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ABSTRACT

This booklet summarizes the 1,560 vocational education program improvement projects conducted during FY 1978-1979 under the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) with respect to location, funding levels, funding recipients, educational levels, problem areas, and outcomes. Projects reported include research, innovative and exemplary programs, and curriculum development activities. Data contained in six tables provide information on (1) state program improvement projects by state; (2) state program improvement projects by legislative section; (3) recipients of project funding; (4) target educational levels; (5) problem areas addressed by projects; and (6) products and outcomes of projects. Appended is a table of number and funding amounts of projects by state and legislative section. The data for this report were compiled from descriptive abstracts provided by state research coordinating units and contained in the ERIC database. (KC)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

A Summary of State-Administered Projects in FY 1978 and 1979

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
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FOREWORD

Provisions were made in the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) for state-administered program improvement projects. During the 1978 and 1979 fiscal years, 1,560 research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development projects were conducted under this legislative provision. Information about these projects have been reported with respect to location, funding levels, funding recipients, educational levels, problem areas, and outcomes. This summary report will be helpful to legislators, federal program administrators, and state agency personnel by providing answers to questions such as:

- o How many projects were conducted and how much money was obligated?
- o How do states compare in the number and kind of projects conducted and the amount of funds obligated?
- o Are projects addressing critical problems and issues?
- o What is the relative emphasis on target audiences and problem areas?
- o What kinds of agencies and organizations are conducting the work?

We are pleased to disseminate this summary of state program improvement projects so that it might be used for program planning and policy development.

We wish to thank the staff members of the state research coordinating units for this cooperation in submitting project descriptions. Ronald D. McCage, Manager, Research and Development Section, Illinois State Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education, Springfield, Illinois; Erma Keyes, Director, Vocational Education Information Network (VEIN), Millersville State College, Millersville, Pennsylvania; and Donald K. Erickson, Director, ERIC Clearinghouse for Handicapped and Gifted Children, Reston, Virginia served on the National Center Clearinghouse panel.

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Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for
Research in Vocational Education

INTRODUCTION

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P.L. 88-210) was the landmark legislation for vocational education program improvement because it contained broad provisions for research, training, experimental, and demonstration or pilot programs. Funding authorized under the legislation was appropriated by Congress and allocated by the Commissioner for institutional capacity building and for such priorities as program evaluation, resource development, vocational guidance and career choice, organization and administration, and new careers. The subsequent Vocational Education Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-576) authorized support of grants for research, training, exemplary programs, and curriculum development. Part of the research and exemplary programs was to be administered at the state level.

An assessment by the Committee for Vocational Education Research and Development (COVERD, 1976) was highly critical of the vocational education research and development program because of its apparent lack of impact due to shifting research priorities, geographic restriction on distribution of R&D funds, lack of coordination between parts, inadequate dissemination and utilization, failure to examine impact, and slow startup. COVERD faulted vocational education R&D for not focusing on the larger philosophical and policy issues during the previous 10-year period. Other studies by Rand and Development Associates raised concerns about other aspects of the R&D program.

The Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) responded to many of the concerns raised about vocational R&D. It provided for Programs of National Significance to be administered at the federal level and for Program Improvement and Support Services to be administered at the state level. The act encouraged consolidation of programs, better management, and accountability. The Rules and Regulations for the act required the state research coordinating units to submit abstracts of contracted program improvement projects to The National Center for Research in Vocational Education and to submit reports and products resulting from the projects within 90 days of completion of the project. The National Center, through its Clearinghouse, publishes abstracts of program improvement projects in Resources in Vocational Education bimonthly and in Current Projects in Vocational Education annually, as well as maintains the information in its files for review and analysis.

This database of state program improvement project descriptions can be helpful to practitioners, researchers, administrators, and policy makers. Analysis of information in the database can provide answers to many program development and policy-making questions.

The first analysis of this database is reported here. It provides summary data about projects conducted in the states and their focus. It provides information about where projects were conducted, by whom, for what purpose, and with what results. This report does not deal with qualitative and programmatic dimensions of state program improvement projects, nor with impact. These dimensions need further investigation which can be facilitated by the database.

METHODOLOGY

The database of state-administered program improvement projects has been compiled from descriptive abstracts provided by state research coordinating units. The abstracts served as the data source for the review and analysis conducted by the Clearinghouse staff. The basic steps taken by the staff are described below:

1. Abstracts were reviewed by Clearinghouse staff to make sure that all bibliographic and funding information was complete. If some information was missing, states were asked to supply it.
2. Lists of projects were compiled and sent to research coordinating unit directors for verification.
3. Key variables were edited and indexed in the ERIC format.
4. Key variables were coded for computer analysis (i.e., state, fiscal year, legislative section number, project beginning and ending dates, amount of funding, recipient institution, legislative and federal priorities addressed, educational level, target population, vocational service area, and products or outcomes).
5. Data were sorted and tabulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).
6. Data were aggregated for display in the six tables in the Findings section.
7. Data in the tables were described and analyzed for conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

The methodology used can be replicated in subsequent years as more data become available.

FINDINGS

The findings reported in this section are based upon data drawn from program improvement project abstracts supplied by state research coordinating units. It is believed that the data is relatively complete (i.e., in excess of 90 percent) because lists of these project abstracts were verified as complete by research coordinating units who administer the program improvement activities. The data listed below were chosen for attention in this report:

1. State program improvement projects by state in Table I.
2. State program improvement projects by legislative section in Table II.
3. Recipients of project funding in Table III.
4. Target educational levels in Table IV.
5. Problem areas addressed by projects in Table V.
6. Products and outcomes of projects in Table VI.

The number and funding amounts of projects are displayed by state and legislative section in Appendix A.

Table I shows the number of vocational education program improvement projects and Federal funds obligated for projects in each of the states and territories under provisions of Sections 131, 132, and 133 of P.L. 94-482 during FY 1978 and 1979.

1. For the two year period, states and territories reported 1,560 program improvement projects for which \$39,205,436 was obligated.
2. The number of program improvement projects ranged from two in New Hampshire to 134 in Illinois; however, only one territory reported a project.
3. Obligations for program improvement during the two years ranged from \$20,125 in New Hampshire to \$4,946,973 in Texas.
4. The average funding for projects was \$25,132, with a range of \$4,882 in North Dakota to \$78,818 in the District of Columbia.
5. Funding level for individual projects ranged from \$366 to \$649,960.

TABLE I
 FY 1978 and FY 1979 STATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
 BY STATE

State or Territory	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Alabama	10	138,701
Alaska	10	83,714
Arizona	31	376,176
Arkansas	19	460,196
California	54	2,767,715
Colorado	14	292,183
Connecticut	26	279,196
Delaware	5	61,977
District of Columbia	4	315,273
Florida	50	1,911,998
Georgia	12	628,278
Hawaii	6	41,910
Idaho	22	207,244
Illinois	134	4,250,485
Indiana	47	1,543,262
Iowa	47	842,121
Kansas	31	317,366
Kentucky	21	430,491
Louisiana	14	318,032
Maine	3	48,374
Maryland	65	787,463
Massachusetts	14	961,228
Michigan	11	865,250
Minnesota	36	824,005
Mississippi	10	622,475
Missouri	20	155,327
Montana	16	195,701
Nebraska	4	54,621
Nevada	8	112,998
New Hampshire	2	20,126
New Jersey	47	827,387
New Mexico	14	518,660
New York	91	3,069,511
North Carolina	7	198,526
North Dakota	29	141,573

TABLE I. continued

State or Territory	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Ohio	79	2,502,339
Oklahoma	8	75,055
Oregon	37	427,573
Pennsylvania	123	2,007,993
Rhode Island	9	62,966
South Carolina	3	66,295
South Dakota	4	253,000
Tennessee	29	717,333
Texas	95	4,946,973
Utah	4	62,896
Vermont	12	104,068
Virginia	54	1,389,483
Washington	31	222,533
West Virginia	52	588,619
Wisconsin	59	847,099
Wyoming	26	167,210
Puerto Rico	1	94,528
TOTALS	1,560	39,205,436

Table II shows the distribution of projects and funds obligated across the program improvement sections (i.e., research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development).

1. Overall program improvement funding was divided among sections approximately equally; however, several states chose to fund projects under only one or two of the three sections (Appendix A).
2. The 516 projects conducted under Section 131 (research) were funded at an average of \$25,507.
3. The 577 projects conducted under Section 132 (innovative and exemplary) were funded at an average of \$23,558.
4. The 467 projects conducted under Section 133 (curriculum development) were funded at an average of \$26,661.

5. The average funding for state projects within each of the sections (Appendix A) was extremely variable --
- research projects ranged from \$481 to \$65,978
 - innovative and exemplary projects ranged from \$3,011 to \$171,691
 - curriculum development projects ranged from \$685 to \$335,662

TABLE II
FY 1978-1979 STATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
BY LEGISLATIVE SECTION

Legislative Section under Subpart 3 P.L. 94-482	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Section 131, Research	516	13,161,524
Section 132, Innovative and Exemplary	577	13,593,187
Section 133, Curriculum Development	467	12,450,725
TOTAL	1,560	39,205,435

Table III shows the recipients of project funding in several categories. All funding amounts by category are rounded. Percentages shown are for the amount of funds, not for projects.

1. Over 86 percent of the funding was for projects conducted by educational agencies.
2. Four-year colleges and universities conducted 33.5 percent of the projects, followed by local educational agencies (28.6 percent), two-year colleges (13.4 percent) and state education agencies (6.1 percent).
3. Non-educational agencies (i.e., research centers, private businesses, and professional associations) conducted projects which were supported with 8.6 percent of the funds.
4. Intermediate education agencies conducted 32 projects which were funded at an average of \$60,281, which was over twice as large as the average size project overall.

Table III
RECIPIENTS OF PROJECT FUNDING

Institution or Agency	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
4-Year College/University	440	13,151,000	33.5
Local Education Agency	477	11,203,000	28.6
2-Year College (Jr. College/ Technical School/Community College)	287	5,248,000	13.4
State Education Agency	92	2,406,000	6.1
Research Center	57	2,206,000	5.6
Intermediate Education Agency	32	1,929,000	4.9
None/Information Not Available	61	1,612,000	4.1
Private Business	36	844,000	2.2
Professional Association	10	314,000	.8
Other	18	291,000	.7
TOTALS	1,560	39,204,000*	100.0

* Actual total is \$39,205,436.00; difference due to rounding.

Table IV provides information on the number of projects and funding directed toward target educational levels or combinations of educational levels.

1. The focus of 44.1 percent of the program improvement projects was upon secondary and postsecondary or postsecondary and adult educational levels.
2. The focus of 38.9 percent of the work was upon less-than-postsecondary education levels (i.e., elementary, elementary and secondary, and secondary).
3. Focus on educational levels was not applicable in 201 (16.9 percent) of the projects.

TABLE IV
TARGET EDUCATION LEVELS

Educational Level	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
Secondary (7-12)	485	10,268,000	26.2
Postsecondary and Adult (13-Adult)	461	10,047,000	25.6
Secondary and Postsecondary (10-14)	260	7,245,000	18.5
Not Applicable	201	6,642,000	16.9
Elementary and Secondary (K-12)	131	4,428,000	11.3
Elementary (K-6)	21	576,000	1.4
TOTALS	1,560	39,206,000*	100.0

*Actual total is \$39,205,436.00; difference due to rounding.

Table V shows the problem areas addressed by the state-administered vocational education program improvement projects funded during FY 1978 and 1979. The "Not Applicable" category is quite large because products such as technical reports and monographs, management and policy information, and consortiums and networks were not directed at such levels.

1. Over 80 percent of the projects addressed problems relevant to federal administrative and legislative priorities.
2. The largest percentage (32.4 percent) was in the area of curriculum (i.e., management, development).
3. A large percentage (16.2 percent) of projects was related to special needs populations (i.e., handicapped, gifted, disadvantaged).
4. Planning, data, and accountability projects accounted for 10.1 percent of the funding.

TABLE V
PROBLEM AREAS ADDRESSED BY PROJECTS

Problem Area	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
Curriculum Management/Curriculum Development Procedures	487	12,687,000	32.4
None/Information Not Available	302	7,156,000	18.2
Special Needs (Handicapped, Gifted, Disadvantaged)	227	6,353,000	16.2
Planning, Data & Accountability	150	4,005,000	10.1
Guidance for Careers/Vocations	98	2,379,000	6.1
Education to Work Transition	57	1,387,000	3.5
Equity/Civil Rights	60	1,358,000	3.5
Other Federal Priority	63	1,370,000	3.5
Administration of State/Local Vocational Education Agencies	33	897,000	2.3
Basic Skills	24	642,000	1.6
Availability/Accessibility to Adults	32	517,000	1.3
Urban/Rural/Youth	27	453,000	1.2
TOTALS	1,560	39,204,000*	100.0

*Actual total is \$39,205,436.00; difference due to rounding.

Table VI shows the nature of products and outcomes of the 1,560 vocational education program improvement projects administered by the states in FY 1978 and 1979.

1. Curriculum and instructional products resulted from 534 or 36.4 percent of the projects.
2. Personnel training was the outcome of 247 or 14.3 percent of the projects.
3. Evaluation and assessment was the outcome or product of 314 projects (12.8 percent).

4. These three categories of products and outcomes promise to impact directly on programs and constitute 63.5 percent of the state-administered program improvement investment.

TABLE VI
PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES OF PROJECTS

Primary Product/Outcome	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
Curriculum and Instructional Products	534	14,281,000	36.4
Personnel Training (Inservice)	247	5,671,000	14.3
Evaluation and Assessment	214	5,024,000	12.8
Technical Reports and Monographs	191	4,662,000	11.9
Program Models and Feasibility Studies	176	3,878,000	9.9
Management and Policy Information	80	2,515,000	6.4
Information Not Available	35	1,133,000	2.9
Personnel Counseling	38	748,000	1.9
Other	1	495,000	1.3
Consortiums and Networks	19	419,000	1.1
Placement	18	435,000	1.1
TOTALS	1,560	39,207,000*	100.0

*Actual total is \$39,205,436.00; difference due to rounding.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions about the state program improvement effort can be drawn from the information collected and organized by the Clearinghouse for FY 1978 and FY 1979.

1. The reporting system is working. Information is flowing from the state research coordinating units to the National Center Clearinghouse on a regular basis. States have assured the Clearinghouse staff that all projects under Sections 131, 132 and 133 have been reported.
2. More funds are being obligated for support services than for program improvement. State program improvement projects funded under Sections 131, 132 and 133 represent \$39,205,436 or 17.5 percent of the total amount allocated to the states for program improvement and support services. It is surmised that the remaining 82.5 percent is being obligated for the support services specified in Sections 134, 135 and 136, and possibly for the administration of the state research coordinating units when this is not reported as a project. States vary in the proportion of funds they devoted to program improvement.
3. Collectively, the states are obligating about equal amounts on research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development products. Individual states, however, are extremely variable in this respect, some choosing to fund no projects in certain categories.
4. The amount obligated for each project is extremely variable. There is a wide range in project size within and between states. The average funding per project is \$25,131. The range is from \$366 to \$649,960.
5. States are being responsive to federal priorities. Over 80 percent of the state program improvement projects were conducted in problem areas related to federal administrative and legislative priorities.
6. State program improvement projects have focused on every educational level. Over 74 percent of the state program improvement obligations have been at postsecondary, adult and combined secondary-postsecondary levels. Other projects have focused on levels from kindergarten to grade 12.
7. State program improvement projects are being conducted by educational agencies and institutions at every level. Only 13.4 percent of the state program improvement funds go to projects done by other than educational agencies. The largest share of the work is being done by four-year colleges and universities (33.5 percent), local educational agencies (28.6 percent), and two-year colleges (13.4 percent.)
8. The greatest number of projects have focused directly on improvement of instruction (i.e., curriculum and instruction projects, 534; personnel training, 247; and evaluation and assessment, 214).

Quality, redundancy, and programmatic aspects of state program improvement projects have not yet been examined. Also, there is need to examine how states are setting program improvement priorities, incorporating these into comprehensive state plans, and following through with appropriate sequences of research, curriculum development, demonstration, personnel development, and statewide implementation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications which can be drawn from the conclusions have bearing on R&D policy development at federal and state levels, on decision making related to R&D operations at both levels, and on practices at every level. The recommendations which spring from the implications suggest new or adjusted policies, procedures, and practices.

Implications

1. The reporting system, while working could be more efficient and effective. Not all projects nor all data elements for projects have been reported. Further, it has taken repeated urging before some states responded with submission of project abstracts.
2. Little is known about support services and administrative activities funded under P.L. 94-482. Currently, states are not required to submit information about guidance, personnel development, or sex equity activities funded under Sections 134, 135, and 136. This represents approximately 82.5 percent of all discretionary program improvement and support service activities in the states.
3. States report program improvement activities in three categories (i.e., research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development), but there is little difference in the design of some of the projects assigned to different categories. Examination of project abstracts reveals that there is an uncertain mix of activities funded under each of the categories. State personnel may regard integrity of the categories as unimportant or may be funding the proposals received in each category regardless of methodology because there are no other options.
4. States have different strategies for program improvement as manifested in different funding patterns and levels. The size of projects and the proportion of projects in each category vary considerably by state. It is apparent that many states have encouraged different patterns and levels.
5. Independent funding decisions by states about projects on nationally significant problems may be increasing the chance of viable solutions through diversity; on the other hand, these independent decisions may be decreasing the chance of programmatic approaches and increasing unplanned duplication.

Recommendations

1. The responsibility of state research coordinating units to supply information about program improvement projects should be further clarified and reinforced. The legislation and administrative regulations regarding submittal of project information should be explicit. Responsibility for enforcement of these regulations should be assumed by the Federal agency through information, training, and sanctions (if necessary).
2. Training should be provided to research coordinating unit personnel to improve their ability to organize, prepare and submit accurate project information.
3. The project information (i.e., tracking) system should be expanded to accommodate information about support service and administrative activities in the states. At the present only 17.5 percent of the program improvement and support service activity is reported.
4. A study of the results (i.e., project outcomes and products) of various funding patterns and levels would be useful. While some states undoubtedly seek specific outcomes via certain patterns and levels, others may be less rational.
5. The planning of multi-state, multi-year cooperative R&D effort on nationally significant problems should be encouraged. The initial planning undertaken in late 1979 exemplifies this recommendation.

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APPENDIX A

FY 1978 - 1979 State Administered
Program Improvement Projects

FY 1978-1979 STATE ADMINISTERED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

STATE	Sec. 131 (Research)		Sec. 132 (Exemplary)		Sec. 133 (Curriculum)		TOTALS	
	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount
	Alabama	-	-	9	88,701	1	50,000	10
Alaska	2	21,691	1	5,321	7	56,702	10	83,714
Arizona	11	103,510	7	132,602	13	140,064	31	376,176
Arkansas	9	181,891	10	278,305	-	-	19	460,196
California	20	1,319,567	12	558,354	22	889,794	54	2,767,715
Colorado	10	182,760	2	24,423	2	85,000	14	292,183
Connecticut	18	113,061	7	125,976	1	40,159	26	279,196
Delaware	-	-	3	22,697	2	39,280	5	61,977
District of Columbia	4	315,273	-	-	-	-	4	315,273
Florida	27	1,086,694	11	149,261	12	676,043	50	1,911,998
Georgia	8	465,322	-	-	4	162,956	12	628,278
Hawaii	-	-	3	25,410	3	16,500	6	41,910
Idaho	7	32,892	11	148,385	4	25,967	22	207,244
Illinois	51	1,622,041	53	2,011,178	30	617,266	134	4,250,485
Indiana	24	542,978	20	930,371	3	69,913	47	1,543,262
Iowa	15	481,230	5	82,501	27	278,390	47	842,121
Kansas	13	129,896	5	83,315	13	104,155	31	317,366
Kentucky	7	155,881	14	274,610	-	-	21	430,491
Louisiana	7	159,376	5	104,952	2	53,704	14	318,032
Maine			2	40,524	1	7,850	3	48,374
Maryland	16	137,038	28	227,537	21	422,888	65	787,463
Massachusetts	7	253,619	2	343,383	5	364,226	14	961,228
Michigan	4	137,000	1	55,000	6	673,250	11	865,250
Minnesota	17	477,467	6	111,256	13	235,282	36	824,005
Mississippi	5	186,720	4	100,093	1	335,662	10	622,475

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FY 1978-1979 STATE ADMINISTERED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

STATE	Sec. 131 (Research)		Sec. 132 (Exemplary)		Sec. 133 (Curriculum)		TOTALS	
	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount
Missouri	18	106,797	2	48,530	-	-	20	155,327
Montana	5	25,069	7	157,489	4	13,143	16	195,701
Nebraska	-	-	-	-	4	54,621	4	54,621
Nevada	-	-	8	112,998	-	-	8	112,998
New Hampshire	1	2,826	-	-	1	17,300	2	20,126
New Jersey	11	178,242	20	408,143	16	241,002	47	827,387
New Mexico	6	96,024	5	329,521	3	93,115	14	518,660
New York	35	1,096,940	14	425,824	42	1,546,747	91	3,069,511
North Carolina	5	192,504	2	6,022	-	-	7	198,526
North Dakota	7	28,617	12	66,956	10	46,000	29	141,573
Ohio	-	-	79	2,502,339	-	-	79	2,502,339
Oklahoma	4	18,227	3	54,728	1	2,100	8	75,055
Oregon	7	51,768	22	314,429	8	61,376	37	427,573
Pennsylvania	30	717,217	44	637,442	49	653,334	123	2,007,993
Rhode Island	3	1,444	4	60,152	2	1,370	9	62,966
South Carolina	3	66,295	-	-	-	-	3	66,295
South Dakota	1	25,000	2	218,000	1	10,000	4	253,000
Tennessee	3	82,568	20	456,707	6	178,058	29	717,333
Texas	39	1,461,350	35	1,081,003	21	2,404,620	95	4,946,973
Utah	2	34,000	2	28,896	-	-	4	62,896
Vermont	4	39,730	6	56,738	2	7,600	12	104,068
Virginia	13	404,176	3	84,929	38	950,308	54	1,389,413
Washington	11	75,345	15	115,756	5	31,432	31	222,533
West Virginia	12	186,840	20	240,963	20	160,816	52	588,619
Wisconsin	13	154,638	6	154,257	40	538,204	59	847,099
Wyoming	1	10,000	25	157,210	-	-	26	167,210
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	1	94,528	1	94,528
TOTALS	516	13,161,524	577	13,593,187	467	12,450,725	1560	39,205,436