



NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (NAVE)

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION PLAN

ABSTRACT

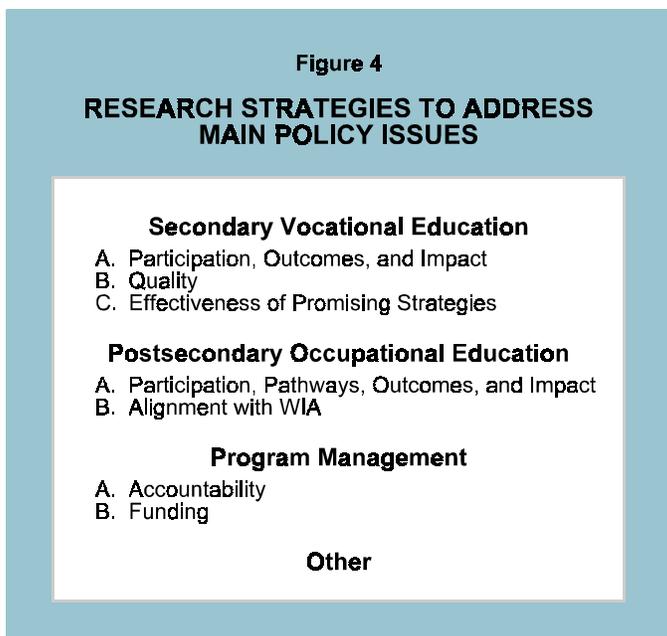
The recently amended (1998) Carl Perkins Vocational and Technology Education Act (Perkins III) directs the Secretary of Education to complete an “independent evaluation and assessment of vocational and technical education programs under this Act,” and to appoint an independent advisory panel to advise the Department of Education on how to conduct this national assessment of vocational education (NAVE).

Vocational education is a field in transition, prompted by sweeping changes in state and local education priorities. Several key policy issues are likely to shape the course of vocational education, and therefore of the NAVE: (1) the small federal investment in vocational education relative to overall federal education spending, (2) the focus of education reforms on improving students’ academic achievement, and (3) changes in accountability and funding provisions in Perkins III. Given the educational and political context in which Perkins III operates, as well as specific legislative changes recently enacted, the NAVE will be guided by several main questions:

What strategies improve the performance of “vocational students” and how does, or can, vocational education contribute to improving academic and occupational skills, access to postsecondary education, and earnings?

What are the pathways by which sub-baccalaureate students prepare for careers, and what is the contribution of workforce reform efforts to improving their training?

Is the policy shift from set-asides and legislative prescription to flexibility and accountability likely to improve program quality and student outcomes? How do special populations fare?



Addressing the primary vocational policy issues requires a set of interrelated but distinct studies. The overall research agenda calls for diverse data collection and analysis methods, including: qualitative case studies, national surveys, examination of existing databases, and econometric estimation. While some broad themes are relevant to both secondary and postsecondary vocational education, each also has its own key issues. Finally, given the timeline for implementing Perkins III, and the July 2002 date for reporting NAVE results to Congress, the studies conducted will reflect the very early efforts made in response to specific new provisions in Perkins III.