

CERTIFICATION FOR TEACHERS AND VOCATIONAL EVALUATION SPECIALISTS

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ABSTRACT: The question of what type of certification vocational evaluation specialists need to have in order to work in secondary schools is a problem that is currently facing the fields of special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation. A quick review of the last twenty years must be made in order to understand how the dilemma was created, and through this historical perspective, how it might be resolved.

The decade of the sixties brought into full force the Civil Rights Movement. Emotions stemming from the Vietnam conflict combined with the Civil Rights Movement brought about a new awareness of the individual differences that exist in society and of how these differences contribute in their own unique way to make the United States function as it does. The theme that emerged during the sixties was relevancy. What was being taught, the work being done, and the programs being offered had to be relevant. As a result of this relevancy theme, questions about serving special population groups were asked. These questions were: How are we serving the handicapped and disadvantaged? What are their rights when it comes to educational planning and program offerings?

The course of the decade of the 1970's was charted as a result of the experiences of the 1960's. The time was right for specific pieces of legislation -- Public Law 93-112 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973); Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975); Public Law 94-482 (Educational Amendments of 1976); Public Law 95-93 (Youth Employment and Development Projects Act of 1977) -- that would provide the mechanisms through which handicapped and disadvantaged persons could be served and trained. Because of these new social and educational commitments, the 1970's became known as the "total programming decade."

This "total programming decade" brought to the field of education terms like mainstreaming, least restrictive environment, deinstitutionalization, and normalization. All of these terms have as a focus the delivery of services to special population groups.

By process of definition, the 1980's have to be declared the "Implementation Decade." All of the pieces of legislation, theories, and plans must be put in place in order for the targeted groups to be served.

The movement of equality of opportunity requires that human service agencies cooperate together as they develop their continuum of services. Three of the most involved fields in providing education and service to handicapped and disadvantaged individuals are special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation. These three fields became intertwined with each other as a result of philosophical changes in service to and for handicapped and disadvantaged individuals and federal legislation.

Special education through P.L. 94-142 started developing and implementing Individual Educational Plans (IEP's). These IEP's are very prescriptive and clearly outline where the student should be progressing on the education continuum. A critical part of the IEP is a strategy for training the individual for a post high school experience, be it work or further training. For many handicapped students, vocational training was called for, and as a result, special education started becoming very involved in vocational training with only limited experience upon which to call.

In the meantime, vocational education via P.L. 94-482 was setting aside 30% of its federal dollars to serve the handicapped (10%) and disadvantaged (20%). Vocational education personnel were receiving handicapped students into their programs, both mainstreamed and separate programs. These vocational instructors had little or no training in working with special needs youth. Many of the placements were inappropriate or incorrect. As a result, there was confusion and frustration by instructors and students as each struggled to find out how they could survive in their educational settings. Initially it was a very difficult time for all.

Vocational rehabilitation was receiving much attention through P.L. 93-112 and the various provisions within the law, such as section 504. This section makes it illegal to discriminate against the hiring of or admission into a vocational education program

of qualified individuals on the basis of their handicapping condition.

What was occurring was that a number of educational and societal changes were being made independent of each other, but as time went by, they slowly started to intertwine with each other in terms of a continuum of services. This intertwining brought about a number of personnel training needs in all three of the fields, but especially in special and vocational education.

The training needs for special education were as follows:

1. Development of appropriate IEP vocational components.
2. Vocational assessment of student interests, abilities, and aptitudes.
3. Proper placement of handicapped students in vocational settings.
4. Placement of students into jobs in the community.
5. Selection of appropriate vocational instructional materials.

The training needs for vocational education were as follows:

1. Working with disadvantaged and handicapped students.
2. Vocational assessment of student interests, abilities, and aptitudes.
3. Proper placement of handicapped and disadvantaged students in vocational settings.
4. Placement of students into jobs in the community.
5. Selection of appropriate vocational instructional materials.

The training needs for vocational rehabilitation were as follows:

1. Integrating into the educational mold.
2. Translating vocational assessment results into educational placements.
3. Developing a role for vocational evaluation in school settings.

4. Utilizing job laboratories for student placement.
5. Understanding the continuum of services for handicapped students.

These three lists resulted in a scramble to train the involved personnel in order to better meet the needs of the students they were serving. This scramble resulted in a lot of personnel development programs being developed, but, as they were being developed and implemented, "turfism" started rearing its ugly head. This turfism was translated into a series of skirmishes over where students could be counted for funding purposes. The federal programs were intended to supplement the local school districts efforts, not supplant them. The students then became pawns in a head-hunting game by various programs. Each program wanted to count the students as theirs, so they could get additional federal funds. Once the initial implementation phase of the new pieces of legislation (P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 94-482) passed, and the trouble spots in terms of funding were ironed out, then cooperative agreements were drawn up by the local districts between special and vocational education. These cooperative agreements illustrated funding patterns, responsibility of personnel, and administrative functions.

There still remained some philosophical issues that had to be worked out between the two fields in regard to methods of delivery of services. Special education felt it could best offer vocational training within the structure in which it operated. Vocational education felt since it was in the business of training people for work it could best train these students. Then on the other hand, vocational education wasn't sure that it was its job to train handicapped students. Once the dust settled, mutual respect for each other's professional expertise was developed, and a team approach was developed to serve these students. Vocational teachers started serving

on IEP Child Study Teams, assisted in making student placement, and offered skill training. Special education assisted vocational teachers as resources for instructional techniques, placement, transfer of academic skills to vocational settings, and the development of good employee skills.

At this point, turfism of a higher level again surfaced -- this time concerning teaching credentials. Vocational teachers were teaching handicapped students and they were not certified special education teachers. Special education teachers were teaching vocational subjects, and they were not certified vocational teachers.

Part of this problem again rested with the manner of funding these programs. The special education dollars required a certified special education teacher, if the dollars were going to flow into the local district. This same situation held true for the vocational dollars. There had to be a certified vocational instructor involved in the instruction.

A number of states (examples: Nebraska, Washington, Illinois, Idaho, Missouri) sought to remedy this situation through cross-training and secondary endorsements. They created local district teams composed of special and vocational educators. These teams were trained in joint programming utilizing the expertise from the two fields to develop mutually beneficial educational strategies. This cross-training did not solve the credential problems, but it gave credibility to what the instructors from the two fields were doing.

Another strategy for solving the credential problem was to offer a secondary or add-on endorsement for special and vocational teachers. The special and vocational teachers would take a series of basic courses in the area of vocational training for handicapped individuals. Then, if they were from special education, they would take additional vocational training. For the vocational teachers the opposite was true; they took

additional special education course work.

This secondary endorsement training did not make them dual certified, but it did endorse them to work in parts of each other's program. Progress was being made in the offering of vocational training for special populations, but much remained to be done, both in terms of curriculum and personnel.

With any new movement there are stages that it goes through and vocational training for handicapped individuals was no exception. The initial phase of placing students in vocational programs was over. Demands were being made on teachers to make sure the placement met the students' needs, were proper, and were leading to gainful employment. These demands brought about a tremendous interest and growth in vocational evaluation on the secondary school level. The teachers and counselors were in desperate need of information about the needs, interests, and aptitudes of their students. Generally they had paper and pencil aptitude surveys and the results of an occasional manipulative device.

Outside the field of education, vocational rehabilitation was developing and refining vocational evaluation to an even higher level of sophistication, but these services and data were not readily available to school systems. To meet their needs, school systems started conducting vocational evaluations with the resources they had, both in terms of personnel and devices.

The school personnel were trained to conduct vocational evaluations by taking a graduate course in vocational evaluation, taking training sessions offered by sellers of vocational evaluation devices, or attending a training session offered by an institution of higher learning; such as the University of Wisconsin-Stout's training, sessions offered by the Research and Training Center #22. All three of these methods served to orientate school personnel to vocational evaluation, but in no way did it make them vocational evaluators. The problem of how and where

to secure well trained vocational evaluators for schools was created and currently the three fields are working to resolve this problem in some logical manner.

Possible Solutions

The following discussion will set forth a number of possible solutions to this dilemma of how to secure the "appropriately" certificated personnel to conduct vocational evaluations. The solutions are meant only for discussion, as none of them are to be perceived as total solutions but only as solutions that are currently being tried.

Grow Your Own

This solution is the most commonly used. A district selects a certified teacher that is interested in vocational evaluation and sends the individual through a series of short term training programs. The training is taken where it can be best secured based upon financial resources. This method results in a certified teacher, which is critical to the district when they undergo accreditation, and a person that is interested in vocational education. This method works if the interest of the selected teacher is strong enough to do a lot of personal study and training to develop the competency required of a vocational evaluator. This solution to the problem has worked well in a number of cases, but it all depends on how much the teacher cares.

Make Me A Teacher

Another strategy that has been employed has been to hire a vocational evaluator and then require them to become certified as a teacher. This method has made mixed results. For example, a vocational evaluator was hired with the stipulation that she obtain teacher certification within three years. Using a local college's

course catalog, she discovered that her easiest way to be a teacher was to take courses in history. She completed the requirements and is now a certified history teacher doing vocational evaluation full time. This appears to be unfair to the vocational evaluator, a professional in her own right and in the field of history education, because she doesn't want to have anything to do with history at all even though she is a certified history teacher.

Developing Respect

One solution would be to get educational agencies and school districts to recognize vocational evaluators as professionals in their own right. They are recognized as such by the field of vocational rehabilitation, why not education? Vocational evaluators would be working parallel to teachers and counselors in terms of evaluations and referrals. A precedent for inclusion of vocational evaluators within school settings, not as certified teachers, but as certified evaluators, comes from speech pathologists. Many of these individuals are certified pathologists, but not teachers. They practice their profession of assisting students without the need for being a certified teacher.

The source of certification for vocational evaluators could come from the Commission for the Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluators (CCWAVES). This commission has established a rigid set of criteria and testing in order for vocational evaluators to be certified. The certification is for a five (5) year period and when renewal is needed, record of continued education (CEU's) and other professional improvement must be supplied. This certification much parallels the teacher certification process.

State Certification

State Departments of Education are generally the certification officers

for teachers. These departments and the rules under which they operate are the entities that must be dealt with. School officials and vocational rehabilitation professionals should talk with these state officials in order for all individuals to understand the intricacies of certification. Unless this critical step is taken, teachers will continue to conduct vocational evaluations with limited expertise, and vocational evaluators will be excluded due to a lack of teaching credentials. A joint agreement can be developed between the involved fields to resolve the problem or at least to set up a plan where the problem can be worked through.

National Position

A critical question must be asked at this point. Is there a need for certified vocational evaluators in school settings? Schools are currently getting along with the level of trained personnel that they have, whether or not they are adequately prepared as viewed by the rehabilitation field. So what is the concern? The people most concerned about the certification of vocational evaluators are those working in the area of vocational evaluation, both in education and rehabilitation. Unless national associations such as the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Division on Career Development (DCD), Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), American Vocational Association (AVA), and the National Association of Vocational Education Special Needs Personnel (NAVESNP) join together to develop some joint positions on personnel, no progress is going to be made. The afore-mentioned associations have positions on vocational evaluation, but they have not addressed to any great depth personnel requirements. Thus, by addressing this concern and then advertising it, proper training can be specified. Then school districts

will have an idea of what kind of training their vocational evaluators should have.

A benefit of cooperative activity between these associations would be the development of a continuum of vocational evaluation services so that the various service providers would understand how each fits into the model and what they are to do. This would greatly facilitate the referral process for handicapped individuals from seventh grade through adulthood.

Conclusion

This discussion has traced the personnel problems created as a result of the implementation of federal legislation providing access to training and employment for handicapped individuals. Using this information, national associations involved with vocational evaluation must join together to develop personnel preparation recommendations in order to have well trained vocational evaluators conducting vocational evaluations. If they do not, there will never be any specific training outlined for vocational evaluators in educational settings and the certification problem will be perpetuated. If they do, vocational evaluators will have the opportunity to acquire the competencies necessary to conduct vocational evaluations that will facilitate better placement and service to handicapped individuals.

REFERENCES

- U.S., Public Law 93-112 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973).
- U.S., Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975).
- U.S., Public Law 94-482 (Educational Amendments of 1976).
- U.S., Public Law 95-93 (Youth Employment and Development Projects Act of 1977).

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