

Vocational Education

Vocational Education - training designed to advance individuals' general proficiency, especially in relation to their present or future occupations. The term does not normally include training for the professions.

Development

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the apprenticeship system and the home were the principal sources of vocational education. Since then society has been forced by the decline of handwork and the specialization of occupational functions to develop institutions of vocational education. Manual training, involving general instruction in the use of hand tools, developed initially in Scandinavia (c.1866) in response to the doctrines of Friedrich Froebel and Johann Pestalozzi. It became popular in the elementary schools of the United States after 1880. While the immediate object of this training was not vocational, it developed gradually into extended courses in industrial training. Courses in bookkeeping, stenography, and allied commercial work in both public and private institutions were other early forms of vocational education.

Among the early private trade schools were Cooper Union (1859) and Pratt Institute (1887). Hampton Institute (1868) and Tuskegee Institute (1881) were pioneers in industrial, agricultural, and home economics training for African Americans. The agricultural high school (1888) of the Univ. of Minnesota was the first regularly established public vocational secondary school and introduced extensive public instruction in agriculture. Since 1900 the number of public and private vocational schools has greatly increased.

Although the 1862 Morrill Act, which established land-grant colleges, represented the first effort by the federal government to ensure vocational education, nothing further was done until the Smith-Hughes Act (1917), which provided federal financing for industrial, home economics, and agricultural courses. This aid was extended in the George-Deen Act (1936) to include teacher education and training for certain other occupations. Vocational correspondence courses, which were formed in great numbers to meet the growing demand for training, often were poorly designed and without value. These were improved under the informal supervision of the National Home Study Council (1926) working with the Federal Trade Commission.

Advances in the techniques of vocational education were made by the armed services during World War II. The need for technicians was so great that civilian life could not supply them, and special training methods stressing graphic presentation and practical work were used to meet the demand. Further impetus to vocational training resulted from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (popularly, the G. I. Bill of Rights), which allowed World War II veterans to receive tuition and subsistence during extended vocational training. Subsequent bills provided funds for the vocational education of veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars. The Manpower Development Training Act (1962), the Vocational Education Act (1963), the Vocational Education Amendments (1968), and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (1984) have helped to upgrade the nation's workforce and ensure that vocational

training is available for economically or physically challenged young people.

In recent years, corporations and labor organizations have established the majority of new vocational and cultural centers. In addition, many of the public high schools offering vocational training have undergone a variety of changes. Almost all have placed renewed emphasis on a student's meeting general academic standards as well as learning a trade. Many schools have shifted the emphasis of their programs from the traditional construction trades to computers and related technologies, and some schools have moved away from vocational training entirely.

Modern Vocational Education

Large communities frequently have separate public schools devoted to specific occupational fields, and some counties and states sponsor regional vocational training establishments. These public schools work closely with interested industries and trades in establishing curricula and in guidance programs. The cooperative training technique, in which students work part-time in the job for which they are preparing, is a common feature of these schools. Community colleges often provide vocational training courses. Many industries have instituted extensive vocational education programs for their employees, and virtually all trades require apprenticeship and/or on-the-job training.

Theorists in vocational training have emphasized that its aim is to improve the worker's general culture as well as to further his or her technical training. That policy is evident in the academic requirements of public vocational schools and in the work of public continuation and evening schools. Various academic courses are provided so that workers who have not completed the public school requirements may do so while engaged in regular jobs. In some localities attendance at continuation schools is compulsory for those who are of school age. While continuation and evening schools are often primarily vocational, they frequently include general courses that attract older workers.

See also adult education; Cooperative Extension Service; school; and programmed instruction.

Bibliography

See the publications of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education; also F. J. Keller, *The Double-Purpose High School* (1953, repr. 1970); R. N. Evans, *Foundations of Vocational Education* (1971); N. P. Eurich, *Corporate Classrooms* (1985); A. J. Pautler, ed., *Vocational Education in the 1990s* (1990).

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