

*Journal of the American Association of
Teacher Educators in Agriculture
Volume 7, Number 2, pp.27-33
DOI: 10.5032/jaatea.1966.02027*

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"FRONTIERS IN VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION"*

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It is a pleasure and privilege for me to have this opportunity of speaking to you who are leaders in the United States in the producing of teachers for the vocational fields of business and office education, trade and industrial education, technical education, agricultural education, distributive education, home economics education and related areas.

You have done much for the young people of this country with your programs. I feel a kinship with you. Some of the best friends I have enjoyed and worked with have been in vocational education. Some of

*Presented at Special Convocation Council on Vocational Teacher Education
December 6, 1966.

the professors who have helped me most when I was a student were in vocational education. I will always be grateful to Rolland M. Stewart of Cornell and Roy Roberts of Arkansas.

Through the years I have been in teacher education and college and university administration, I have known a great many workers in vocational education; such as, Milo Peterson of Minnesota and Obed Snowden of Mississippi State.

In thinking about vocational education I am often reminded of certain passages from David Snedden which it was absolutely necessary for me to be reminded of in order to survive a graduate course in Philosophy of Vocational Education, taught by T.H. Eaton at Cornell many years ago.

The passages included:¹

In some form or other, vocational education is older than liberal education, for the simple reason that men have always had to have occupations involving more or less skill, by which they could earn a livelihood...

In vocational education the choice of methods and materials is primarily determined by the necessities of some of the numerous callings or groups of callings, into which the workers of the world have divided themselves. That vocational education which is specialized to the preparation of lawyers, physicians, and teachers, we call professional; that which is designed to train the bookkeeper, clerk, stenographer, or commercial traveler, including business leadership, we call commercial; that which is organized with reference to the needs of the brick-layer, the machinist, the shoemaker, the metal-worker, the factory hand, and the higher manufacturing pursuits, we call industrial education; that which conveys skill and knowledge looking to the tillage of the soil and the management of domestic animals, we call agricultural; and that which teaches the girls dressmaking, cooking, and the management of the home, we call education in the household arts...

The apprenticeship system, as inherited by certain of the great vocations of the Middle Ages, was undoubtedly the most perfect system of vocational education the world has ever seen...

...it is obvious that other agencies than schools have long been responsible for vocational education. The home

¹ Snedden, The Problem of Vocational Education (1910) p. 8-13

was the first great instrumentality to this end...Society has always recognized the very great necessity of some form of vocational education.

We may sum up by saying that the education whose controlling motive in the choice of means and methods is to prepare for productive efficiency is vocational; that vocational education, more or less unorganized and resting largely on native instincts and capacity, has always existed; that it tends to be organized under school conditions only where special demands or necessities exist; and that from the standpoint of social necessity, vocational education given by some agency is indispensable.

It must be acknowledged that there is abroad in all civilized countries a growing conviction that vocational education should be better organized and more efficient...

There can be little doubt that, in the process of social evolution, the time has arrived when vocational, as well as liberal education must be conferred, so far as the majority of people are concerned, by institutions especially devoted to this end. But these institutions must be schools...They must be specially organized for the purpose of this education, and they must select their courses and methods and teaching staff with this end in view. In other words, the period when vocational education must, of necessity, be carried on under school conditions has arrived, so far as the majority of callings are concerned, as it arrived decades ago in the matter of professional education, which is only one division of vocational education.

"Mr. Snedden", as Professor Eaton liked to call him, said these things in 1910. He said a lot more on his little book that I believe to be a classic for those of us who are struggling today with the problem of trying to encourage and bring about the improvement of vocational and technical education for our times.

Those of us who are especially interested in the pre-service and in-service education of teachers for vocational education in the fields represented here today can find statements from quite some time back² which with remarkable clarity seem to describe the tasks we must accomplish if we are to provide the teachers needed for the vocational education programs of our times.

I would predict that you somehow will find it easier to agree with a great many things that are quoted from the literature of fifty years ago about vocational education than with many things that are being

² See Secondary Education in Country and Village by E.N. Ferriss (1927) Also look at Educational and Vocational Guidance by W.M. Proctor (1925) And by all means see Education for All American Youth (1944 Educ. Pol. Comm. Statement)

said today. Maybe that is because the ideas which tend to remain in the literature are the best ideas and we tend to quit remembering such false ideas as, for example, that Vocational Agriculture is limited to keeping boys on the farm.

It may also be that we are up against certain affective factors, motivational trends or cultural problems of our times which make the developing and carrying out of effective vocational programs most difficult.

When I asked a professor of vocational education in a midwestern land-grant university to help me list symptoms of some of these problems or "frontiers" we are struggling with in vocational education at present, he and four colleagues offered me a list from which I selected the items below:

1. Vocational educators have made little or no attempt to relate themselves or their program to the general field of education. (Vocational educators have tended to isolate and insulate themselves from the general field of education.)
2. Undergraduate students in vocational education need more exposure, familiarization, and sophistication in the area of research.
3. Teacher education programs are not in gear to cope with changes in vocational program (e.g., home economics now in a two track program including gainful employment, yet many home economics teacher education programs remain "home oriented").
4. Large numbers of teachers are needed in vocational education. The gap between supply and demand is widening rapidly.
5. The new look in vocational education involving related disciplines of agriculture and distributive education, home economics and trade and industrial education, etc. -- the "occupational mix" requires a new kind of teacher to be prepared by the teacher education institutions.
6. Lack of communication about research. Teachers in the field have little opportunity to know what is being studied and learned. As a result, little use can be made of the obtained results.
7. There is serious question that some vocational teacher educators are not aware of current developments in research.
8. There is some question about the up-to-dateness of some vocational teacher education programs.
9. Vocational education is too compartmentalized. Teachers are specialists in their own area but are completely unaware of the philosophies, objectives, operational patterns, etc., of the

other areas, i.e., agriculture, distributive, home economics, etc. (Suggestion: A team teaching approach might be used in the preparation of teachers. In such an arrangement, one teacher educator could be used from each of the vocational education areas; thus the student would develop and awareness of the other areas.)

10. The new vocational education teacher of tomorrow must play a different role in the classroom. We must provide him with materials prepared by experts, electronic equipment for presentation of TV teaching materials, tapes, slides, etc. As a result, the new vocational education teacher will be an organizer, counselor, programmer, coordinator of materials and devices.
11. Too many states depend on a few other states for the development of teaching materials.

If these symptoms are general around the United States, they indicate that we have a busy period coming up. As I reflect on the list of symptoms above, I am inclined to worry about the immediate future of vocational education in this country.

We are producing a tremendous number of young people who emerge from high school with little or no work experience. Such young people have a hard time being motivated toward vocational education because up to the point of high school graduation, they have not been culturally useful because of lack of work experience. This isn't their fault. They just haven't had the opportunity to work. Very few of our young people are afforded the opportunity before graduating from high school to work. This tends to create a climate in high school and in college that is invidious to vocational education because vocational education and work go together in any culture.

We are trying to compete in our vocational programs with the academic junior college programs and four year liberal arts programs for the same kind of student. We must learn to serve the people who have needs as well as the people we need to obtain status, academic or otherwise, for our programs.

Sometimes I wish the Dictionary of Occupational Titles had not been published. Or rather, I wish we had not come up with the categorical classification of titles of jobs below and above O.O that we have. Nevertheless, we have this system, a vocational caste system, and we must go ahead and prepare teachers anyway. Fortunately, in the minds of a great many people, there is a growing realization that there must be dignity attached to any job that is necessary in a self-supporting human culture. Our record hasn't been as good in this respect in the last 100 years or even the last 50 years as I hope it will be in the future.

I would suggest, as we try to meet the heavy need for vocational teachers in the next few years, three emphases. These emphases, as far as I am concerned, are reflected in the early and classic literature about vocational education and the teacher preparation you are concerned with. They are also reflected in the kinds of federal programs which continue to be supported by Congress, by the interests of state legislatures, and some foundations. You might say these are currently the three R's we should look to in vocational teacher education.

1. Rehabilitation. We are going to need very much to prepare teachers who can help various kinds of persons to be restored to economic self sufficiency through vocational education.

This emphasis will be a continuing one as long as there is vocational teacher education within a human culture on this planet. We will have to attack this problem more directly through the programs we now have, the ones represented here, or there will continue to be an annual outpouring of "new programs" from the U.S.O.E., from Congress, from the Rafferty's and Parson's Colleges of Public and Higher Education that would dazzle Alexander the Great.

We must deal with, and be glad to serve, in vocational education, the physically handicapped, the emotionally ill, the culturally deprived, the mentally retarded, the convicted, and the paroled or released, and the poorly motivated.

We may have been most eager to serve during the last 50 years those who needed us least. Fortunately, there is a growing sophistication about this. We are realizing that this is not entirely a reflection of our Christian conscience. There is also involved a positive effect on the GNP and on the health of our culture.

2. Retraining. We must prepare teachers who can retrain people and themselves constantly, year in and year out, without losing their edge.

This emphasis is called for partly by the technological changes, and pressure brought about by these changes, and by the changes in human values and human mobility of our times. This retraining emphasis is not as tough to engage in as some people make it sound, but people of all ages must be encouraged to continue to be useful, to contribute culturally in the total sense, if we are to be vocationally healthy from now on. Computers should not cause unemployment in our times anymore than should the shift from steam to diesel engines. People can take these changes in stride if we can produce teachers who will help them to do so.

People who reach a change from one life role to another will need vocational education in our public schools, special schools, libraries, community colleges and four year colleges and universities to be able to seek new roles of usefulness. This is true

not only of people who have been unsuccessful on a job, or have seen the job shot out from under them by changing technology. It will be true also for people who retire early after military experience, women who have raised a family and people who just honestly want to change jobs.

3. Research. I mention this emphasis as a re-emphasis only. Most of you know that a good agriculture teacher, home economics or business teacher engages in research constantly in developing his curriculum. And most of you will agree, that a vocational teacher education program, either pre-service or in-service, without research orientation, is like an unguided missile. But we all need to re-emphasize research in vocational teacher education. We particularly need in-service conferences, institutes, special courses, grants, and other encouragement for our vocational teachers to be research minded. Perhaps we have allowed ourselves to think research is too difficult for just any teacher to engage in. Or we may have allowed the science people to influence us to think that the research done by a Vocational Agriculture teacher is not really research. Or we may have thought that research, adequate for all of us, could be done in thirty or forty anointed, well financed universities who would then get the word out to the rest of us. This won't do. Research is an all hands job in vocational education, and in the preparation of the teachers for our programs.

In my reading and thinking for this paper, I haven't come up with any really new concepts in vocational teacher education. I don't think we need new curriculum wine in our old program bottles. Nor do we need to change drastically these existing programs in vocational teacher education which you represent. We need, instead, to hunker down and perhaps broaden and extend our service areas. There is a growing realization that vocational education is the most perplexing field of education at this time, but, at the same time, there is a growing willingness to support vocational education in every state.

I am highly confident the programs you represent, and the administrations and faculties of your institutions will be able, by a day-to-day devotion to human needs, to do this job extremely well.

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* Note: The Entire Text and Bibliography of Dr. King's Address were not included because of space limitations.