

How Valuable is CTE in this Economy

By Norman Halls

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS WE HAVE KNOWN IT FROM THE SMITH-HUGHES ACT AND PERKINS WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL IN ITS HEYDAY. But times and technology have changed drastically and often career and technical education (CTE) schools have not changed with it. This country has lost thousands of jobs offshore to countries that have taken advantage of the United States' lack of support for CTE. An Embassy of the People's Republic of China report noted that, "Developing vocational education is an important part of educational undertaking of the state and an important way to promote economic and social development and employment."

Who benefits from CTE? The answer: every person and business. In 1984 industrialist Peter Elliman reported on critical issues in vocational education. He interviewed a vice president and general manager of Lucas Industries and noted, "when Lucas evaluates a country for the potential location of a new plant, it examines such important elements as labor unions and labor costs, trade regulations, taxes, inflation, the strength of the currency over time, the availability and quality of technical schools and universities, the skill and productivity levels of the workforce, attitudes toward work, the standard of living and the cultural environment."

What the industrialist said in 1984 is true today: companies can keep jumping around the world. As Elliman commented, Lucas Industries looks for quality schools and universities, although it

seems that the company is not willing to support the educational programs. This is true with many businesses where the local school system is losing its tax base. But if business and industry stays on the move, what will happen to the consumer? They will not be able to buy the goods produced by any company in the United States.

We find that most educators are what we call "compounded educators of education." Most teachers in elementary, middle, high school or higher education have never held a job other than teaching at some level. Back in the early 1970s

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Sidney Marland developed the concept of career education to remove the stigma of academic and occupational learning programs. The thought was to have all learners understand careers and give them rewarding lives. Both vocational and academic teachers were against the concept. Today we must be realistic about who the educator's consumers are—students and businesses. If the student is not able to be employed and trained, the business segment of the equation will not be paying property taxes to support the school system.

What needs to be done? Educators must have a better understanding of the



whole picture. They should not live in a vacuum that inhibits student learning. Also, those who work in business and industry must be allowed to teach in the school system, with or without having a

Norman Halls

is an educator with 35 years of experience. He is a consultant in business and industry strategic planning and can be contacted at madsengroup@sbcglobal.net.

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