

Submission for: “Hawaii International Conference on Education”

Title: Factors Related To Instructors Willingness to Serve As Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (SKILLSUSA-VICA) Advisors

Topic Area: Trade and Industry Education (Industrial Education)

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The purpose of this study was to determine, in Hawaii, what factors encouraged/discouraged trade and industrial (T&I) vocational educational teachers from participating as advisors for high school chapters of the SKILLS USA-VICA vocational students organization. Surveys were distributed to 170 trade and industrial instructors throughout the state of Hawaii, 62 were returned, giving an overall response rate of 36.5% (62/170).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study was the rationale proposed in a study by Davis (1979) on the nonparticipation of vocational education teachers in vocational student organization programs in Pennsylvania. Davis provided the following findings about the reasons for nonparticipation found in her study: 55% of the respondents did not consider Vocational Student Organizations (VSOs) as an integral part of the curriculum; 48% felt that teachers should receive extra pay for VSOs participation; and 42% indicated that they did not have time for student organization activities. In determining if vocational teachers felt adequately prepared to be advisors, Davis found that 82% indicated that they could have better prepared; 70% indicated they could have acquired leadership skills via in-service training; 55% indicated they could have receive leadership development training as part of their teacher training; and 16% had no knowledge or information of VSOs. In determining reasons for integrating leadership activities into the curriculum, Davis found that 50% indicated that administrators are not interested in VSOs participation and don't want the responsibility; and 82% thought the community could afford the cost of VSOs if they were well informed of their benefits (Davis, 1979, pp.34-37).

Davis examined the 1974-75 statistics on vocational student enrollments in Pennsylvania and found that of a total of 243,279 students; only 44,571 were enrolled in VSOs only 18% of the possible participants (Davis, 1979, p. 9).

Organizations significance

In May 1965, SKILLSUSA-VICA became a nationally recognized organization. Public Law 81-740 (1950) helped to make this organization an integral part of public education in the United States by providing for the incorporation of a vocational club into the classroom curriculum. Such a program would provide vocational students with an even more practical means of developing their skills and attributes by allowing them to connect training in the classroom with trades and industry outside the classroom. VSO's rely heavily on industry to set and communicate the guidelines for what is required in

industry. They then instruct participating students, giving them a clearer understanding of what is to be expected in the workforce. They also provide a set of standards to follow and work ethic requirements for entering the workforce.

Vocational Student Organizations

According to Hall (1993), SKILLSUSA-VICA chapters conduct themselves as professional societies- members conduct meetings and develop leadership training activities. SKILLSUSA-VICA has the largest single education-business partnership in the nation with programs that add quality dimensions to coursework. SKILLSUSA-VICA National Skills Olympics have received over \$7.5 million in financial contributions. Some of SKILLSUSA-VICA activities introduce lab experiences to SKILLSUSA-VICA participants that require them to apply skills from coursework.

Tim Smith, a human resources specialist for General Dynamics Corporation feels that workers who have prior SKILLSUSA-VICA experience can make a difference when they arrive in industry because of the immediate return for employees. Employers do not have to spend time training SKILLSUSA-VICA students about the basic job expectations, and employees need less on-the-job training and can therefore become efficient workers. Smith contends that SKILLSUSA-VICA participants are dependable and their attitudes are much higher from the start than those not familiar with the program. He further contends that "Our company has taken a vested interest in the development of the SKILLSUSA-VICA student, ... because we see an immediate return- the return being that less on-the-job training is required and we have the opportunity for this employee to start to work for us today and rapidly become very efficient. They come up the efficiency curve much quicker. They're more dependable" (Smith, as quoted in Hall 1993, p. 29).

Summary

This study examined what factors encouraged and discouraged T&I instructors from participating as advisors in the SKILLSUSA-VICA organization in Hawaii. A panel of university professors, state SKILLSUSA-VICA directors, state directors of vocational technical education, state directors of school-to-work programs, a trade and industry specialist, and a member of the Economic Development and Finance Committee from the State of Hawaii House of Representatives were invited to address the questions guiding this research and to define the questions for the data collection. Out of the 170 surveys distributed to trade and industry instructors in the state of Hawaii, 62 were returned, giving an overall response rate of 36.5% (62/170). Out of the surveys returned, 24 questionnaires were from SKILLSUSA-VICA advisors (46 surveyed; 52% response rate) and 36 were from non-advisors (124 surveyed; 29% response rate).

The findings obtained in the research found several factors to be significant in the lack of participation of Trade and Industry (T&I) instructors in the SKILLSUSA-VICA program

The following areas were examined to determine the demography profile of T&I instructors and to assess any statistically significant differences between the advisors and non-advisors:

- Demographic Profile of Teachers,

- Educational Profile of Teachers,
- SKILLSUSA-VICA Advising Responsibilities and SKILLSUSA-VICA Related Background,
- Experience in Education and Student Enrollment

The research attempted to verify what variables explain whether T&I instructors do or don't serve as SKILLSUSA-VICA Advisors. To determine if differences existed between the groups of (advisors vs. non-advisors of SKILLSUSA-VICA) a discriminant analysis was run to assess which variables differentiated between the two advisor groups. The following are the selected variables used in the discriminant analysis of SKILLSUSA-VICA advisors and non-advisors:

- Years of Employment
- Position Status
- Marital Status
- Children in Household
- Individual in Teacher Training Programs in VSOs
- Individual in VSOs like SKILLSUSA-VICA as a Student
- Degree
- Age
- Salary

The research further attempted to verify what reasons as identified by T&I instructors, contribute to the lack of participation in the SKILLSUSA-VICA program and are there statistically significant differences between Advisors and Non-Advisors. The following discourage items were examined to determine if there were statistically significant difference between advisors and non-advisors:

- Paying State and National Dues
- Fund Raising
- Not Enough Time To Integrate SKILLSUSA-VICA Into Curriculum Professional Development
- School Shop Inadequately Equipped
- Part Time Jobs To Supplement Income
- Effect That Failures Have On Students In Competition
- After Hour Activities
- Not Understanding The Goals And Value Of SKILLSUSA-VICA To Students
- Instructors Have Been Getting Along Fine Without SKILLSUSA-VICA
- Instructors Not Compensated For Being Advisors In SKILLSUSA-VICA
- Not Adequately Trained And Educated To Be SKILLSUSA-VICA Advisors

The following seven items are the encouraging variables that were examined between advisors and non-advisors:

- Pre-service Teacher Preparation
- Adequate Training And Education in VSOs

- Annual Summer SKILLSUSA-VICA Conference For Present And Prospective SKILLSUSA-VICA Advisors
- Supporting SKILLSUSA-VICA Advisors To Attend National Conference Of State Winners
- Administrative Support
- T&I Instructors Generally Have A Positive Attitude Towards SKILLSUSA-VICA
- Support From Businesses and Community
- Mandatory Participation

Recommendations for Further Study

The next suggested step is to allow for the implementation of the preceding recommendations and to reevaluate the participation of T&I instructors in the state of Hawaii SKILLSUSA-VICA program at a future date. Examination of the large number of non-respondents to the SKILLSUSA-VICA survey by performing a case study follow-up on the non-respondents. This could be achieved through a telephone survey of the non-respondents population group. Optimally, to use the validated SKILLSUSA-VICA surveys nationwide, a study of the organization at a national level could determine if there was a correlation between what has been found through this study in the State of Hawaii and what might be happening across the nation. Employing discriminate analysis, two demographic variables were found to differentiate between those who volunteered to serve as advisors and those who did not. Specifically, older and higher paid T&I teachers were less likely to volunteer.

Factors identified as encouraging volunteering were included administrative support, industry support, pre-service and in-service training, and support to attend state and national competitions and conferences. Factors identified as discouraging volunteering included the burden of fund raising and the impact on instructional teaching time volunteering.

Conclusion

The commitment of vocational teachers to vocational student organization depends on the dedication of the teacher within the organizational setting and perhaps more important, outside of it.

References

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