific occupation set up to share with appropriate education specialists the information they need to build curricula and programs. The technical committees can also be used to obtain technical assistance and professional development for State and local vocational education institutions and teachers but only as requested by the education community. The Senate legislation would create similar committees at the Federal level as part of a National employer s council.

To make this work, business needs to make available to the education system its own people who can set out in specific terms the competencies needed to work and to grow in the occupations that are taught both at secondary and postsecondary levels. Generally, such people are not the chief executive officers (CEOs). They are people the CEOs can designate to work with educators because their knowledge arises from daily experience.

NAB believes the way to get the best people with enough time to work problems through is by going to the industry associations. The trade associations within the State would be asked to designate three to five people to work with experienced, accomplished, and recognized educators to develop the needed competency statements. As you know, the American Electronics Industry, the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association, and the Association of General Contractors have already developed such statements for electronic technicians, auto mechanics, and a variety of construction jobs at several levels. We believe the response of trade associations and labor unions will be a good indicator as to which occupational areas have the most pressing need for skilled labor. We believe if the Governor specifically asks industry to make its people available, industry will make it happen.

This proposal assumes that the State agency activities will shift somewhat away from compliance monitoring to providing technical assistance to local education agencies, schools, and instructors. We assume also that State agencies will want to use outstanding educators that instructors respect and give them the leadership role in working with the technical committees and providing the technical assistance and professional development wanted.

These technical committees and the information that they develop can be a tremendous asset to State educators, legislators, Governors, and operators of other State employment programs in addressing such problems as how to increase productivity and identify areas of skill shortage. Vocational education would then be in the lead role in gathering, interpreting, disseminating, and using that information.

This proposal is part of the developing Federal legislation reauthorizing Federal investment in vocational education. But, States do not need to wait for Federal legislation to implement this concept. Whether there is Federal legislation or not, NAB urges educators to discuss these ideas with the industry associations and labor unions within the State and ask their support in implementing these committees. Furthermore, different States in a region may wish to establish different committees and then share the information developed with other States to avoid duplication of effort.

Another opportunity for employer-education partnerships is through the provisions in the House and Senate bills for creation of a new program to fund training in high-technology occupations. The new program is meant to provide incentives for business and industry and the vocational education community to develop programs jointly. Not less than 50 percent of the cost of these programs must be provided from non-Federal sources, and not less than 50 percent of the non-Federal share must be provided by participating businesses. Funds for this program are available for training and retraining of instructional personnel, curriculum development, acquisition of equipment, and other activities essential to providing training programs in high-technology occupations.

These industry-education partnership training programs in high-technology occupations, as the law calls them, where the business community underwrites part of the cost, are another opportunity for employers to show their commitment to quality vocational education programs. This type of activity is already quite common in many communities and NAB is pleased that it will be expanded through Federal legislation. It is not too early for States to start considering how such partnerships should be implemented. This program will need to be marketed to the business community. Individuals who act as "account executives" or "industrial coordinators" will be needed to act as liaisons with the business community. Employers will want to feel confident about their investment and will want to be part of decisions made in joint programs.

Joint programs with the business community must also keep regulations and bureaucratic processes to a minimum if they want to keep busy employers active in a partnership program. Again, we do not need Federal legislation to move ahead with this kind of an idea.

Conclusion

What does all this mean? It means we in industry and education are on the threshold of a new adventure—that we may be given the opportunity to build on the years of experience we have working together—and do it better. To make any of these ideas successful, the principles of public-private collaboration will need to be understood and applied. The challenge for the National Alliance of Business, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, and others is to develop, understand, and communicate the need for partnerships, the advantages of partnerships, the difficulties and challenges of successful partnership, and the techniques for making them work. And we need to work together to do it.

Thank you very much.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Madeleine B. Hemmings

Question: Your talk was mainly about private sector involvement in the running and direction of training in educational institutions. Another form of partnership is the reverse, in which the public institutions work with private business to provide customized training. I was wondering if you might talk more about that. Is that outside the concept of public-private partnerships? How does it fit in?

I thought I should have some mercy on the crowd by not exploring every possibility that could be put down here. However, I think that in many ways, I was talking about formalized relationships and the need to understand how they might be made more workable. The services you describe are probably even better done on a direct basis between a business and the education institution. Customized training is a wonderful resource that the education community brings to the country and to the economy and that ought to be encouraged in every possible way. That kind of service offered by community colleges and vocational-technical schools has been more than welcome by the business community. I think customized training is more accepted as a way of life than the kind of relationship I was describing, but I didn't intend to suggest that it's less important. In fact, it is more important and I would see growth in customized training as one of the most important results of a partnership process. The opportunity for business to learn from the combined experience educators have from working with many students and many businesses will be invaluable to businesses as time goes on.

Question: One of our charges is to assemble data for policy decisions. Is there a way for us to understand better what the business community wants? Are there any studies?

I may not have expressed what I meant very well. I was trying to say that the business community must understand it has different decision-making processes than that of the public community, and that it needs to learn to appreciate why the public community does what it does. I don't think there has been enough done to increase mutual understanding. In fact, my intention was to develop a paper that talked only about these two different decision-making processes, but I discovered that there wasn't very much available on the subject. The issue is to teach the business community what it needs to know in order to understand the difference between when the public agency is putting something over on them with a lot of paper, and when, in fact, the business community has to make it possible for the public partners to build support for their decisions. This entails going through the process of explaining all the things that public sector people do. I really think the business community has little, if any, understanding of this requirement, and, therefore, when they get into some situations with public partners, they are unnecessarily critical of them because they are naive about what the public partners have to deal with in terms of keeping their own heads above water. I don't think you can build a partnership unless the people who are sitting across the table from each other can keep their jobs after the meeting has taken place, and I don't think we talk about that very much. I don't think most business people understand it. I didn't mean to say that educators need to understand the hierarchial structure of business; I don't think it matters, if they do or not. I do think it matters though, that the business community be able to tell the

difference when they go to meetings between what is keeping them from understanding the issues (so that somebody else's purpose can be manipulated through the situation) and what is necessary in order to make a viable public decision that will endure. Business people don't live in a world where, when they make a decision, the first thing that happens is both the people on their staffs and the people outside their staffs immediately start figuring out how to get that decision undone. That's a world they don't know and they don't understand at all. They say, "Oh well, that's politics." But if you are going to operate something in the public domain, you are going to have to develop some of those skills, and I don't think the private sector has enough appreciation for the quality and skills of the public sector.

Question: Do different individuals at different points of the hierarchy hold different views about job training?

Probably, yes. I think that's very well said. We find that the chief executive officers in most organizations are very interested in the broad education of their people. They want people who have a broad education and they also want technical genius. They want the best engineers that they can possibly find. They want the most talented people available, no matter where they are found, and they want to build an organization around them. Well, who doesn't? If you are looking at competing in the world today, that is what it takes.

On the other hand, I think that Susan Raymond's study of what business people really want from people coming out of high school has a great deal to recommend it. I've heard it said that the study probably wasn't done on a large enough population. However, I'm willing to bet money on the fact that if you spent a million dollars replicating it, the answers would be very similar in a larger population. And I would recommend the study to you. Raymond talks about the higher order of reasoning skills, the ability of people to use the information that they get when they are in school, the ability to draw conclusions from what they read, and those kinds of things. She has a highly developed list of skills that business people say they need in productive employees. She also indicates that business people try to communicate to educators that they do not need students or graduates who are prepared only for entry-level positions. They want to promote people and they want them to grow within the company. However, I thought one of the most interesting things she did find out was that high schools—thousands of them—think of themselves as preparing students for entry-level jobs. Now that is a tremendous gap in understanding. It really is, and it's one we really need to talk about to each other. Raymond's is the best study of what employers think high schools do and what they ought to do that I've seen.

One other point: business people want employees with general skills, and they do have a problem with people who can't read, write, and so on. This is a reality to them.

I understand that you are studying hiring patterns. If you give employers 10 people, all of whom have good basic skills, and one of whom has the technical skills to go ahead and do the job, that's the person they are going to hire. The person who makes the hiring decision needs a person with both kinds of education, training, and skills. I believe that as soon as we get past our discussion on the basic skills that people need to have and begin to get people with those skills, employers will immediately come back to you and say please give us the people with the basic skills *and* the technical skills. That's what they want. You cannot hire a secretary who can't type. That person needs a basic education—probably more—plus the ability to turn on the machine and get something out of it the first day on the job. The same principle is true in many other jobs.

Another point: there are millions of smaller businesses in the country, but we tend to spend our time asking what the large business is going to do. The large business likes to tell us how it's

going to train people. But again, if you find out who they really take and who gets into their training programs, you find they are the people who already have a pretty good start.

The resource in our country with the potential to help us with the real problems we have is the vocational education community. There isn't any other system that offers the same combination of basic and occupational skills training. A quarter of the people in the labor market do not have high school diplomas. Employers have already hired an enormous number of people who have been giving them a lot of productivity problems. That is not to say that everybody who comes out of high school is in great shape either. Our adult education opportunity is phenonmenal. We really do have serious problems to deal with in this country in terms of bringing people along to the point where they really are employable. Employers eventually will ask for help doing that.

Question: At least for the last 10-12 years, the National Association of Business-Industry Education Cooperation has been working on those partnerships. Why haven't they been more successful?

Some of them have been very successful. This particular set of proposals that we have developed did not arise out of any of their materials. One of the problems that we think we have resolved in our proposal is going to the employers where they are. In other words, we suggest that educators really begin to work seriously with trade associations that are set up to deal with employer problems. They are also set up to reach out to the government where you need them to reach out to government. Trade associations know how to do that. They are skilled in such outreach, and they are the groups that come together to consider the problems of specific industries and communicate these problems to government as appropriate. If one of these problems is employees, they are going to have a committee of people dealing with that problem, prepared to advise the membership on how to act and what to support. That group can be a strong advocate for vocational education.

I think we don't need new organizations or new associations because people don't have time for them. We've already got thousands of them in Washington. What we need then is to go where people already are and use the resources that they recognize and accept to reach them. Then the efficiency of these people's time spent becomes much stronger, and so does their interest in a new issue. I think reaching business people through their trade associations would make all the difference in the world to vocational educators. There is nothing in our proposal that is very revolutionary; rather, it is an extension of what's already done, carried one step further. What it does represent, however, is a series of recommendations that have already been proposed and accepted by the five major business organizations in the country. The people who normally represent employers have looked at these recommendations in this particular moment in history and asked to work with vocational education and that structure. The commitment is there.

Other systems have to go into the community and find people and hope to organize them. Some have been doing that for a long time for vocational educators and have done a lot of good through this work. But, I don't think vocational education has yet reached into the business community's regular system of making its own decisions, and I think you ought to unleash that system on your behalf because vocational education is an economic good. Getting business to understand your importance and value as it makes decisions about its own economic future would really begin to bring some people to your cause who would expect to deliver for you. That's what associations do for a living, and they have staff available who can help. This idea is essentially to trade on as much of what is already there as possible and unleash the organized business community on behalf of the vocational education community.

Question: Given the fact that the vocational education community has had thousands of advisory committees over the years, what would be the two to three priorities you would recommend? What kind of partnerships ought to be built?

I don't know that I can suggest what the vocational education community ought to do, but I hope we can continue our dialogue, and maybe we can develop something more than just a couple of suggestions off the top of my head. What we are asking for in the business proposal is not a set of job training programs. We are asking for a system to be set up whereby the education community can get information from the employer community, and the employer community is forced to organize itself to provide that information. The information is not just about what vocational education should do. The information business should provide is what people need to know in order to function on the job. That's as far as the employer community ought to go. They stop right there, and beyond that, the education community makes up its mind what it can do, when, and how. What education should have is a body of knowledge provided by the employer community.

The employer community, although its executives have served on numerous councils, has not really systematically organized itself to provide that information. The way the business community works internally has not been made readily available to the education community. That's what is being proposed here. I think what I would suggest at this point is that figure out how we can teach our different sectors to understand enough about each other to overcome their hesitancy toward working cooperatively. I think that would be the challenge.

What can we show them about each other to bring them together? What is the most effective way of doing that? Passing a law that says the business community can put up money to encourage job growth or establish some kind of training programs isn't going to unleash a flow of money. Somebody is going to have to go out and get it from the business community, because business is not going to be jumping up and down at the opportunity to pay out money for something that it doesn't understand. One thing we need to do is to figure out this process and then show the education community how to make those approaches and how to establish the understanding with the employer community that will produce employer-funds for local programs. Doing so would be really exciting.

We've had a lot of experience in dealing with employers and we would like to share it. The desire to work together has to be real for partnerships to work. It's one thing to organize a council where the members may or may not listen to each other and may get sick of participating after a while and quit. It is another thing to hear a business person say, "I'm going to write you a check for $50,000. I really believe this is going to be good for my business, and I can go tell my stockholders or the owner of my business that this was money well spent. It's their money that is well spent." That's the pressure on the owner of the business or the manager of a publicly held corporation—to be able to justify the investment. So, the education community has to make its approach in a way that enables employers to understand and explain the payoff. That will require very well thought out proposals based on a clearly identified need. So, I think we ought to figure out the techniques for making these approaches and then train people to deal with the employer community on this basis and put together proposals and committees to support the proposals. A very real possibility is to get the kind of money you need to run larger projects through the trade associations who can help you put together 25 employers in support of a project. The people who bring employers together are their own associations. I think associations are a really rich resource that we ought to approach and try to work with very hard.

Question: One of the chief concerns of business and industry is to retain jobs. Do you think that JTPA should be the primary vehicle for retaining jobs?

The only vehicle? I see the vocational education system as a better one. The vocational education community system is a $6.5 billion system. The JTPA system is at total less than $3 billion. I don't think that the economic development problems of the country are limited to the concerns of the Federal Government. In fact, I suspect that those kinds of problems are better solved at the State and local levels. When you begin to organize to deal with economic development, the employer community will stand with you in asking for more money from State legislatures. I think that it is going to be easier to argue the case for the economic development and job retention situation at the State level than it is going to be to argue it in Washington next year.

There is not much money in the Federal Government anymore, and I don't think we ought to assume that that's our primary source of money. I think we will gain more by asking business to put up some of the money, and the State to put up some of the money, and maybe others as well. Perhaps we ought to get together to create the pots of money a lot closer to where the problems are. It is easier for people to agree to paying for a problem they can see and understand. It is also in many ways, easier to design a solution to those problems closer to home.

We have places like this National Center that are gathering the experience of the rest of the country and making it available. I don't think we should be reinventing the wheel in every locality, but I would hate to say that Washington is the source of all the answers to our problems. Shared experience and locally developed applications will do more than nationally mandated programs.

Next year, the Federal budget battles are likely to be worse than anything we've seen up until now. The Job Training Partnership Act has a role to play in retraining. It deals with a very specific population. The vocational education system is not restrained in that way, and, therefore, it is in many ways much easier to bring the employer community to rally around it. Employers like to think they are getting the best and the brightest.

Question: Should public money, that is taxes, be used to subsidize training for the private sector? This is almost a moral issue.

What do you think the moral issue is? We have to look to some extent at the social thinking of the time in order to understand why laws develop the way they do. When CETA was developed, for example, the prohibition against money flowing to the private sector to train people arose not out of an animosity toward the private sector, but because of the point you are making. We believed, at that time, that if we provided public funds to a private business, we were creating comparative advantage for one business over another with public funds, including paying a business to train its own employees or even non employees. We thought that was wrong. We believe in a free, competitive economy. We believed at that time that any business out there ought to use whatever it has to make its way in the world, and that it isn't up to the government to create an advantage for one over the other. Whoever survives, survives.

Over a 10-year period or so, we began to realize that having our disadvantaged people trained only by the public sector was not getting them jobs in the private sector. Sometimes there were differences in the way that people did their work or the work that needed to be done. Therefore, being trained in one sector was not necessarily going to prepare a person for the other. So it became in the public interest to train people in the private sector. Then the issue shifted a little bit. We began to realize that there is also a tremendous productivity loss to society when a group of people has a serious barrier to employment. So we began to think that maybe we could provide the cost of training or some percentage of trainee salaries to the employer in order to get the person initial training and experience. The payment was viewed as compensation for hiring someone less

productive than others who were available. So we adopted the targeted job tax credit and started paying for on-the-job training. The moral issue becomes finding the right way to give people a real opportunity.

Now we may be moving toward a situation where it is in the public interest to see that people are retrained in order to be sure the businesses don't fail and that we don't lose the capabilities of competing in international markets. We may want to create funds to retrain people so we can keep them employed. I'm not saying that is the answer. I'm saying that issues and our thinking about them seem to evolve. The society has different sets of problems at different times, and we arrive, eventually, through our very interesting democratic processes, at the solution we are willing to apply.

I don't think we are quite back into the previous situation, in which we couldn't use public money for any private purpose, After all, we are now asking the private sector to use its money for public purposes. There is something of an exchange going on here. How we feel about it is involved in our processes in State legislatures, local councils, the Federal legislature, and so on. I think it is wonderful to see how the thing is actually debated, and we eventually arrive at a balance with which we, as Americans, feel comfortable. Such thinking is an evolving thing. I don't think there is a clear answer or one that is suitable to all social climates or economic circumstances. The answer seems to depend on what we see as the most pressing social problem at the time, on our view of what the moral problem is. In this case, we went from worrying about creating comparative advantage for one employer to worrying about our moral obligation to give disadvantaged people the kind of training they really needed to get a second chance at the job market. To do the latter, we are now trying to provide funds to employers who train people with serious employment problems so the employers can remain competitive with those who do not undertake such socially desirable activities.

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