

Chapter XVII

Federal Funding for Career and Technical Education

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ABSTRACT

Federal funding for Career Technical Education (CTE) programs is critical to the expansion and success of training a skilled workforce to meet the needs of labor markets. The Morrill Act of 1862 was the first federal law to provide support to build agricultural and mechanical colleges and universities. Federal support continued through the decades with Perkins IV being the current legislation with funding guidelines for CTE programs. Today's educational systems are faced with the task of providing rigorous and relevant educational programs with the mission of developing productive citizens capable of competing in a global society. This mission cannot be accomplished without continued federal funding support.

INTRODUCTION

Federal funding legislation for CTE programs dates back to 1862 with the passage of the Morrill Act. Public land was given to each state. The land was sold and the money was placed in an endowment fund to be used to build agricultural and mechanical arts colleges (Lightcap, n.d.). United States presidents and congressmen have continued to support CTE programs. This is evident in the fifteen key pieces of legislation signed

into law during the past one hundred forty-six years. Perkins IV (The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006) is the current federal law guiding the funding of CTE programs:

It is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time

in the history of the world – using computers, e-mail, networks, teleconferencing and dynamic new software. (Friedman, 2005, p. 8)

People are no longer in competition for jobs with their next door neighbors. They are in competition for jobs with people all over the world. Globalization opened the doors for large and small corporations to outsource work to countries for less money than they would pay for local employees to do the same job. America is now faced with training a highly skilled workforce that will be able to economically and intellectually compete for these jobs. Federal funding is a crucial component in meeting corporation's needs for highly trained employees.

This chapter briefly explains the history of federal funding for CTE programs. One hundred forty-six years ago the Morrill Act was signed into law. This Act changed the course of education by shifting the focus from classical education to agricultural and mechanical education and ensured continued financial support for CTE programs from the federal legislation (Lightcap, n.d.). CTE programs cannot remain viable without the federal legislation continuing to provide financial support.

BACKGROUND

The Franciscan Mission Schools in New Mexico were the first effort to create vocational schools in America. Students above the age of nine were taught skills in a variety of trades including carpentry, tailoring, and metalworking. This continued until the schools were destroyed in 1680 during a revolution. Later the Franciscans established more schools in Texas, California, and Florida (McClure, Chrisman, & Mock, 1985).

Benjamin Franklin made an attempt at introducing vocational education to the Pennsylvania society. In his pamphlet *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania* "he urged the

establishment of an academy that would realistically prepare the youth to deal with the problems of making a living" (McClure et al., 1985, p. 17). Opponents of the school felt students must be taught Latin and the classics for an education to be important. Mr. Franklin compromised and formed a Latin school and an English school. Due to lack of support, the English school changed to an elementary school teaching reading and writing (McClure et al., 1985).

Vocational education evolved through the centuries as the need for a skill work force became more evident. The argument arose as to where and how these skills should be taught. In the early 1900s, John Dewey opposed building separate schools for vocational education and the traditional high school education. He warned that separate schools would create two classes in society. The superior class would be made up of the students attending a traditional high school. Dewey's warnings were ignored and separate schools were established (McClure et al., 1985).

Career and Technical Education programs are very different today from the first vocational programs. CTE programs are an integral part of high schools. Programs are stressing the importance of integrating academics into the CTE course to ensure the curriculum offered is rigorous and relevant to the needs of today's work force.

Vocational education programs would not exist without assistance from Congress. Federal legislation is not easily passed. During each session lobbyists work to keep the needs of CTE programs on the agendas of senators and representatives. CTE educators stay in contact with legislators keeping their program needs outlined for their representatives. The world economic climate affects funding at the federal, state and local levels. Federal funding for CTE programs has been important to legislatures for many decades. Educators must work even harder now to keep their representatives informed as to the importance of strong CTE programs to the economy of the United States.

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