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DETERMINING APPROVAL STANDARDS FOR POSTSECONDARY
VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Under the Supervision of Professor J. Galen Saylor

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TITLE

DETERMINING APPROVAL STANDARDS FOR POSTSECONDARY

VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public postsecondary vocational technical education in Nebraska has experienced considerable growth and expansion since the passage of the Vocational Act of 1963. Postsecondary vocational technical education is now emanating from a wider base of sponsorship with the state schools, area schools, the University of Nebraska, and junior colleges all amplifying occupational course offerings. In looking to the future, it is anticipated that more postsecondary vocational technical schools will be established in Nebraska, as provided by State Statutes 79-1445.12 through 79-1445.33.¹ An increase in the number of vocational technical courses being offered is also anticipated. A need for realistic, uniform approval standards for vocational courses has evolved from this expansion.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

It is the purpose of this study to formulate and validate standards which may be used for approving Nebraska's postsecondary vocational technical schools.

¹Nebraska School Laws 1967-1968 (Lincoln, Nebraska: Stephenson School Supply Company, 1968), pp. 317-22.

Particular attention will be given to:

1. those standards which encourage attainment of a maximum level of educational quality,
2. those standards which assure compliance with mandates enacted by the Nebraska Legislature,
3. those standards which focus attention upon recommendations by the National and State Advisory Committees for Vocational Education, and
4. those standards which assure compliance with minimums set by federal legislation.

Certain other approval standards which apply to providing educational opportunity and maximizing resources will also be evaluated for possible recommendation to the State Board for Vocational Education.

Need for Study

The amount of learning which takes place in postsecondary vocational technical schools in Nebraska is dependent upon the educational quality of their instructional programs. One method of achieving and maintaining educational quality at a maximum level is through a system of approval, using realistic standards. It is important to involve the combined efforts of the local school and leadership at the state level in order to attain the highest possible educational quality. It is also recognized that the amount of funds being spent for postsecondary vocational technical education demands that educational quality reach the highest level possible.

Because of a dynamic, changing society, it is necessary that the process of improving educational quality be a continuous one, governed by the most current standards available, in order to establish

an educational identity for postsecondary vocational technical education.

There is an immediate need for research on this topic so that realistic standards of educational quality may be researched, validated, and submitted to the Nebraska State Board of Education for its consideration in formulating the basis whereby quality education is assured and legislative mandates fulfilled.

Particular attention will be given to the following state statutes as responsibilities have been assigned the State Board of Vocational Education by law without accompanying standards for determining compliance:

79.1445.27 -- approval of courses selected by the local governing boards

79.1445.28 -- determines requirements for eligibility for student admission and established the rate or rates of tuition to be paid

79.1445.31 -- determines eligibility of area schools to share in state and federal funds

79.1610 and
79.1611 -- provide for inspection and recommend accreditation of junior college occupational courses that meet the standards and regulations determined²

The following recommendation, made by the Panel of Consultants appointed by President Kennedy, suggests state action in establishing approval standards:

²Ibid.

An evaluation committee of competent authorities should report the strengths and weaknesses of the vocational training program. To make this possible it is necessary that:

1. Criteria be developed for the evaluation of vocational education services in a local community.
2. Records be kept of enrollments, dropouts, completions, placements, and subsequent success of students.
3. A competent person with an adequate staff be assigned the specific responsibility for the evaluation procedure in local, state, and federal vocational education agencies.³

Scope and Delimitations

The investigation was limited to those standards which affect the educational quality of postsecondary vocational technical programs under the jurisdiction of state departments of education.

Basic Assumptions

In reviewing the literature on this problem, it was found that criteria for assuring quality education for postsecondary vocational technical schools were referred to both as approval standards and as accreditation standards. Accreditation agencies, established for accrediting the schools on a regional basis, used the term "accreditation standard" while the state agencies, whose purpose it is

³United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Education for a Changing World of Work, A Report of the Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 222.

to assure educational quality, used the term "approval standard." For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the two terms are synonymous. The basic difference would lie in the function of the agency using the term.

Definition of Terms

Secondary. In this study the term "secondary" shall be interpreted as that educational level including grades ten through twelve.

Postsecondary. "Postsecondary" programs are those provided for persons who have completed or have left high school, who are over 16 years of age, and who attend on a full-time basis. Quite often, postsecondary education is considered to be comparable to the thirteenth and fourteenth years of instruction.

Vocational education. "Vocational education" is that education designed to develop individual knowledges, skills, abilities, attitudes, and competencies needed by a worker to enter and/or advance in gainful employment.

Technical education. "Technical education" is that segment of vocational education, usually offered at the postsecondary level, which consists of those specialized educational courses which emphasize the mathematical, scientific, organizational, or managerial competencies. A technician (one so trained) works in the area between that of the skilled person and the professional person.

Vocational technical education. "Vocational technical education" is a composite term, involving both vocational and technical

education, not necessarily intended to be separate and distinct. This term designates an educational level encompassing the spectrum of skills contributing to occupational competency from the skilled worker to the technician.

Evaluation. "Evaluation" is the process of determining educational values for the purpose of assessing compliance of purpose and educational excellence of educational agencies and institutions.

Accreditation. "Accreditation" is the process of designating recognition to institutions for meeting prescribed standards or accepted criteria of quality.

Approval. "Approval" is the process used by a designated state agency to certify legally that an institution meets minimum educational standards.

Standard. A "standard" is a stipulated requirement of educational practice which must be met by an institution for approval or certification.

Evaluative criteria.* The term "evaluative criteria" refers to indicators or measures of educational quality in the process of evaluating institutions. These are tools for assessing educational quality and are commonly used as a series of specific statements.

Accreditation standard.* "Accreditation standard" is a term frequently used by regional accrediting associations when referring

*These terms have a close similarity in meaning and function and are commonly used interchangeably in evaluation of educational institutions.

to levels of educational quality used in the process of accrediting educational institutions.

Background for the Study

Public postsecondary vocational technical education in Nebraska prior to 1965 was centered in one institution, the Nebraska Vocational Technical School at Milford, Nebraska. This is a state school, administered by the Division of Vocational Education, State Department of Education, under the State Board of Vocational Education.

Enrollment slowly increased following the school's establishment in 1941. New courses were added from time to time; outdated facilities were replaced and modern equipment added as funds were made available by the Legislature. By the early 1960's, the national technological explosion was being reflected in Nebraska. Students were becoming aware of occupational opportunities in skilled technological areas and were looking to the school for their education. Waiting lists swelled; some students were delayed as much as two years from the time of initial application until entry into training.

It became apparent that one state vocational school was inadequate to meet the needs for skilled technicians and to serve all students who desired vocational training. The Nebraska Legislative Council Committee Report No. 139,⁴ in 1964, identified a need for

⁴James T. Horner, "Report on the Need for Vocational Technical Schools in Nebraska," Nebraska Legislative Council Committee Report No. 139 (Lincoln, Nebraska: Legislative Council Committee on Vocational Technical Education, 1964), p. 54.

more vocational education programs in Nebraska at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

On August 7, 1965, LB 581 and LB 482 were passed by the seventy-sixth session of the Nebraska Legislature and became known as State Statutes 79.1445.12 through 79.1445.33.⁵ These statutes provided for the combining of counties into areas for the purpose of establishing public postsecondary schools for vocational technical education. Subsequent state laws have further expanded public postsecondary vocational technical education. A second state vocational technical school was established at Sidney, Nebraska, in 1965, by State Statutes 79.1445.01 through 79.1445.11.⁶

The seventy-seventh session of the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 490 which amended state statutes on the formation of junior college districts, provided state financial assistance, and set standard tuition rates. The junior colleges were primarily engaged in public postsecondary vocational education in a limited way. The new legislation was expected to expand the vocational technical educational opportunities.

State schools, area schools, and junior colleges all qualify to share in state and federal funds for support of vocational technical education. The increase of participating institutions without a corresponding increase of funds caused an inadequate amount of money

⁵Nebraska School Laws 1967-1968, op. cit., pp. 317-22.

⁶Ibid., pp. 315-17.

to be available to meet all needs. In anticipation of this situation, the State Board of Vocational Education established a priority for using the money available for this purpose.⁷ First priority was assigned to state operated vocational technical schools; second priority, to established programs of vocational and technical education, operated through local boards of education; third priority, to area vocational technical schools operated through local or area boards of education; fourth priority, to approval of individual applications on an individual merit.

Stipulations contained in the Vocational Education Act of 1968 (PL 90-576)⁸ have made it impossible to follow the previously established State Board of Education priorities. A new basis was provided for administering vocational education in Nebraska under the new act by the Nebraska State Plan for Vocational Education.⁹

It is expected that additional institutions will be established for offering postsecondary vocational technical education. It is also expected that increased state and federal funds will be made available for financing these schools. There is a vital need for coordinating the development of new courses since an over-saturation may develop

⁷ See Appendix A for a copy of priority pattern.

⁸ Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 (PL 90-576), 90th Congress H.R. 18366, October 16, 1968 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 12.

⁹ "The Nebraska State Plan for Vocational Education" (Lincoln, Nebraska: State Division of Vocational Education, State Department of Education, October, 1969), Sec. 3.2. (Mimeographed.)

in some instructional areas while many other areas may be left unserved. Approval standards will assist in assuring a standardized quality of education, equitable policy, and non-restrictive facilities.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, the investigator establishes the need for the study and correlates the factors which have developed to date, causing the need. The parameters and limitations are drawn and explained. Specific terms which apply to the study are presented with an explanation of their implications to the study.

In Chapter II, a review of related studies is presented; these studies have been conducted concerning the evaluation and development of approval standards.

Chapter III presents the design of the study in terms of the basic phases which make up the study. The procedures for selecting the sample and for collecting the data are explained together with the development of the questionnaire. The statistical procedures used are identified and their functions explained.

Chapter IV presents the data concerning the characteristics of the sample. The responses have been classified by group and have been totaled for each standard upon which a reaction was solicited. Characteristics for each group were clearly discernible. The reaction of the jury of experts, after weighing the findings of the study in terms of direct application to the administration of postsecondary vocational technical programs in Nebraska, is also presented.

In Chapter V, the investigator summarizes the study and states conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A continuous effort has been made for almost a century to identify quality education through evaluation. During this time the basic process of evaluation has undergone considerable change.

The literature reviewed on the subject of approval standards dealt largely with evaluation. The fundamentals of evaluation are twofold: first, determining the characteristics of desirable education; and, second, measuring those characteristics according to stated goals and objectives.

The literature revealed that evaluation has been utilized by a variety of agencies, for a variety of purposes, employing a variety of terminology. For example, when the rating or evaluating of a school was performed by an accrediting agency, its criteria were called "accreditation standards." If, however, the evaluation was conducted by a state department of education in order to measure a school's effectiveness according to established minimal requirements, the criteria used were called "approval standards." These variances in terminology were considered a matter of semantics rather than an indication of basic differences. Often these terms were used synonymously. Therefore, the references chosen for review in this study included material about accreditation, evaluation, and standards alike for they provide effective parallels for discussion.

Because postsecondary instruction does not have the depth of evaluative development of secondary education, much of the literature necessarily concerned this latter level.

Historical Background

Initially, colleges and universities obtained their students from graduates of their own preparatory departments or through the administration of entrance examinations. As Wright pointed out, however:

With the spread of the public high school and the increase in numbers of pupils wanting a college education, colleges were besieged by applicants who were graduates of these high schools, but who lacked some of the traditional subjects considered necessary for college entrance. At the same time, colleges were interested in ways of selecting and transferring young people from secondary school to college.¹

Since the University of Michigan did not have a preparatory department of its own, in 1871 it took what are now considered to be the first steps toward accreditation of secondary schools. It inspected the accomplishments of interested high schools in the state and awarded four of them what amounted to accreditation. This meant that for the ensuing year the university would accept graduates of these four institutions as students qualified to enroll in the university without entrance examinations.

¹Grace S. Wright, State Accreditation of High Schools, Practices, and Standards of State Agencies, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Bulletin No. 5 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 6.

In 1873, according to Henderson, the University of Indiana recommended that the Indiana State Board of Education adopt a plan similar to the one developed by Michigan for accrediting high schools; thus, Indiana became the first state in which the accreditation of high schools was made a responsibility of the State Board of Education. As the number of high schools increased and as the influence of state departments of education became more powerful, other states adopted this practice.²

Groups of colleges in various regions began to organize by 1885 for the purpose of standardizing college entrance requirements. Secondary schools were later drawn into membership in the college associations. Once the College Entrance Examination Board was established in 1901, the college associations turned to the task of raising educational standards. The primary purpose of accreditation gradually changed from standardization for college entrance to providing assurance that schools were meeting minimum educational standards.

How Standards Were Derived

The prevailing influence of educational accreditation entered another phase in 1933 with the formation of the Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards which later evolved into the National Study of Secondary School Evaluation. The following excerpts are from the

²Joseph L. Henderson, "Admission to College by Certificate" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York City, 1912), p. 6.