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ABSTRACT

Teacher educators' views on preparing future business education teachers to deliver workplace skill instruction were examined in a survey of an adjusted sample of 183 members of the National Association of Teacher Educators for Business Education who were in teacher education positions. Of the 71 teacher educators who completed surveys (a 38.8% response rate), 38 were female and 33 were males. Of the 13 duty areas mentioned on the survey, demonstrating technological literacy, maintaining professionalism, communicating on the job, and demonstrating work ethics and behavior were mentioned as the 4 areas most frequently addressed in existing teacher education courses. Demonstrating technological literacy, seeking and applying for employment opportunities, communicating on the job, and maintaining professionalism were deemed the four areas in which graduates of business teacher preparation programs are best prepared. The majority of respondents (97.2%) agreed that workplace skills instruction should be addressed in teacher preparation programs, and 58% indicated that workplace skills instruction should be incorporated into all teacher preparation courses. Only 14.1% agreed that workplace skills instruction should be taught as a separate course. It was recommended that teacher educators' views on preparing teachers for workplace skills instruction be compared to program graduates' views. (MN)

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## TEACHER PREPARATION FOR WORKPLACE SKILL INSTRUCTION

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### Abstract

*This study's purpose was to identify teacher educators' views on preparing future teachers for delivering workplace skill instruction. Members of a national vocational teacher education association served as the research population. The 71 respondents to the survey instrument, using the V-TECS workplace skills duty areas as the framework, indicated their programs prepared future teachers well for "demonstrating technological literacy" and "seeking and applying for employment opportunities." Future teachers are least prepared to teach such workplace skills duty areas as "maintaining interpersonal relationships" and "adapting/coping with change." Recommendations were to incorporate organized curriculum for preparing teachers for workplace skill instruction.*

### Introduction

Various terms have been used to identify workplace skills. Miller and Usoro (1981) discussed affective workplace competencies. Luft and Schoen used the term nontechnical competencies while Foster, Engels, and Wilson (1986), and Buck and Barrick (1987) gave these skills the term employability skills. More recently, these skills have been termed workplace know-how by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS Report, 1991), workplace basics by Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer (1992), and workplace skills by the Vocational-Technical Education Consortium of States (1992). Invariably, when employers are asked what skills are most needed by employees, workplace skills will be the reply. The future of the business environment is dependent upon its workers possessing these workplace skills; and to be able to compete in the global environment successfully, those skills are vital (Foster, Engels, & Wilson, 1986). Little attention is placed on instruction of workplace skill in the classroom because more time is spent acquiring technical skills. Furthermore, little research has addressed how to prepare teachers to deliver workplace skill instruction.

According to research conducted and reviewed by Foster, Engels, and Wilson (1986), "employability (workplace) skills are sensitive and can be developed through educational intervention" (p. 177). According to Anderson-Yates, Coffman, and Baker (1992), little attention is placed on workplace skills development as teachers spend class time in developing

student technical skills. Their research on Illinois vocational instructors revealed that a majority of instructors felt very prepared to teach such skills as "work behavior/work ethics" and "maintain working relationships". They were uncomfortable teaching such competencies as "identify and react to sexual intimidation/harassment" and "be creative to meet changing needs." Instructors reported using their own personal experiences to teach workplace skills and their college courses were of minimal assistance in preparing them to teach such skills.

Workplace skill competence represents a critical component reflecting the degree to which students will be successful in their chosen careers. In the educational reform movement, emphasis is being placed on the need to develop specific skills organizations are demanding. Reformers have also concluded that if education changes to meet this need, a positive "ripple-effect" will occur in the improvement of not only worker employment success and market productivity, but also in global competitiveness (Schlichting & Echternacht, 1994).

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to determine business teacher educators' perceptions regarding the preparation of business teachers to teach workplace skills. Specifically, these research questions provided a focus for the study: (1) What workplace skills do teacher educators view as important to address in preparing teachers; and (2) Do teacher educators perceive graduates of teacher education programs as being prepared to provide workplace skills instruction?

### **Research Procedure**

A descriptive research design using a survey instrument was used. Professionals involved in preparing future teachers were chosen as the population of the study. Specifically, members of the National Association of Teacher Educators for Business Education (NATEBE) were chosen as representatives of this population. The NATEBE is one of the affiliates of the Business Education Division of the American Vocational Association whose purpose is to plan, develop, and sustain programs for teacher education in business education. The 1996 membership list was used; members who listed high schools, community colleges, and business organization affiliation were excluded, resulting in 219 names used as the sample. The sample was adjusted to 183 after determining that certain members were not in teacher education positions. Of this adjusted sample, responses were received from 71 (38.8%).

The data gathering instrument was designed to elicit demographic information and to address specific workplace skill duty areas. These duty areas and competencies were derived from the validated list identified by V-TECS (1992). Teacher educators were asked to identify one business teacher education course currently taught or that had been taught in which workplace skills development could be addressed. Using a five-point Likert-type scale, they were then asked to indicate how frequently they addressed how to teach that workplace skill in the identified course. Respondents were further asked to indicate their perception of how

prepared graduates of business education programs were to teach each of the specific skills in each of the workplace duty areas. They were also asked to identify what type of training or preparation they had regarding teaching of workplace skills. Respondent data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and means.

### Selected Findings

The 71 survey respondents were balanced by gender (female = 38 and male = 33). The most frequently reported doctoral degree majors were business education (36 or 39.6%), vocational education (10 or 11%), and curriculum and instruction (8 or 8.8%). The title of professor or chair was reported by 32 (40.6%); associate professor by 17 (21.5%), and assistant professor by 10 (12.7%) .

Relating to research question 1 addressing the workplace skills that teacher educators view as important to address in preparing teachers, respondents were asked to identify a course that they have taught in which workplace skills instruction could be addressed. Respondents most frequently identified a methods/strategies class (36 or 50%) or a business communication course (10 or 13.9%) as such a course.

Using the course they identified, they were asked to rate (scale of 5 to 1) how frequently they address teaching competencies within each workplace skill duty area. As reflected in Table 1, Duty Area K "demonstrating technological literacy" had the highest mean (4.2) and "maintaining professionalism" received a mean of 4.1. Duty areas with lowest means were "maintaining a safe and healthy environment" (2.6) and "accepting employment" (2.3).

Table 1  
Respondent Frequency in Teaching Workplace Skills Instruction

Workplace Skills Duty Area	Mean Response
K. Demonstrating technological literacy	4.2
F. Maintaining professionalism	4.1
D. Communicating on the job	4.0
J. Demonstrating work ethics and behavior	4.0
H. Solving problems and critical thinking	3.9
M. Demonstrating team work	3.9
L. Maintaining interpersonal relationships	3.8
B. Seeking and applying for employment opportunities	3.4
E. Interpreting the economics of work	3.1
G. Adapting/coping with change	3.1
A. Developing an employment plan	2.9
I. Maintaining a safe and healthy environment	2.6
C. Accepting employment	2.3

Research question 2 asked whether teacher educators perceive graduates of teacher education programs as being prepared to provide workplace skills instruction. Using a scale of 5 to 1, respondents ranked such teacher preparation. Table 2 shows the duty areas for teacher preparation with the highest mean (4.1) was "demonstrating technological literacy." Duty areas for teacher preparation with the lowest means were "maintaining interpersonal relationships" (2.7), "adapting/coping with change" (2.4), and "maintaining a safe and healthy environment" (2.4).

Table 2

Respondent Perceptions of Business Education Graduates' Preparation to Teach Workplace Skills Instruction

Workplace Skills Duty Area	Mean Response
K. Demonstrating technological literacy	4.1
B. Seeking and applying for employment opportunities	4.0
D. Communicating on the job	3.9
F. Maintaining professionalism	3.9
J. Demonstrating work ethics and behavior	3.7
M. Demonstrating team work	3.7
H. Solving problems and critical thinking	3.5
C. Accepting employment	3.3
A. Developing an employment plan	3.1
E. Interpreting the economics of work	2.9
L. Maintaining interpersonal relationships	2.7
G. Adapting/coping with change	2.4
I. Maintaining a safe and healthy environment	2.4

Further, respondents were asked to identify the workplace skills duty areas in which they personally had received preparation/training. Table 3 reflects that "communicating on the job" was the most frequently identified (36 or 90%) duty area covered during in-service activities. Among the duty areas least frequently identified were "interpreting the economics of work" (10 or 25%), "maintaining a safe and healthy environment" (10 or 25%), and "accepting employment" (6 or 15%).

Table 3

Respondent In-Service Activity Topics for Workplace Skills Instruction (n = 40)

Workplace Skills Duty Area	Frequency	Percentage
D. Communicating on the job	36	90.0
H. Solving problems and critical thinking	32	80.0
L. Maintaining interpersonal relationships	32	80.0
G. Adapting/coping with change	30	75.0
F. Maintaining professionalism	26	65.0
K. Demonstrating technological literacy	25	62.5
J. Demonstrating work ethics and behavior	24	60.0
B. Seeking and applying for employment opportunities	11	27.5
A. Developing an employment plan	10	25.0
E. Interpreting the economics of work	10	25.0
I. Maintaining a safe and healthy environment	10	25.0
C. Accepting employment	6	15.0
M. Demonstrating team work	*	-

Note. \* M was inadvertently left off the survey instrument.

According to Table 4, personal experience was the most frequently (66 or 97.1%) reported way respondents had personally learned about workplace skills. Least frequently reported methods were professional reading (2 or 3%), and various other ways (4 or 6%).

Table 4

Respondent Preparation to Teach Workplace Skills Instruction (n = 68)

Preparation	Frequency	Percentage
Personal experience	66	97.1
Work experience	60	88.2
College/University	49	72.1
Workshops/Conventions/Seminars/Conferences	8	11.8
Research	4	5.9
Professional reading	2	3.0
Human resource management training	1	1.5
Business contacts	1	1.5
Friend in public school supervision	1	1.5
Guest speaker in classes	1	1.5

Note. Three respondents did not answer. Therefore, the number is less than 71.

The majority of respondents (69 or 97.2%) agreed that workplace skills instruction should be addressed in the preparation of teachers. A majority (58 or 81.7%) agreed as well that workplace skills instruction should be incorporated into all teacher preparation courses. Only 10 (14.1%) agreed that workplace skills instruction should be taught as a separate course.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Research findings support the conclusions that teacher educators: (1) address the workplace skill duty areas of "demonstrating technological literacy" and "maintaining professionalism" most often; (2) perceive graduates of business teacher education programs to be well prepared to teach the workplace skills duty areas of "demonstrating technological literacy" and "seeking and applying for employment opportunities"; (3) were prepared to teach workplace skills instruction primarily through their personal experiences; and (4) believe that workplace skills instruction should be incorporated into all teacher preparation courses rather than offered as a separate course.

Recommendations include: (1) Teacher education programs must be reviewed to determine how curriculum is designed to prepare teachers for workplace skills instruction; and (2) further research should be conducted to compare views of teacher educators with graduates of those programs.

Much work and creative effort lie ahead for all educators in attempting to educate and train members of the labor force so they can work to their fullest capacity. Such investment in human capital is imperative if this nation plans to stay economically competitive. Educators must tackle this tremendous challenge--and help rebuild part of the basic foundation of this country. And teacher educators must take the leadership to assure that educators are prepared to accept this most important challenge.

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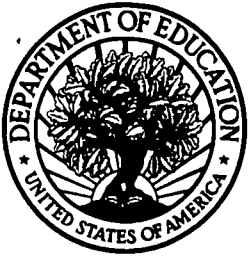
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