# THE EXPERIENCES OF POSTSECONDARY TECHNICAL FACULTY RETURNING TO HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER ADMINISTRATIVE MANDATE

by

JOHN M. WATFORD

(Under the Direction of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda)

## ABSTRACT

The study examined the perspectives of five technical college instructors who were earning an Associate Degree under administrative mandate due to the school seeking a higher level of accreditation. Each instructor had a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience in postsecondary technical education. Purposeful sampling was used to select the five postsecondary instructors at three technical colleges in the same southeastern state. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data gathered from three semi-structured interviews. Data from each case were analyzed, first individually, then through cross case methods in which four common themes emerged: 1) Morale among technical instructors under an education mandate is directly proportional to the perceived support of their school administration, 2) Technical instructors under mandate expect immediate practical application of the education that they are required to receive, 3) Teachers of vocationally oriented programs are resistant to the trend of postsecondary technical education to include academic courses, and 4) Veteran teachers in their late career stage see mandated degree earning as a major interruption in an, otherwise, settled and content lifestyle. The findings of the study had implications for administrators of postsecondary vocational instructors. The areas of support needed in a

mandated education experience included planning and organization, moral support, and financial reimbursement when possible.

INDEX WORDS: mandatory continuing education, mandatory adult education, technical and vocational teacher education and preparation, postsecondary teacher credentialing

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Barbara, for her patience, endurance, and support; to my children, Mark, Joshua, and Lacey, for their tireless encouragement and unconditional love; to my father, Mervin H. Watford, for his high ideals and reverence for education; to my mother, Dorris Watford, for the dedication, acceptance, and understanding only a mother can give; to my sister, Dr. Lettie Watford, for her consistent support and leading example; and to my close friends who listened patiently and never complained about my obsessive persistence with ‘my school work.’

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Preparing adults for the world of work has long been the primary mission of vocational and technical education (Gray & Walter, 2001; Kincheloe, 1999; Lynch, 1996). With more than 80% of the jobs in the United States requiring some formal postsecondary education but less than a four-year baccalaureate degree, technical education serves a necessary and vital function to the economy by providing preparatory training for employment (Breeden, 2000; Hight, 1998; Lynch, 1996). As technology advances at an accelerated rate, so does the demand for highly-skilled employees equipped with current knowledge and practical experience (Levin, 2000; U.S. Department of Labor, 2003). To deviate in focus from this fundamental mission could be a disastrous turning point for the post-secondary technical school system (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000).

While technical schools strive to maintain true to the mission of workforce education, expectations of students for seamless transferability between post-secondary technical colleges and four-year universities are resulting in a new evolution of technical education (Levin, 2000). In efforts to meet these expectations and to limit the conferring of terminal certificates and diplomas, the technical colleges are assuming more responsibilities that traditionally have been considered those of junior and community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Thus, the evolving mission of the postsecondary technical schools includes more than simply workforce education (Levin, 2000).

For the purposes of granting federal aid and ensuring educational quality, the United States Federal Government recognizes two accrediting agencies for postsecondary occupational Education: the Council on Occupational Education and the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (Accreditation in the United States, 2003). The standards of these agencies are designed for institutes of postsecondary education with workforce and occupational outcomes as the primary mission. To facilitate the transfer of course and degree credit to universities, however, postsecondary technical colleges require the additional accreditation of one of the 10 regional accrediting bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for institutes of higher education (Accreditation in the United States, 2003). Among the additional expectations of these accrediting agencies is the minimum educational degree level requirement of teachers who work with adults seeking the associate degree. For the instructors that were involved in this study, that minimum requirement for a vocational teacher was a degree equal to the highest level of the instructional program offering which was the two-year associates degree (Criteria for Accreditation, 1998).

Many of the veteran vocational teachers entered this unique educational system at a time when work experience was of primary importance (Gray & Walter, 2001; Lynch 1996; Paulter, 1990). Until recently, formal higher education degrees were not of critical importance to administrators hiring teachers for vocational programs (Lynch, 1996). The teachers of these colleges, working under the accreditation of one of the two occupational accrediting agencies, have been able to teach based on experience and skills and without, necessarily, holding degrees in higher education (Handbook of Accreditation, 1999). Under occupational accreditation, higher education degrees were not a priority in hiring when considerable experience was evident thus, many faculty did not possess the minimum credentials that were required of the new

accreditation for higher education. In summary, the adults who did not have at a minimum of an associate degree were faced, under the new accreditation standard, with a choice – either earn the degree or leave the profession.

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements affected the personal and professional development of postsecondary vocational teachers. Moreover, the researcher sought to understand the support needed by postsecondary vocational teachers who returned to school to meet minimum credentialing necessary to maintain employment in a technical college.

There is nothing new or revolutionary about employers requiring employees to return to school for continued education (Kerka, 1994). Numerous industries have literacy programs to improve the quality of their human resources (Cutz, 1997). There are many professions where continued education must be documented to maintain a certification or license to practice. For example, certified public accountants in 49 states are required by law to attend continuing education courses. Likewise, 37 states have continuing education requirements for lawyers while 47 states have similar requirements for pharmacists (Cervero, 2001). Studies conducted on the participants of mandatory education primarily focused on the resulting improvements of the individual employee's performance and skills (Gammill, 1994).

Research in the field of adult education has yielded significant data about the pros and cons of mandatory continued education (Kerka, 1994). The most compelling finding of Kerka's report was the argument that expected voluntary participation in professional education was unrealistic and that those who are in need of it the most are the least likely to participate. Little research has been conducted, however, to understand the effects of mandatory education on

veteran teachers and no research was located on veteran vocational educators who were forced to return to school (McLoughlin, 2002).

The work of Burke (2001) identified factors influencing career stages of educators categorized into personal and professional environments. Using a sample of 57 teachers from rural, suburban, and urban schools, Burke used the Attitudes Toward Personal Teaching Behaviors Instrument to categorize these 2 environments. The personal environment included areas such as family and hobbies, public attitudes and pressures, working relationships, preparation, and external influences. The organizational environment was divided into the areas of evaluation, teaching and learning, professional development, non-instructional duties, instructional management, and union and professionalism. Cohen (1991) described at length the various levels of commitment to and the propensity to leave an organization based on the career stage of the individual. Cohen's research found that older employees were more settled into their positions and were less likely to seek advancement or to change jobs.

While the fact that the maturity and constancy of their career stage lends more stability for the veteran instructors, many negative factors have been introduced into both the personal and organizational life of the teacher when required to return to school (Cohen, 1991; Kerka, 1994; Ruhland, 2001). In some cases, the impending nature of these potentially negative factors could result in decisions by teachers to leave the profession of education (Ruhland, 2001). The devastating loss of veteran vocational teachers would be strongly felt by the post-secondary technical system.

## Statement of the Problem

In an accreditation visit to Brevard Community College in Cocoa, Florida, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) team questioned the teaching credentials of 84 of

the college's 600 faculty members (Kelsch, 2003). El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas relieved 65 instructors from their teaching duties after a SACS accreditation team visit due to insufficient teaching credentials (Crawford, 2003). North Lake College in Dallas, Texas dismissed or reassigned a third of its faculty due to inadequate teaching credentials that were discovered in a SACS team visit (Grabell, 2003). These veteran faculty members are faced with the decision to either retire early or to return to higher education to earn the necessary degree for the accreditation credentials (Ruhland, 2001).

In the State of Georgia in 2001, the 33 technical institutes within the State Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) changed their names to include the word "college." The Georgia State Code, Section 20-4-11 (2001) empowers the State Board of Technical and Adult Education to:

> Approve a request by a postsecondary technical school or institution governed under this chapter to be named a technical college upon the approval and granting of occupational degree-granting status by the State Board of Technical and Adult Education and upon receiving accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Schools, the Council on Occupational Education, or any other appropriate accrediting agency approved by the United States Secretary of Education. The use of the name technical college shall not alter the governance of the technical school or institution as established under this chapter nor shall it abridge the authority of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia under the Constitution of this state. (Item §10)

To validate this name change, each school, many of which had only offered technical diplomas and certificates in the past, began offering associate degrees (Breeden, 2000). Student expectations quickly evolved that these degrees, and the courses taken within them, be transferable to four-year baccalaureate programs. While 13 of the technical schools had already attained the regional accreditation to make transferable credit possible, the remaining 20 colleges would need to apply for new accreditation (Governor's Education Reform Study Commission, 1999). The re-entry of veteran faculty to higher education is a phenomenon that will exist in the

State of Georgia until all 20 schools achieve the necessary accreditation. Veteran teachers of vocational education with such valuable experience in both teaching and their trade have a strong potential to become discouraged and to consider leaving the teaching profession to either return to industry or to retire (Ruhland, 2001).

Postsecondary schools offering the associate's degree are faced with the dilemma of satisfying accreditation credentialing while providing a competent, skilled, and experienced teaching faculty. Schools nationwide, as in the cited examples in Florida, Georgia, and Texas, are confronted with the reality that veteran teachers will need to return to higher education (Crawford, 2003; Grabell, 2003; Kelsch, 2003). While considerable research has been conducted on staff development of community college faculty and numerous studies exist on mandatory adult education, there is no current research to examine the effects on the personal or professional development of mandated higher education of veteran postsecondary vocational-technical faculty.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements affected the personal and career development of postsecondary vocational teachers. The research sought to gain an understanding of the specific needs and necessary support for veteran teachers who were required to return to school to meet minimum credential standards.

## Research Questions

The overall questions that guided this study included:

1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty?

2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self?
3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants at the organizational level?
4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school?

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data in this study was taken from four primary areas of literature; the catalysts for change in vocational education, postsecondary faculty development and vocational teacher preparation, mandatory education, and career stages. These areas of literature framed the study for the researcher by providing an integrated view of the evolving mission of postsecondary technical education as it related to the staff development needs of faculty. Those needs became more clearly defined with the study of the unique characteristics of the late career stage when those veteran teachers were required by mandate to return to school for further education.

The postsecondary two-year college system in the United States has experienced exponential growth in enrollment, which has resulted in expanded offerings and services (Breeden, 2000; Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000). In turn, a new global economy demands that students these schools be prepared with problem-solving skills adequate for continued economical and technical growth (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000; Reitano, 1998). A history of the two-year postsecondary school and the changes in mission brought about by societal and political influences informed this study by providing an understanding of how veteran teachers were able to achieve a late career stage while lacking adequate teaching credentials.

While the U. S. Department of Education has minimum standards and measurements for states to follow in elementary and secondary education, it is the individual states that establish minimum criteria for their teachers. As mentioned earlier, the majority of vocational teachers initially receive alternative certification by substituting years of relevant work experience for college-level preparation. A large percentage of these alternatively-certified teachers eventually receive college degrees (Lynch, 1996). Adams (1999) concluded, however, that vocational teachers who had the least amount of formal preparation suffered the greatest amount of stress. Adams suggested that:

> School systems could require that all teachers have a teaching certificate, preparation, education, and/or training prior to being hired. School systems could also provide opportunities for vocational teachers to gain additional education or training related to their areas of expertise. (p. 9)

This, however, is in reference to the certification of secondary vocational teachers. The Federal Government has no centralized authority over postsecondary institutions and, therefore, schools of higher education operate with some degree of independence and autonomy (*Accreditation in the United States*, n.d.). That autonomy is reflected in the more liberal use of practices for established requirements for postsecondary vocational faculty when compared to the certification practices of secondary teachers in the individual states. While very few states require traditional teacher certification for postsecondary vocational faculty, most states require a minimum of a bachelor's degree plus substantial work experience (U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002).

Although mandatory education is an established component of adult education, it is still the source of heated controversy primarily due to the fact that adults take personal objection at being forced to do anything (Kerka, 1994). The idea of education, for many, has connotations of the compulsory didactic system from childhood. Negative emotions, resentment, and fear are

among first reactions to required adult education (Cutz, 1997). Fallin, Wallinga, and Coleman (2001) described the cognitive-transactional model as providing a convincing means of depicting the experience of stress in an educational experience. The cognitive-transactional model included three theoretical concepts: daily stressors and cognitive appraisal, coping strategies, and resources.

The work of Burke (2001) identified factors influencing career stages of educators that are categorized into personal environment and working environment. The personal environment is composed of family and hobbies, public attitudes and pressures, working relationships, preparation, and external influences. The organizational environment is divided into the areas of evaluation, teaching and learning, professional development, non-instructional duties, instructional management, and union and professionalism. Cohen (1991) described in great detail the various levels of commitment to, and propensity to leave an organization based on the career stage of the individual. Cohen's research reflected that older employees are more settled into their positions and less likely to seek advancement or be prone to change jobs.

## Significance of the Study

As postsecondary technical and vocational institutions continue to evolve missions that include transferability of credit to four-year baccalaureate schools, the expectations on the faculty and their credentials will only increase (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000). Lynch (1996) believed that the colleges and universities have greatly diminished efforts to prepare vocational and technical educators, and he further asserted, "There does not seem to be a strong sense of professional identity with a body of knowledge and a discipline related to vocational and technical teacher education" (p. 191). In the past, primary emphasis for qualifications to teach in postsecondary technical education has been on experience in the field (Paulter, 1990).

The end result, then, is that the majority, 66% according to Boessel, Hudson, Deich, and Masten (1994), of postsecondary vocational faculty have less than a four-year bachelor's degree. To gain credibility with the colleges and universities offering higher degrees and to satisfy the new accreditation standards that will verify that credibility, the postsecondary vocational faculty who do not possess the minimum credentials will be returning to school for further education or will be forced to seek other employment.

This study sought to identify the personal and professional effects of mandatory continuing education on these faculty members and is, thus, significant in arming school administrators in the knowledge of what personal and professional development factors to anticipate when these teachers are required to return to higher education. To date, there have been no studies to examine these effects and the types of support that veteran teachers returning to school need from administrators. From such a study, a better understanding of the phenomenon of returning to school and the support needed from administrators can emerge. The applicability of this knowledge lends to the significance of the findings related to this specific area of mandatory education.

The study was theoretically significant to the body of literature on mandatory adult education by introducing the need to study professional and personal effects of educators required to earn a college degree. Existing literature on mandatory adult education was primarily concerned with professional re-certification programs, adult literacy programs, or retraining for new technology (Alejandro, 2001; Cervero, 2001; Kerka, 1994). Burke (2001) and McInnis (2000), in their studies of teacher career stages, indicated that special consideration should be given to teachers in a late career stage when planning staff development. As the missions of

postsecondary schools evolve to include higher academic expectations, more teachers will, inevitably, be returning to school for additional degrees.

With exponential growth in technical education (Breeden, 2000), the body of literature on staff development for faculty in higher education could be better served by additional research in this area. The unique nature of technical and vocational postsecondary teaching presents the opportunity for research specific to this growing area. Documenting the perspectives of veteran teachers to mandates by administration that require additional investments of time, energy, and finances will also lend to the development of literature on mandatory education and staff development in higher education.

## Definitions of Terms

Mandatory Continuing Education: Mandatory Continuing Education is the requirement of professionals to return to an educational environment for the sake of continued certification or continued employment in one's field.

View of Self: In the context of this study, one's View of Self indicated the individual's personal interpretation of his or her professional status in relation to that of others in the same field of vocational teaching. How the individual teacher sees his or her value to the school in light of the school's administration expressing expectations of higher levels of academic achievement will be the View of Self to which this study refers.

Vocational–Technical Teacher: A teacher is referred to as a Vocational-Technical Teacher when their primary responsibility is to provide the student with the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable gainful employment in a specialized field on completion. As opposed to academic faculty who provide basic skills training in the areas of the physical sciences, social sciences, and

the humanities, the vocational-technical teacher transmits knowledge and skills that make students highly-skilled and marketable immediately on graduation.

Educational Requirements: An operational definition of Educational Requirements was adopted for the purpose of this study. The minimum Educational Requirements acceptable for faculty teaching in professional, occupational, or technical areas must be an academic degree at the same level at which the faculty member is teaching (Criteria for Accreditation, 1998). For example, the teachers involved in this study that are teaching in a program offering an Associates of Applied Technology degree, the requirement will be a two-year associate degree.

Veteran Teacher: For the purposes of this study, a Veteran Teacher is defined as any postsecondary technical or vocational faculty member who has at least 10 years of teaching experience.

## Overview of the Research Procedures

This research was an application of qualitative methods for the purpose of understanding how the experiences of veteran vocational teachers being forced to return to higher education influenced their personal and professional lives. Qualitative researchers seek to understand what specific interpretations an individual has at a particular time within a particular context (Merriam, 2002). Each veteran teacher within this study has his or her own constructions and interpretations of reality that can most effectively be explored through the methods offered by qualitative research. As this study seeks to understand the experiences and the perspectives of veteran postsecondary teachers returning to school, a purposeful sample of educators falling into this category were selected to participate.

The primary source of data for this study was the participant interview. Participants were chosen based on the selection criteria. All of the participants were interviewed on three separate

occasions to allow the researcher to further probe areas of needed understanding. The interviews were recorded in the participants' offices or classrooms, according to their own choice. Participants reviewed interview transcripts and feedback was used to ensure the accuracy of the information gathered. Fieldnotes were taken by the researcher of observed participant behavior in classrooms, in faculty meetings, and in general campus activities in an effort to further reinforce the internal validity of the study.

## Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, theoretical framework, significance of the study, assumptions of the study, definitions of terms, limitations of the study, and an overview of the research procedures used in studying the experiences of veteran postsecondary vocational faculty who are required to return to higher education. The literature on postsecondary faculty and staff development, career stages, and mandatory education was reviewed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, the research method used for data collection and analysis was discussed. Chapter 4 presented the findings from the data, and Chapter 5 presented a cross case analysis in which themes derived from the findings are examined. Chapter 6 included a discussion of the findings with implications, recommendations, and conclusions.

# CHAPTER 2

# REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements affected the personal and career development of postsecondary vocational teachers. The overall questions that guided this study included:

1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty?
2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self?
3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants at the organizational level?
4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school?

This study was informed by four areas of literature—the catalysts for change in the nation's technical college system, postsecondary vocational faculty development, mandatory adult education, and career stages.

The first area reviewed addressed the various catalysts for change in technical colleges. The postsecondary two-year college system in the United States has experienced exponential growth in enrollment (Breeden, 2000; Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000). In turn, a new global economy demands that students within these schools be prepared with problem-solving

skills adequate for continued economical and technical growth (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000; Reitano, 1998). The literature reviewed in this section examined the history of the two-year postsecondary school and the changes in mission brought about by societal and political influences.

The second area reviewed focused on postsecondary vocational faculty development. Since the early years of vocational education in America, vocational training has been viewed as inferior and preparation for teaching in the field has been without universal organization (Gray & Walter, 2001; Lynch, 1996; McCaslin & Parks, 2002). Gray and Walter (2001) identified the need for reform and areas for improvement in vocational teacher preparation. Teacher shortages and the evolving mission of postsecondary vocational education are examined as the causes for teacher education reform (Anderson, Barrick, & Hughes, 1992; Doolittle & Camp,1999; Levin, 2000).

Mandatory adult education was the third area of research that informed this study. The literature reviewed revealed that compulsory education affected individuals on both a personal and a professional level (Cervero, 2001; Cutz, 1997; Kerka, 1994). A large body of qualitative research identified both negative and positive effects of mandatory education on the individual's personal life (Cutz, 1999; Tight, 1999; Alejandro, 2001). The work of Cervero (2001), Gammill (1994), and Kerka (1995) identified effects of mandatory education on the professional life of the individual.

The final area of literature that informed this study was that of career stages. Literature in the fields of sociology, adult development, career development, and education categorized employees into one of three career stages including early, mid, and late career stages (Burke, 2001; Cohen, 1991; Raelin, 1990). Due to the nature of this study, the late career stage was

reviewed in greater detail to provide a description of the characteristics of employees considered to be veterans in their chosen career. Researchers such as Burke (2001), Lynn (2002), and McInnis (2000) have examined the career stages of teachers. Special attention was given to the body of literature that related to staff development and the third career stage.

## The Catalysts for Change in Postsecondary Technical Education

The dichotomy that once existed between the community college and the vocational postsecondary institution has yielded to that of a merged purpose college with an evolving mission (Kane & Rouse, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999; Levin, 2000). With more than 50% of all undergraduates in two-year colleges (Reitano, 1998), the challenge of understanding the role and mission of these schools in higher education, and in society as a whole, is of unprecedented importance. An examination of the social factors that have influenced the growth and direction of the two-year postsecondary school facilitated a deeper understanding of its' purpose and future. Vocational training, an integral function of the two-year postsecondary school, has been shaped largely by public policy (Hyslop-Margison, 2001; Levin, 2000; Prentice, 2001). Therefore, an analysis of the major acts of legislation that have steered the course for vocational education on a national level was beneficial to understand the direction of change that these schools have experienced.

### *History of the Two-Year Postsecondary School*

The modern two-year postsecondary institution has grown out of a need for convenience and opportunity. In 1901, William Raney Harper, President of the University of Chicago, met with J. Stanley Brown, Superintendent of Joliet High School, for the purpose of designing a local institution of learning with a course of study that paralleled the first two years of college (Kane & Rouse, 1999). Students could attend the Joliet Junior College tuition-free. Harper and Brown

modeled the new school after the German Gymnasium. The Gymnasium, popular in 19th Century Germany, provided an education, primarily in literature and classic languages. The Abiturzeugnis, or leaving certificate, certified that graduates were prepared for the equivalent of the junior year at a university (American Institute of Physics, 2001). First called junior colleges, these two-year postsecondary schools were also referred to as community colleges, technical institutes, city colleges, branch campuses, county colleges, and adult education centers. Cohen and Brawer (1996) later defined these two-year colleges as "any institution accredited to award the associate's in arts or science as its highest degree" (p. 5). This definition excluded, however, many two-year vocational schools, adult education centers, and proprietary schools that were considered postsecondary but did not offer degrees.

Even though the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 resulted in the creation of state boards of vocational education across the country, their domain was largely limited to secondary schools until the 1930s. The Great Depression and unprecedented unemployment gave rise to a recognized need for immediate adult workforce training. As a result, occupational and vocational training became a part of the curricula for many postsecondary schools (Kincheloe, 1999). By 1930, there were 450 postsecondary schools in all but 5 states (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The purpose of two-year postsecondary schools had evolved from the cultural function of university preparation to include a more economical function of preparing adults for jobs.

The largest growth for two-year postsecondary schools was experienced immediately following World War II as tuition vouchers offered under the GI Bill flooded the schools' admissions offices. A similar expansion occurred immediately following the Korean War. The 1960s brought a third major expansion of these schools as baby boomers began to reach college age, Vietnam War veterans began to return home, and many enrolled in school to avoid the

military draft (Kane & Rouse, 1999). By 1972, there were over 1100 two-year postsecondary schools in the United States and, while enrollment has steadily risen, the number of schools has remained relatively constant since the early 1970s (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

The original intent of the junior college as a transitional step to the university was broadened to encompass several additional purposes. Vocational training, community development programs, continuing adult education, and workforce and economic development were among the myriad offerings added to the present-day two-year postsecondary school (Kane & Rouse, 1999). With such diversity in opportunities, it is not surprising that the faculty of these two-year schools differed from that of their four-year counterparts. Almost two-thirds (60 %) of the faculty at two-year institutions were part-time compared to one-third at the four-year schools. The master's degree was the highest degree of 64 % of full-time faculty in the two-year schools while 68 % of the four-year faculty held doctorates (Kane & Rouse, 1999).

According to Cohen and Brawer (1996), at least 90 % of the United States population lived within 25 miles of a two-year postsecondary school. In the early 1990s, over one million students were enrolled in such schools that had over 20,000 students each. Cohen and Brawer (1996) further stated:

> Although the number of colleges has changed little recently, enrollments have grown. Even so, this has not changed the median college size, because most of the growth has taken place in the larger institutions. In Fall 1991, one-third of the public community colleges had enrollments of 2,200 or less, one-third enrolled between 2,200 and 6,000, and one-third were from 6,000 on up to 30,000 and more. (pp. 15-16)

*Legislation Affecting Change in Vocational Education*

The single most important act of legislation involving vocational education was the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 (Lynch, 1996). At the time President Woodrow Wilson signed this bill into law, 14 % of the offerings in the junior college system were considered to be terminal

vocational. The Smith-Hughes Act appropriated $1.7 million for the 1917-1918 fiscal year but, more importantly, created the Federal Board for Vocational Education (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). While this initiative was focused primarily at the secondary school system, postsecondary colleges that offered these terminal offerings quickly found opportunity to receive federal funding from the legislation.

In 1929, the George-Reed Act was passed authorizing an increase of $1 million each year from 1930 to 1934 for the purpose of expanding vocational education in agriculture and home economics. During this period, an attempt to repeal the Smith-Hughes Act was defeated in Congress. President Roosevelt did, however, transfer the functions of the weakened Federal Board for Vocational Education to the U.S. Office of Education in 1933 (New Association is Born, 2002). The George-Ellzey Act of 1934 authorized $3 million annually for three more years to vocational education. This time, in addition to agriculture and home economics, trade and industry were included in the apportionment (Hyslop-Margison, 2001).

Hyslop-Margison (2001) referred to the Vocational Act of 1963 as the most significant piece of legislation since the Smith-Hughes Act. This federal legislation broadened the definition of vocational education and expanded the range of financial support for training programs at both the secondary and postsecondary levels (Hyslop-Margison, 2001). President Lyndon B. Johnson signed in the Vocational Act of 1963 at a time when the economic and social anxieties of the nation mirrored those of the 1917 era when the Smith-Hughes Act was signed.

The third most significant piece of legislation to vocational education was the Carl Perkins Act of 1984. The two primary purposes of this act were to improve the quality of career and technical education as well as to ensure accessibility to all persons. Fifty-seven percent of state funds were to be allocated to special populations while the other 43 % were allocated for

program improvement (Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998). The Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act Amendments of 1998 furthered the causes of the original law from 1984. The most significant of the changes in the 1998 act affecting postsecondary vocational training involved a more rigorous emphasis on academic standards and power granted at the state level to impose sanctions on institutions not conforming to accountability performance measures. The funding formula for the 1998 legislation did not change (Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998).

*Societal Influences on Vocational Education*

When Harper and Brown conceived the first two-year postsecondary school in the nation, the primary objective as seen by the academic world and society as a whole was to relieve the university of the burdens of teaching less sophisticated students (Reitano, 1988). This pervasive attitude that attendance at community colleges and participation in vocational training were badges for social failure, or, at the least, less than optimum success, continued to permeate society even to the final decade of the 21st Century (Hlavna, 1998; Kane & Rouse, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999). Kincheloe (1999) described occupational training as a societal ill that completes a self-fulfilling prophecy of substandard living for Americans at a cultural or societal disadvantage because of social class, race, or gender. He further stated that capitalists in the United States have used both secondary and postsecondary vocational training to maintain control of the working class by removing the humanities and liberalistic thinking from the educational realm. Kincheloe stated:

> Vocational education and the everyday world of work do not contribute to the development of a coherent picture of the world. In fact, such experiences tend to fragment our understandings of who we are and how our work fits into the larger society. (p. 8)

Prentice (2001) expanded further on the pervasive societal condescension on vocational education:

> This divide seems to be at the heart of the issue. The unwillingness of academic faculty to collaborate with occupational faculty, the unwillingness of many baccalaureate institutions to accept for transfer any course that might be labeled "applied," and the unwillingness of institutions to commit time and resources to develop integration are largely the result of a belief that occupational education is somehow inferior to academic education, and that students who are drawn to occupational subjects are less academically competent than those drawn to academic subjects. (p. 87)

According to the U. S. Department of Labor (2003), more than 80% of the jobs in the United States required a postsecondary technical education but not a baccalaureate degree. The inferior stereotype of vocational education in American society has been in growing conflict with the need of business and industry for vocationally trained employees (Kincheloe, 1999; Lynch, 1996; Prentice 2001). The solution to this conflict lies, in part, with the development of a new mission for postsecondary technical training (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin, 2000; Reitano 1988).

*The Evolving Mission of the Two-Year Postsecondary School*

Cohen and Brawer (1996) identified the mission of the community college for the latter half of the 20th Century to have been focused on three areas: academic, vocational, and remedial. This type of mission, however, was geared primarily toward the curricula track of postsecondary schools. Rather than focusing on a curricula oriented mission, Cohen and Brawer (1996) projected that the new community college is decidedly moving toward economic ends by becoming a development site for workforce education. According to Reitano (1988), two-year colleges have four major missions: compensatory, career, community, and the transfer function. Reitano further stateed, however, that these four missions are pursued in isolation from each other in an atmosphere of competition and defensiveness. Levin (2000) stated that, by the end of

the 20th Century, the community college mission had evolved to one that was more suited to the demands of a global economy as opposed those of the local community to which it was previously dedicated.

A change in mission for the postsecondary institution is the result of external changes in expectations of the role and services of such institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Levin; 2000; Reitano, 1988). Three categories of this change have been identified as: diminished public sector funding for public postsecondary institutions, increased and improved relationships with the private sector, and increased state intervention into the operations and governance of the institution (Levin, 2000). While administrators and faculty interviewed in a study conducted by Levin insisted that the mission of their institution had not changed since the 1980s, the policies, behaviors, and specific actions taken by the institution suggest a definite move toward an orientation for the economic concerns of the private sector.

The SCANS Report (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skill), What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000 (1991) identified a need for educators to teach students critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, and problem-solving skills for the private sector to find them employable. As postsecondary schools heeded the call of the private sector, community colleges began to offer more vocational oriented programs and listened more intently to the cries of the employers. Community colleges, however, found it difficult to break the paradigm of a liberal arts curriculum. According to Prentice (2001) integration of occupational and academic courses was one solution attempted but the results were less than successful. There was no quantitative evidence that academic and occupationally integrated courses were superior in achieving the goals outlined in the SCANS Report (Prentice, 2001).

According to Levin (2000), the two-year postsecondary college has been revising its mission to become more globally oriented in its occupational preparation. During the 1990s, these two-year schools were developing a more overt connection to the marketplace with behaviors that resembled private business and industry. Students and their learning outcomes were being measured in economic terms, as the school itself became a business enterprise. Most staggering was the deviation from the long-standing tradition of aspiring to the higher-education status of the two-year colleges' four-year counterpart. Two-year colleges are beginning to find their own unique niche, as explained by Levin (2000):

> For the twenty-first century, community colleges will function more on a model compatible with business norms: a fluid organization, with little reverence for academic traditions, little evidence of a dominant professional class of faculty and more evidence of a professional managerial class, and greater reliance upon technology and less upon full-time labor. (p. 21)

While Levin focused on a clearly evolving global mission for the two-year postsecondary school, Reitano (1988) described a system of institutions with a purpose that bordered on chaos. Citing the various diverse functions of a two-year postsecondary school, she denounced the competitive nature that exists within the institutes:

> As the concept of terminal education becomes increasingly anachronistic, as the world becomes increasingly small, as the postindustrial economy requires an increasingly flexible workforce, as the demands of the community become increasingly profound, the need for the two-year colleges to reevaluate their historical missions becomes increasingly great. (Reitano, 1998, p. 125)

## Postsecondary Vocational Faculty Development

As with any profession, teachers at all levels of education have various requirements to achieve and to maintain a degree of preparedness that qualifies and equips them to teach (Cervero, 2001). Vocational faculty members, both secondary and postsecondary, are not exempt from the responsibility of properly preparing themselves. Proficient vocational educators

have, in addition to adequate preparation, the unique challenge of remaining current with practices and skills in the business or industry of trade while remaining knowledgeable and competent in the art of teaching. According to Harrison (1987), vocational teachers have four areas of responsibility: knowledge of the specific skills of the trade; instructional planning, implementation, and evaluation; classroom and laboratory management; and occupational experience.

Schools that prepare teachers for vocational instruction have as their goals ". . . to equip a prospective teacher with state-of-the-art technical knowledge, a sound background in general education, and pedagogical competencies that will facilitate student learning in the classroom and laboratory setting" (Paulter, 1990, p. 102). However, Boesel, Hudson, Deich, and Masten (1994) reported that 33% of postsecondary vocational instructors in the trade and industrial areas have less than a bachelor's degree. Of these same teachers, 19% have more than 20 years of experience teaching in their chosen field. With at least a third of active postsecondary vocational faculty members missing the adequate preparation intended for the profession, administrators have the important challenge of ensuring the vitality of their faculty. Vitality of faculty can be achieved through requiring staff development and other experiences that promote intellectual growth and the reinforcement of the competencies and skills for which faculty were originally hired.

*Past Practices of Vocational Teacher Preparation*

While the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 served to formalize and to provide resources for vocational education in America, it also initiated an ambiguous plan for educators and researchers to follow in reference to vocational teacher education (Lynch, 1996). The Smith-Hughes Act outlined the expectations of the vocational teacher to the degree that occupational

experience in the field was mandatory and considered more valuable than a teaching degree (Gray & Walter, 2001). Gray and Walter summarized:

> Unhappy with what they perceived as the ruination of manual arts by general educators, industrialists in the early 1900s wanted nothing to do with teachers prepared in colleges, and educators wanted nothing to do with teachers who were not prepared in college. (p.1)

According to Lynch (1996), vocational and technical teacher education programs in the United States were organized by their program of trade as originally divided by the 1917 legislation of Smith-Hughes. Future vocational teachers could be found in program areas such as agriculture education, home economics, trade and industrial education, and business education. Sections 2, 3, and 4 in the Smith-Hughes Act authorized the distribution of financial resources to the states for the purpose of preparing vocational teachers, supervisors, and directors but did not delineate colleges of vocational educator preparation (McCaslin & Parks, 2002).

Provisions of the Smith-Hughes legislation have caused a controversy in that occupational experience may be an acceptable substitute for traditional teacher preparation. Kincheloe (1999) denounced the Act as the stimulus for legitimating the separation between academic and vocational education and perpetuating the perception that workforce training was inferior to formal academic education. McCaslin and Parks (2002) reported that Charles Prosser, the first Administrator of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, emphasized that "teachers should be knowledgeable of the skills needed by crafts or trades if they are to be successful teachers, and college and university courses contribute little or nothing to the training of secondary vocational teachers." (p. 13) Gray and Walter (2001), not agreeing with the alternative certification and preparation of vocational education teachers as stipulated in the Smith-Hughes Act, indicated:

> Training for teaching effectiveness is necessary regardless of mission. As suggested by the demand for train-the-trainer programs in business and industry and on the part of labor unions, it is clear that the old adage that people from the workplace are always natural teachers is hogwash. (p. 37)

Boesel et al. (1994) also reported the lack of deviation in vocational teacher preparation since the time of the Smith-Hughes Act early in the 20th Century. While academic teachers have always had minimal degree credential requirements, vocational faculty tend to have had less formal education but considerably more occupational experience. Most state teacher licensure regulations for secondary education require agriculture, business education, family and consumer sciences, marketing, and technology education teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree. The same states, however, require that trade and industrial teachers and health occupations teachers need only to be high school graduates with relevant work experience and licensure (Gray & Walter, 2001).

In a report to the U.S. Congress, Boesel et al. (1994) indicated that 45 % of trade and industry teachers in secondary schools had less than a bachelor's degree. The same report, however, indicated even lower numbers of college graduates for postsecondary trade and industry faculty members. Some 15% of all vocational postsecondary teachers had less than a bachelor's degree compared to 12% in the secondary school system; however, these statistics are skewed by the large number of postsecondary marketing and business teachers classified as vocational teachers, who hold advanced degrees.

Indications are that, historically, more emphasis has been placed on occupational experience when considering a potential vocational educator. An instructor may teach trade and industrial secondary vocational courses with only a high school diploma and occupational experience ranging from two to nine years (McCaslin & Parks, 2002). Until 1984, the only attempts to improve vocational teacher education involved stiffer requirements for entry into

teacher education programs (Naylor, 1997). The Carl Perkins Act of 1984, which was later revised in 1998, introduced legislation in an attempt to reform and to improve vocational education in America. The most significant of the changes to the Carl Perkins Act involved a more rigorous emphasis on academic standards and power granted at the state level to impose sanctions on institutions not conforming to accountability performance measures (McCaslin & Parks, 2002). This new emphasis was the first significant legislation that addressed the accountability and importance on academic standards since the inception of vocational education in 1917.

*Reform in Vocational Teacher Education*

The term "reform" carries with it the implicit understanding that something is in a state that requires a positive adjustment or correction. The decade of the 1980s brought a national focus on education in general and a need to improve the quality of educational delivery and outcomes. More specifically, a centralized focus was placed on teachers, teaching quality, and teacher education. Gray and Walter (2001) identified seven areas of needed reform for vocational teacher preparation. Included in these recommendations were increased requirements in training in: the teaching of academic subjects including math, science, and communications; educating special needs students and diverse student groups; and increased supervision of school-sponsored, work-based learning opportunities provided to vocational students.

The diversity of program offerings within vocational education, as a result of the Smith-Hughes Act, was partly responsible for the difficulty in clearly defining an educational curriculum for vocational teachers. Gray and Walter (2001) recommended that teacher education programs for career and technical educators be redesigned based on mission rather than occupational content or existing program titles. Gray and Walter further recommended only

two missions from which to choose: (1) Traditional/Tech Prep or (2) Education through Occupations/Work, Family, Community, and Technology/Tech Prep.

In their conclusions to Congress concerning vocational teacher preparation, Boesel et al. (1994) stated:

> If such reforms are to be effected, there will have to be substantial changes in the way teachers are prepared in colleges and universities. The Perkins Act should support the pre-service, as well as in-service, preparation of teachers for integrated, contextualized education oriented toward work. . . . Vocational teachers will need more and more [sic] rigorous courses in the liberal arts. For many prospective vocational teachers, a greater emphasis on math and computers will be required. (p. 81)

Naylor (1997) cautioned, however, that any changes in vocational teacher education and certification programs needed to be carefully evaluated to ensure the greatest possible improvements in program quality. Naylor also believed that there was an inherent danger of exacerbating the problem of declining enrollments in vocational teacher education programs by increasing preparation requirements.

Anderson, Barrick, and Hughes (1992), when discussing the causes for reform in vocational teacher preparation, cited fiscal constraints and increased demands for accountability. The call for this heightened level of responsibility came from the public, other educators, and, most importantly, the businesses and industries that hired the vocationally trained. The absence of clarity in defining the specific roles of vocational teacher education was due, in part, to the diversity of the educational mission in various states. According to Anderson et al. (1992), "…state-level policies affecting teacher education appear to reflect the current educational climate in each state" (p. 43). As a result of these contributing factors, reform of vocational teacher preparation has been imminent. Anderson et al. also predicted that, given current trends, vocational preparation would be less involved with preservice teacher education and more prevalently associated with alternative certification programs.

*Impetus for Reform in Vocational Teacher Education*

Reform is brought about by external and internal changes within a system. The literature revealed three areas that have been critical to reform in teacher preparation for vocational education. The replacement of the behaviorist approach to vocational learning with that of constructivism is one major change directly impacting teacher preparation (Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Naylor, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999). Second, there has been a consistently growing shortage of vocational teachers resulting in a need for reform of teacher preparation (Gray & Walter, 2001; Tomblin & Haring, 1999; Ruhland, 2001). The third impetus for teacher reform was based on the changing mission of vocational schools to adapt to a global economy and multicultural society (Kerka, 1997; Levin, 2000; Reitano, 1998).

*Constructivism*

Since the early years of vocational instruction in the United States, the theoretical framework for vocational education was grounded in behaviorism. According to Doolittle and Camp (1999), behaviorism was based on the acquisition of stimulus-response pairs. The formation of links between specific stimuli and responses through the application of rewards undergird the behaviorists' belief. According to this ideology, most human behavior can be understood as basic reflexive learning based on the reaction to the environment. The behaviorist model applied to vocational training placed students in the position of having to develop predetermined skills, based on predetermined industry standards and imposed on the learners. Doolittle and Camp contended that learning through a behaviorism construct undermined the true purposes of education and that a fundamental change in delivery is necessary.

> Regardless of structural reforms such as Tech Prep, School To Work, and High Schools That Work, as long as the local curriculum derives from worker task lists, is delivered using incremental teacher-directed instruction, and is evaluated based on criterion

> referenced measures, behaviorism remains the de-facto theoretical foundation. (Doolittle & Camp, 1999, p. 81)

As technology has rapidly advanced, learning in the behaviorism construct has become obsolete, and the theoretical foundation of vocational education has given way to constructivism. Naylor (1997) defined constructivism as "a cognitive approach that emphasizes constructing knowledge through a problem-solving process designed to produce learners who are problem solvers, lifelong learners, makers of meaning, collaborators, change agents who are also able to change, and practitioners of the democratic processes" (p. 3). Kincheloe (1999) decried the negative socioeconomic implications of behaviorism to the point of questioning the morality of such an oppressing practice. Constructivism and the democratic implications for the working class, however, have tendencies to liberate the vocationally trained worker according to Kincheloe.

Constructivism as the theoretical foundation for career and technical education may prove to be the most profound impetus for change in vocational education, and Doolittle and Camp (1999) reported:

> The path of reform the profession has followed over recent years places a strain on the degree to which behaviorist learning theory can adequately describe, explain, and predict the pedagogy needed by career and technical education as we move into the new millennium. (p. 17)

The advancements of technology have caused the lines between manual and mental labor to be blurred to the degree that the dichotomy between academic and vocational-technical may not be so clearly defined as the writers of the Smith-Hughes Act seemed to believe. Shifting vocational teacher education so that teachers develop a work force where the technical, mental, and interpersonal skills produce a less hierarchical workplace is critical to maintaining current with the evolution of work (Naylor, 1997).

*Teacher Shortages*

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003) stated that 87 % of jobs require postsecondary education but not necessarily a four-year baccalaureate degree. With this large demand for technically trained employees, teachers with the necessary skills and credentials are in short supply. Increasing school enrollments, teacher retirements, and exorbitant numbers of teachers leaving the profession for secular work have added to the dilemma of the teacher shortage (Ruhland, 2001). Gray and Walter (2001) estimated that in the U.S. one million new teachers will be needed by the year 2010. Career and technical education faculty are not exempt from this increasing shortage.

Alternative certification programs that have long been a part of career and technical teacher education have become the norm as 46 states have adopted such programs (Tomblin & Haring, 1999). Alternative certification may be defined as, "any significant departure from a traditional undergraduate route through teacher education programs in universities and colleges" (Tomblin & Haring, 1999, p. 509). According to Tomblin and Haring, vocational teachers that receive certification through these alternative programs have, historically, not performed as well as those prepared through the traditional teacher education process. Most school administrators would reluctantly admit, however, that a marginally prepared teacher with considerable competence in the subject matter is better than no teacher at all (Gray & Walter, 2001).

Gray and Walter (2001) referred to the teacher shortage as the most formidable constraint facing reform. Efforts to strengthen career and technical teacher preparation that involved higher standards tended to deter even more potential teachers from entering the field. As the cost of education rises and certification and licensure tests become more difficult, the appeal of higher

paying jobs in business and industry serve to exacerbate the problem of too few teachers (Ruhland, 1999).

*The Changing Mission of Vocational Education*

Vocational education at the postsecondary level has been in the process of revising its mission to become more globally oriented in its occupational preparation along with developing a responsive pattern of behavior (Levin, 2000). Societal changes are reflected in diversity of both the student population and that of the employer. Employers in a global economy will need workers who are, not only skilled in the technical trade, but also skilled in interpersonal relations with the global community (Levin, 2000).

The new mission of vocational-technical education will include goals relevant to the learning theory of constructivism. Kerka (1997) reported that, although there are numerous examples of constructivists' approaches in areas such as science, mathematics, and English, there were very few references to constructivism in vocational education literature. She further stated that, with the profound emphasis on apprentice learning, problem solving, and workplace context, vocational studies are inherently constructivist in nature. Given the rapidly evolving nature of the global economy, the diversity of the clientele, and the demands for critical thinking skills by the nation's employers, the mission of vocational education will have to continue to develop to satisfy the impending needs of its clientele.

## Mandatory Adult Education

As technology continues to advance at accelerated rates, employers have found it necessary to require their employees to upgrade skills through continued education (Cervero, 2001; Kerka, 1994; Gammill, 1994). Kerka (1994) proposed that since being a professional implies commitment to one's continuing education, there should not have to be mandates. The

reality is, however, that changes in technology, advancements in knowledge, public demands for accountability, and the need for consumer protection all have contributed to mandates for further education. The plight of the adult learner varies dramatically from the pedagogical view of the traditional child learner. Understanding these differences is critical to facilitating a successful experience for adults who are returning to college after having an established career and family life. Grasping the nature of the effects on both the personal and professional life of the adult learner under mandate will offer such insight and understanding.

Michigan lawyers in favor of a state law requiring continuing education among practicing attorneys reported that there were no studies measuring the effects of mandatory education (McLoughlin, 2002). While future specific quantitative studies may prove necessary and useful, the literature does, indeed, yield information regarding the effects of a forced education environment. The work of Burke (2001) identified influencing factors on career stages of educators that are categorized into personal environment and working environment. Therefore, the effects of mandatory education are examined as two separate concepts: personal effects of mandatory education and professional effects of mandatory education.

*Personal Effects of Mandatory Education*

Although mandatory education has been an established component of adult education, it remains the source of heated controversy primarily due to the fact that adults take personal objection at being forced to do anything (Kerka, 1994). The idea of education, for many, has connotations of the compulsory didactic system from childhood. Negative emotions, resentment, and fear are among first reactions to required adult education (Cutz, 1997). Burke (2001) described the personal environment to include family and hobbies, public attitudes and pressures, relationships, preparation, and external influences.

One example of public attitudes and pressures combined with family stress was depicted in a study by Cutz (1999):

> My husband is an alcoholic. I have to do the things that are his responsibility. When he is drunk he hits me. I do not want to go to a literacy program with my neighbors to look at me with those bruises on my face. (pp. 3-4)

The participant in this study by Cutz was clearly under male oppression and, because of a family situation, would not be a part of a literacy program. Other women in the same study reported that their husbands feared being cheated on when wives entered education. Still, other women, single parents, expressed hopelessness at having their children cared for during their educational process. Tight (1999) reported that adult learning has led to family break-ups due to the stress, financial strain, and time away from home.

Alejandro (2001) presented a completely different perspective of the family role in education. He stated that professionals tend to be more willing participants of continued education programs if their immediate family members were well educated and supported ongoing educational endeavors. Grimminck (1993) expressed a desire for further education that grew out of embarrassment at not being able to help his children with homework. Setting an example for his children and gaining increased respect from his spouse and in-laws were other family influences on his decision to return to higher education. This type of gender-related antithesis is described by Tight (1999) as the heroic man versus the heroic woman. The working-class man who returns to school is honored and respected while the woman strives and struggles to cope with the many and conflicting demands of family, work, and learning.

For use in the context of adult mandatory education, Adams (1999) provided the following definition of stress: "an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes, that is a consequence of any external action, situation, or event

that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person" (p. 3). Based on this definition, education of any form will produce stress. Mandatory education, however, has the potential to evoke greater amounts of pressure on participants. Individuals who are placed in a situation where they are forced to reconsider values, beliefs, and understandings that challenge life-long personal realities undergo considerable stress (Tight, 1999).

When delineating the disadvantages to mandatory education, Kerka (1994) first cited the fact that this type of forced education violates adult learning principles. Voluntary participation, self-direction, and the informal nature of adult learning are all negated. Disregarding individual learning styles and needs, mandatory education promotes a level of uniformity to adult learning that promotes stress and strong feelings of resentment. In a study by Cutz (1997) of adults with reservations about entering a literacy program, one participant stated, "I can imagine teachers asking me to do something in front of the rest that I cannot do. It will be horrible. I really fear that" (p. 3). Grimminck (1993) indicated that, while he was indeed an adult and that he wanted to be respected as such, he still needed the inner-child to be nurtured and educated.

One form of mandatory education is the compulsory educational environment faced by children in primary and secondary schools. The concept of a carefree childhood is nearly obsolete as millions of children are stressed on a daily basis by failing grades, demanding classroom environments, athletic requirements, tests, and conflicts with teachers. Fallin, Wallinga, and Coleman (2001) described the cognitive-transactional model as providing a convincing means of depicting the experience of stress in a child's life. The cognitive-transactional model identified three theoretical concepts involving educational stress with children that include daily stressors and cognitive appraisal, coping strategies, and resources. For each of these concepts, general classroom interventions were suggested. For daily stressors

and cognitive appraisal, the classroom intervention was to 1) identify stressors, 2) change or remove stressors, when appropriate, and 3) help change appraisals from negative to positive. Coping strategies yielded two interventions: 1) identify and evaluate current strategies, and 2) reinforce effective strategies and teach new ones. The resources concept also had two interventions: 1) evaluate available resources and 2) enhance resources of health and energy, self-esteem, and social support. While adults in a mandatory education environment differ greatly from children in compulsory education, the model described by Fallin et al. (2001) could be adapted and revised to lessen stress in the adult classroom.

In a study of stressors on vocational teachers, Adams (1999) reported a significant source of stress due to feelings of lack of occupational confidence in the instructional or work environment. Vocational teachers were particularly susceptible to this type of stress because of rapid changes in technology that resulted in personal skills and knowledge being repeatedly outdated. In a speech to the Royal Commission on Learning, Grimminck (1993) spoke about the stress due to inadequacy in job skills that were, later, relieved as a result of adult education courses that supplied the necessary skills. Therefore, while Tight (1999) reported stress during the mandatory educational process, Adams (1999) and Grimminck (1993) described situations where continued education may be a solution to stress.

In a mandatory education of a different type, prisoners were required to enter literacy programs to develop varying degrees of skill in interpreting prose, documents, and numbers. Kerka (1995), in a study of these types of prison literacy programs, identified lack of confidence as a primary factor in inmates' reluctance to go to the mandatory classes. This diminished view of self was related directly to negative past experiences with education. Ironically, prisoners with less than a high school diploma tended to be more proficient in many basic skills than their

out-of-prison counterparts. Grimminck (1993) also reflected similar feelings when he stated, ". . . my lack of education has always haunted me. I always felt little confidence in what I could do and had low self-esteem" (p. 1).

The age of the adult student has proven to be a source of a diminished view of self. When confronted with the reality of having to return to school, many adults were fearful that their cognitive and retentive abilities had diminished due to age. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1999), this was a misconception. Age and intelligence issues center on four key factors: the definition of age, definitions of intelligence, types of tests used to measure intelligence, and research methods and their pitfalls. Research concluded that there were no significant reductions in intelligence until the 80s or 90s, and even that was very limited. Merriam and Caffarella attributed the old adage, "an old dog can't learn new tricks" to the reality that the older dogs simply are less likely to gamble on new tricks when the old tricks have served so well in the past. In *Staff development: Old dogs can learn new tricks*, Dixon (2001) examined an adult learning situation where experienced teaching faculty were expected to achieve specific competencies. According to Dixon, the key to growth was in the risk-taking. The teachers had to remove themselves from their comfort zones before they could begin to acquire the skills and new strategies that were the goals of the curriculum.

According to Tight (1999), there exists the perception that one runs the risk of exclusion from the mainstream economy and society if one does not engage in returning to school for further education. Stress caused by the fear of failure and embarrassment before peers is exacerbated by a weakened view of self. Tight also warned of the contrary occurring in light of success. He described a learning junkie who becomes addicted to education for the sake of itself. The concept of the independent self-directed learner, the supposed goal of adult education, is

negated when an adult student becomes so engaged in the completion of the relatively short-term goals of courses that he develops this addiction.

The nature of mandatory education is that the employer is requiring such of the employee. While some programs have been arranged to use company time for the classroom portion of the required education, most have shifted the burden of time to the individual (Tight, 1999). The majority of employers regard personal leisure time as the appropriate opportunity for employees to acquire needed skills and training. Even for organizations that provided time off during working hours, very rarely would additional work hours be allotted for needed reading, studying, homework and other out-of-class activities expected within the coursework. In a study of adults refusing to participate in a literacy program, Cutz (1997) revealed that 2 of the 12 most common reasons given were related to time. Lack of enough time to complete expected requirements and the feeling that education was a waste of time were both common responses among participants in the study by Cutz.

In addition to time, another elusive resource that individuals possess is that of money. Once again, employers may bear the burden of tuition costs, and some may even pay for books and course materials, but other expenses are incurred in the process of adult education that the employee is expected to absorb. The added cost of childcare for evening hours needed to attend classes was one example of these additional expenses (Cutz, 1997). Cutz also related that individuals who had second jobs during off hours would result in money lost if they used that time for continued education. Tight (1999) cited the fact that there was no guarantee of financial reward for higher education. While rate-of-return analyses indicated precise financial returns to society and to the economy, those were based on retrospective averages. There was no guarantee to the individual that her investment in learning would produce tangible dividends.

*Professional Effects of Mandatory Education*

Employers in the United States increased spending on employee education by 24 to 32 % in the past decade (Alejandro, 2001). This financial investment in the knowledge base of the personnel was indicative of the value placed on education by business and industry. There are effects on the organizational life of the individual involved with mandatory education that result in the organization making such an investment. The professional environment, then, becomes another area for study of the effects of mandatory education. In his work with defining various career stages, Burke (2001) divided the professional environment into the areas of evaluation, teaching and learning, professional development, non-instructional duties, instructional management, and union and professionalism.

Kerka (1995) reported that, in a study of mandatory literacy programs in prisons, there was only slightly significant difference in achievement between mandatory and voluntary education. It was the education itself, irrespective of the voluntary or involuntary nature of the participants, which produced desired outcomes. Gammill (1994) described similar results with a completely different population. Complacent pharmacists who were resistant to learning, referred to as 'laggards,' were forced out of isolation and their skills updated regardless of their lack of volunteerism. This positive impact on the quality of pharmaceutical care in medicine was also reflected in the individual professionals required to participate according to Gammill's study.

Kerka (1994) cited that evidence exists where well-designed programs of mandatory education influenced effective practice. Because mandatory education was required, the participants tended to expect high quality in the delivery of courses. They also became more astute consumers of the learning opportunities available.

Education becomes mandated by an employer due to some perceived deficiency in an individual or group that can be remedied through learning. Some competency must be achieved. Kerka (1994) identified competency as having many attributes including knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation, professional judgment, and interpersonal skills. She proposed the argument, however, that attempting to break down professional judgment into discreet tasks for the purpose of conveying a competency undermines the value of higher-level critical reflection. Cervero (2001) took the argument further when he discussed problem-centered curricula as opposed to curricula that are subject-centered. For a program of continued education to be successful, whether mandatory or not, it must go beyond the simple transfer of information. The individual must be able to put into practice the new competency, values, and skills to the degree that she performs better. In other words, the educational experience must be applicable.

To be of value to the participant, mandatory education for the professional should help to keep them "current in their fields, maximize their competence, advance in their careers, and enjoy greater job security" (Alejandro, 2001, p. 15). Alejandro also stated that the major positive incentives were expected financial benefit and status, bonuses, promotions, and other rewards. While the applicability of competencies and skills related to the professional life of the participant in mandatory education on an external level, these benefits achieved as a result of the newly acquired education were applicable on a personal, internal level.

Cervero (2001) stated that every major profession, whether licensed or certified, used some form of mandatory continuing education. For example, certified public accountants were required by law to attend continuing education courses in 49 states. Likewise, 37 states had continuing education requirements for lawyers while 47 states had similar requirements for pharmacists. The New York Stock exchange mandated continued education for their employees

and all 21 medical specialty boards had re-certification requirements that included continuing education (Cervero, 2001). Continuing professional education has been growing as a sub-category under the umbrella of mandatory education. As Kerka (1994) argued, being a professional implies commitment to continuing one's education. Due to public demands for accountability and the need for consumer protection, however, credentialing became necessary.

A license or certificate to practice in a particular profession implies consent on the part of the individual to be governed by the policies and rules of that profession. Alejandro (2001) concluded that one of the most significant forces driving continuing education programs was the compulsory nature due to the need for professionals to maintain a license, certificate, or accreditation. As for the personal effect on the individual, credentialing validated the competencies and skills of the professional.

## Career Stages

Adult development, career development, and sociology literature have revealed that individuals have various skills, attitudes, and behaviors depending on their stage of life and career (Burke, 2001; Cohen, 1991; Lynn, 2002). Employees in present-day organizations have been generalized into one of three career stages. Reichers (1986) divided these into early, mid, and late career stages. Cohen (1991) refered to these three stages as the pre-entry stage, the early employment stage, and the middle and late career stages. Raelin (1990) identified the three career stages as "finding a niche," "digging in," and "entrenching." Burke (2001) focused on the career stages of teachers and described the three stages as survival, adjustment, and mature. Gould and Hawkins (1978) identified the three stages as establishment, advancement, and maintenance.

Regardless of the nomenclature used to describe the stages, the literature reviewed classified the stages into three distinct categories with very similar characteristics. The research revealed that, as employees' characteristics change, their focus, motivation, and need for professional development will also change (Lynn, 2002). Cohen (1991) expanded the generic career stages of adult maturity in careers for further description. The early stage may be thought of as entering the adult world. The mid stage is the 30s transition and settling down phase. The late stage is that of middle adulthood. While age has been the most obvious indicator for career stage, tenure within the profession or length of service within the organization has been identified as a second indicator (Cohen, 1991).

*Characteristics of the Late Career Stage*

As this study sought to examine vocational teachers that were considered veteran teachers, the third or late career stage was chosen for specific review. Raelin discusses the third or "entrenching" stage as such:

> By this point, professionals have lowered their aspirations and professional commitment. Since they are still very involved in their jobs, they are somewhat ambivalent or conflicted about their loss of professionalism, but they have begun to accept the realities and politics of bureaucratic life. Although their job may not pay as much as they feel they deserve, they don't consider it likely that they will find a job elsewhere due to any number of internal and external circumstances. (p. 62)

Noe, Steffy, and Barber (1988) gave a similar description of the third career stage. They described the maintenance phase as a time when the employee wished to remain productive and to avoid technical obsolescence. Work involvement decreased due to stronger commitments to family and community. Decreased willingness to accept mobility opportunities was a common characteristic in the third career phase (Noe, Steffy, & Barber, 1988).

Gould and Hawkins (1978) depicted the third career stage employee as less competitive and more focused on relationships than career. While the promotional opportunities leveled off,

the employee at this later stage becomes more concerned with pay as he or she identified compensation with worth to the organization. The maintenance stage employee, according to Gould and Hawkins, considered himself a permanent member of the organization and expected reciprocation for such commitment.

When evaluating commitment to the organization in relation to career stages, Cohen (1991) found that there was a strong relationship between commitment and turnover in the early stages of the employee's career. With employees in the mid- and late-career phase, however, there was a stronger relationship between commitment and performance. Most significant to this study were Cohen's (1991) findings that:

> People in the late stage of their career are in a stage of relative tranquility. These persons are more oriented to 'settling down' and are less willing to relocate or leave the organization for purposes of promotion. Thus, one would expect a weaker relationship between commitment and turnover in the mid- and late-career stages than in the early career stage, because in the later career stages turnover is relatively low regardless of commitment. (pp. 255-256)

Cohen added that lack of opportunity elsewhere tended to solidify the individual's attachment and commitment to the organization. Thus, veteran teachers in technical education who fall into this late stage of their career will be more likely to stay with the institution while the commitment and loyalty to the school may lessen as a result of the mandate to return to school.

*Career Stages for Teachers*

Burke (2001) has taken the psychology research on employee career stages to a more specific level to develop the career stages for teachers. Although parallel in theory to the generalized descriptions, Burke defined the teaching career stages as: survival, adjustment or consolidation, and maturity. These stages did not correspond directly to age, but to tenure in the profession. The survival stage lasts only one or two years, the adjustment stage anywhere from two to five years, and the maturity stage lasting the remainder of the teacher's career.

McInnis (2000) conducted a national survey of academics in Australian Universities. The findings in this study reflected that mature teachers were chiefly concerned with the quality of their teaching and become frustrated with detractors to quality. Confusion of purpose and competing demands were cited as the primary threats to quality instruction. According to McInnis, 34% of postsecondary teachers received additional teacher training at the start of their careers, but that only 25% had received such training within 2 years of the survey. Of the new postsecondary teachers, however, 56% reported no additional teacher training at their career start. McInnis reported that an improvement in teacher performance was expected by local administrations to the degree that new programs and formal professional development programs were designed to address this need. "More universities are devising teaching plans and initiating their own programs for financial incentives and penalties with respect to teaching performance," according to McInnis (p. 150).

Burke (2001) developed an instrument, The Attitudes Toward Personal Teaching Behaviors Instrument (ATPTB), to measure patterns of teacher's attitudes at different stages of their careers. The factors influencing behaviors were divided into two categories: personal environment and organizational environment. The factors influencing the teachers' personal environment were identified as family and hobbies, public attitudes and pressures, working relationships, background and preparation, and external influences. The factors from the organizational environment included teaching and learning, evaluation, instructional management, union and professionalism, professional development, and non-instructional duties. The instrument developed by Burke allowed administrators to evaluate both personal and professional influences on teachers at given career stages. This evaluation could then be used to

design and to plan individualized staff development for each teacher given his or her career stage.

Lynn (2002) also divided the influences on teachers into the personal and professional categories but cautioned that the transition from one stage to the next was dynamic and flexible rather than static and linear. Lynn stressed that teachers move in and out of the specific stages of their careers based on personal and professional environmental influences. When considering staff development for teachers, it is imperative to be cognizant of the individual's career stage:

> Teacher development theory is predicated on the assumption that the needs of the beginning or novice teacher in the induction phase differ from that of an experienced teacher who has reached the enthusiasm and growth stage or has entered the stable phase. As a result, teachers must be motivated to seek continual growth through professional development that advocates personalized and individualized support systems. (Lynn, p. 182)

Fugate and Amey (2000) conducted a qualitative study of community college faculty career paths, roles, and development. Participants in this study stated that faculty development activities had a direct and vital impact throughout their careers. They saw a direct link between their ability to teach and faculty development activities. Fugate and Amey also found that these teachers had followed diverse career paths but, collectively, were very involved with their community as well as their institution. This finding is consistent with the work of McInnis (2000) who recommended that administrators should take into consideration the career stage environment of each individual faculty member when planning professional development and other activities.

> What is needed is a rethinking of recruitment, accreditation, induction and deployment of teaching staff rather than persisting with the belief that all academics should be cast in the same mold and that they ought to be able to do more and perform better on all fronts for their entire careers. (McInnis, p. 151)

This indicates that administrators of veteran postsecondary teachers should consider the career stage of the individual when developing staff development plans that include returning to higher education to earn degrees or additional credits.

## Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter provided the framework for this study; catalysts for change in vocational education, postsecondary faculty development, mandatory adult education, and career stages. No literature was found that specifically studied veteran postsecondary vocational faculty being mandated to earn higher education to satisfy minimum credential expectations. However, the body of literature gathered from the framework reviewed provided a solid basis on which to prepare the study.

Vocational education and the two-year postsecondary college system was created out of necessity on the part of society, the economy, and the university system's need for such an intermediate level. Legislation such as the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and the Carl Perkins Act of 1984 has brought about necessary changes for vocational education but society has always held a view that occupational training is inferior to academic preparation. The vocational-technical colleges have continually evolved to satisfy economic needs and have been projected to yield to the requests of business and industry in their mission.

The teacher preparation for vocational faculty has been poorly organized on a national level due to the varied nature of the different vocational and technical programs. For example, individuals wishing to be teachers of agriculture program will be in an agricultural school rather than a school of higher education. Efforts have been initiated to reform vocational teacher preparation due to projected teacher shortages, constructivism as a new theoretical framework

for vocational training, and the changing mission of vocational education to satisfy economical needs.

The reform of teacher preparation and faculty development will result in the mandate that some teachers return to school to earn additional credits or even degrees. The literature reviewed on mandatory education revealed effects on both the personal and professional lives of individuals forced to return to school. Negative public attitudes, negative effects on family life, and a diminished view of self were all cited in the literature as effects on the personal life of the participant. The professional life, however, yielded more positive effects in that the educational objectives were achieved regardless of whether the situation was voluntary or mandatory.

Veteran faculty are in a late career stage that places them in an environment where expectations, needs, and resources are different than any other career stage. The literature revealed three primary stages in the life of an employee, more specifically, a teacher. The third and last career stage was characterized by lower expectations of advancement, increased commitment to the organization, and more focus on relationships than career mobility. The body of literature reviewed identified three career stages for teachers whereby the third stage had significant differences to the first two. A heavy focus was placed on the staff development needs of veteran teachers and the imperative nature of individualized planning to meet specific needs of these faculty members.

# CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements affected the personal and career development of postsecondary vocational teachers. A comprehensive review of the literature revealed few studies that focused on veteran vocational faculty under a mandate to return to higher education. The researcher sought, through a basic interpretative qualitative approach, the perspectives of five veteran vocational teachers who were actively taking college courses under an administrative mandate to achieve a college degree or to suffer termination of employment.

Three interviews were conducted with each of the five participants. The first interview sought to profile each vocational educator and to have him or her provide a historic perspective on the need for returning to school. The second interview, more probing in nature, sought to identify the personal effects of the mandated college experience while identifying areas where administrative and supervisory support was needed. The purpose of the third and final interview was to examine the effects on the professional life of the educator and how administration might better facilitate that aspect of the experience.

Chapter 3 includes descriptions of (1) the research questions, (2) the design, (3) sample selection, (4) data collection, (5) data analysis, and (6) validity and reliability.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty?
2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self?
3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants on an organizational level?
4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school?

## Research Design and Rationale

This research was an application of qualitative methods for the purpose of understanding how the experiences of veteran vocational teachers being forced to return to higher education influenced their personal and professional lives. Qualitative researchers seek to understand what specific interpretations an individual has at a particular time within a particular context (Merriam, 2002). Each veteran teacher within this study had his or her own constructions and interpretations of reality that could most effectively be explored through the methods offered by qualitative methods.

The qualitative approach facilitates exploration and allows for inductive analysis. There are several distinct types of qualitative research including basic interpretive qualitative study, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical qualitative, and postmodern research (Merriam, 2002). This study was interpretive as the researcher sought to understand how the participants made meaning of returning to school and then described, in great detail, the interpretation gleaned from the meanings of the data.

Qualitative research of this type incorporates a holistic approach whereby the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its individual parts (Patton, 1990).

Symbolic interactionism was the approach used to guide this study with regard to the experiences of veteran vocational faculty returning to higher education as a result of new accreditation standards. Blumer (1969) coined the term "symbolic interactionism" to describe situations involving the study of human groups and human contact. Blumer defined three major premises of symbolic interactionism:

> The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (p. 2)

Blumer (1969) based his work on that of Mead (1934) who originally conceived the idea of social behavior based on interaction between individuals and the meanings that they attached to symbols. Blumer's symbolic interactionism was different in that he believed that humans act on the meanings that are intrinsically held by the individual as a result of interactions with others. Blumer believed that, because of social interactions, individuals tended to attach meanings to things that were otherwise devoid of meaning. Blumer (1969) noted:

> The term 'symbolic interaction' refers, of course, to the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their 'response' is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions. This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behavior. (p. 180)

Within the qualitative approach of symbolic interactionism, individuals are seen as actors. Goffman (1958) discussed the roles as being "dramaturgical" with the human's roles as scripted. Other times, the actors may be in an improvisational role and, still others, he or she

may be in a role-making position. Thus, the social construction of society, negotiated reality, and emphasis on symbols leads one to understand the framework of symbolic interactionism in a theatrical analogy.

Within the context of this theatrical analogy, the veteran teachers taking courses in higher education can be seen as actors. Before they enrolled in these courses, these teachers held internal meanings for their career, their school, and higher education. The experience of attending classes under an administrative mandate and the natural interactions with other teachers in the same situation may have affected these meanings.

## Data Sources

As this study sought to understand experiences of veteran postsecondary teachers returning to school, a purposeful sample of educators falling into this category were selected to participate. Merriam (2001) stated that "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Patton (1990) further explained that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth." (p. 169, emphasis in the original)

In contrast to quantitative analysis, a qualitative study does not rely on a random sample but on a carefully selected sample that will provide optimum descriptive information relevant to the study (Merriam, 2001; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton 1990). For this reason, the researcher chose vocational teachers from three different southeastern schools that were attending courses toward earning a mandated degree. A total of five participants were chosen as a "minimum based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (Patton, 1990, p. 186). The number of participants in a qualitative study varies in

relation to the resources available, the data to be gathered, questions being asked, along with many other variables (Merriam, 2001). Patton (1990) recommended establishing an expected minimum with the knowledge that this may increase if redundancy of data is not achieved during analysis. Unlike qualitative research where larger quantities of participants relates to stronger reliability, qualitative research seeks to understand the essence of meaning of a phenomenon. This can best be achieved by purposefully selecting the most information-rich sources of data (Merriam, 2001; Merriam & Simpson, 1995; Patton, 1990).

*Sampling Method*

Convenience sampling was also used in determining the participants. Three of the five participants were employed at the same school as the researcher. The easy access to these participants, along with familiarity with the individuals, their administration, and their personal circumstances provided ease of gaining perspectives from the participants. The following characteristics were used as criteria to choose the sample for this study:

1. The instructors had been actively employed in a public postsecondary school serving in a teaching capacity for a minimum of 10 years.
2. The instructors did not hold the minimum credentials required by the new accreditation agency.
3. The instructors were given an ultimatum by their administration to pursue actively the minimum education credentials or suffer loss of employment.
4. The instructors were actively enrolled in college courses working toward the mandated degree.

While none of the participants held a college degree, all had a minimum of a vocational-technical diploma from a post-secondary institution. The subjects for the study ranged in age from 42 to

56 and all were married; one had no children. All of the participants were teachers at relatively small technical colleges in the southeastern United States. One of the colleges had an average quarterly enrollment of approximately 1500 students while the other averaged about 1200 students. Both of the colleges were seeking new accreditation that would require program faculty to have at least the minimum degree that was offered in the program. For the participants, that equated to a two-year associate degree.

## Profile of the Participants

The participants for this study included vocational instructors with a minimum of ten years of experience teaching in their field at a postsecondary institution. The participants taught in the same southeastern state technical college system but were employed at three of the 34 different technical colleges within that system. The educational experience of the teachers ranged from 11 to 25 years. None of the participants in the study held a higher education degree. For purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the names of the participants and their participating institutions.

Jerry Tyson, a 53-year-old Diesel Technology instructor, has been with Alpha Technical College for his entire 25-year teaching career. Tyson received his technical diploma from the Farm Machinery program at Alpha Technical College and had worked in the diesel industry for 10 years prior to entering education. Jerry had completed 65% of the required associate degree at the time of data collection and had never enrolled in a college credit course prior to the mandate.

Mark Roberson was the sole Aircraft Structural Technology instructor at Alpha Technical College where he has served for 20 years in the teaching capacity. Roberson was a graduate of the Automotive Body Repair program at Alpha Technical College and came to the school with

three years of occupational experience in automotive body shops. The 42-year-old had completed 40% of the required associate degree at the time of data collection. Mark had never enrolled for college credit prior to the mandate.

Randy Dennard, a Heavy Equipment instructor at Alpha Technical College, had a total of 19 years teaching experience at the postsecondary level. Randy received his diploma from Alpha Technical College in Diesel Equipment Technology and had a total of eight years of occupational experience in the field. He worked on heavy equipment for four years prior to teaching, lost his teaching job due to a statewide 'reduction in force' 13 years into his education career, and was rehired by Alpha Technical College four years later. Dennard had enrolled in two college courses three years into his teaching career but was not pursuing a degree. At the time of data collection, Randy had completed 75% of the mandated degree. Randy was 45 years of age.

Bobbi Johnson, the only female participant in the study, has served 11 years with Beta Technical College as Printing and Graphics instructor. Johnson has worked in the printing industry since high school, amassing 15 years of occupational experience. The 51-year-old had no formal education beyond high school but relied solely upon occupational experience as preparation for her teaching career. At the time of data collection, Bobbi was 65% complete with the mandated degree.

Roy Muldin was Industrial Electrical Instructor for Gamma Technical College where he has served for three years. Prior to his hiring at Gamma Technical College, Roy had taught at another postsecondary technical college, in the same state, for 8 years giving him a total of 11 years of postsecondary vocational teaching experience. Roy was a graduate of the Electrical Construction and Maintenance diploma at Gamma Technical College and worked in the

electrical industry for 13 years prior to entering the teaching field. At 42 years of age, Roy had enrolled in college courses earlier in his career but dropped out before earning any credits. Muldin was 50% into the matriculation of the required associate degree at the time of data collection.

## Profile of the State Technical College System

The State Technical College System (STCS) for which the study was chosen maintains 34 technical colleges with 18 satellite campuses. The system has a full time credit enrollment of over 153,000 students with over 26,500 graduates on average per year. The STCS boasts a 98.6% graduate placement rate in field of study. Of the students enrolled in colleges within the system in 2003, 51% were over the age of 25, the male/female distribution was 40% to 60% respectively, and 19% of the student population were considered to be either disabled or disadvantaged. Caucasian students were in the majority of the population at 53%, followed by African American students at 41%.

The Council on Occupational Education (COE) accredits all of the technical colleges within the STCS. In 2000, the STCS required all of the schools in the system to change their name to reflect the word 'college,' thereby, requiring all of the schools to offer an associate degree to legitimize the name change. As credit transferability from the technical colleges to the state university system became an issue, the state issued a mandate that all of the technical colleges would be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges (COC) by the end of the decade. This new accreditation is the same as that held by the state universities. At the time of data collection, 22 of the 34 technical colleges had yet to earn the SACS/COC accreditation.

There were three schools within the STCS that employed participants in this study: Alpha Technical College, Beta Technical College, and Gamma Technical College. Alpha Technical College has 61 full time instructors, 12 of which have been required to earn an Associate Degree to fulfill SACS/COC accreditation credential expectations. Beta Technical College has 144 full time faculty members with 14 required to earn the degree. Gamma Technical College, the largest of the three schools in the study, has 180 full-time faculty members with 10 instructors required to earn a degree for accreditation. Gamma Technical College had already achieved the SACS/COC accreditation at the time of the study but could not offer degrees in the programs where instructor credentials did not meet the minimum criteria.

## Data Collection Procedures

The primary source of data for this study was the participant interview. All were interviewed three times to allow adequate opportunity for the researcher to probe for areas that needed further clarification. The participants were told to plan for interviews lasting no longer than one hour each. The nature of the semi-structured interviews and open-ended research questions, however, required some degree of reasonable flexibility with regard to time. While the researcher offered to end the interviews when the hour was complete, the participants in these cases chose to continue to completion. No interview lasted longer than one and one half hour. The transcripts were single-spaced with each line numbered for ease of reference.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the total time spent with each participant over the span of the three interviews, the amount of transcription pages, and the number of pages of fieldnotes taken. The interviews were recorded in the participants' offices or classroom, according to their own choice. Subjects were given the opportunity to review the interview transcripts and feedback was used to ensure the accuracy of information gathered. The researcher took

fieldnotes during the interviews of observed participant behavior to note nonverbal responses and, later, to compare those with the verbal recorded responses for congruence.

Table 3.1

*Overview of Interviews*

| Participant | Total Hours of all Interviews | Total Number of Transcript Pages | Total Number of Fieldnotes Pages |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jerry Tyson | 3.75 | 20 | 3 |
| Mark Roberson | 2.75 | 15.5 | 2.5 |
| Randy Dennard | 2.90 | 17 | 2 |
| Bobbi Johnson | 2.50 | 14 | 2 |
| Roy Muldin | 2.67 | 16 | 2 |

## Data Analysis

Data analysis for the qualitative researcher involves a process of searching for commonalities, patterns, and categories within the data. Analysis of the data is an ongoing process beginning with the first interview, observations, or documents viewed (Merriam, 2002). While all qualitative analysis is inductive, various disciplines and theoretical stances have evolved for the qualitative researcher. Basically, however, one begins with a unit of data and compares it with another unit of data looking for common patterns. These patterns are coded, refined, and adjusted throughout the data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 1990).

A coding process was used to account for and develop emerging themes. As these themes presented themselves during the analysis, regularities expanded into the constructs by

which the researcher drew conclusions. The process used for this study is referred to as the constant comparative method. As Merriam (2001) explained:

> The constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences (for example, one quote about returning to school as an adult with another quote by the same or another participant). Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. This dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall object of this analysis is to seek patterns in the data. These patterns are arranged in relationship to each other in the building of a grounded theory. (p. 18)

Each transcript was read meticulously with the researcher writing words and short phrases in the margins identifying themes. After the first iteration of this process, the transcripts were re-read with the focus on these identifying words and phrases in order to generate a list of categories. These categories were then used as coding headings and the various incidents behind them were transcribed, in brief, on index cards and sorted according to the category. These coded sets of categorized data were then re-read and analyzed and a narrative constructing the interpretation of the data was developed.

## Procedures for Data Analysis

1. The researcher's transcriptions of the interviews and the fieldnotes taken during the interviews were read for the purpose of thematic and content coding.

Over the course of three months, the researcher conducted three semi-structured open-ended interviews with each of the five participants. Immediately following each of the interviews, the audio-taped interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Fieldnotes taken during the interviews were incorporated into the transcriptions where appropriate to add further description to the non-verbal data that was observed during the process. Notation was made during the transcription of themes to be further probed in subsequent interviews. Statements made by the participants that required further explanation in subsequent interviews were also noted.

A set of baseline questions were prepared prior to each interview and each of the participants in this study was asked the same set of questions. The questions were open-ended to allow for maximum elaboration on thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants without staging the response. Table 3.2 provides an example of the open-ended questions prepared before the interview.

Table 3.2

*Examples of Open-ended Questions*

| |
|---|
| What were you first thoughts/impressions when told that you may have to return to school for additional education as a requirement for continued employment? |
| What feelings do you have about accreditation requirements that place minimum education levels on existing faculty with considerable experience? |
| In what way(s) did returning to school affect your teaching? |
| What affect has returning to school to earn a degree had on your self-esteem? |
| How would you prepare yourself for your job if you could start back over at the secondary level? |
| What accommodations have been made on the part of your school's administration to assist you in the process? |

The researcher used silence as a strategic tool to evoke a broader response when participants seemed to have only responded in a superfluous manner. The silence acted as a non-verbal indicator to the participant that more response was desired and had the positive result of greater elaboration when used sparingly. The researcher minimized personal dialogue but asked for more clarification when necessary and affirmed to the participant when the question had been supplied an exhaustive response.

Probing questions were at the heart of understanding the perspectives of experiences being described by the participants. As the researcher made fieldnotes of critical terms and

phrases during a response, the participant would, then, be asked to elaborate further on the meaning of such critical or provocative phrases. Table 3.3 provides examples of phrases in context and the researchers' probing follow-up.

Table 3.3

*Examples of Probing Critical Phrases*

| Participant's Phrasing in Context | Probing Question |
|---|---|
| "I think we get distracted primarily with stupid things like this COC accreditation thing." | Tell me why you think the COC accreditation is stupid. |
| "So it was just kind of haphazard so to speak." | Give me some examples of what you mean by haphazard. |
| "It's like the dog that bites his own tail off." | Please explain your analogy of 'the dog that bites his own tail off.' |

The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the participants to become comfortable with the process in a relatively short amount of time. A rapport and level of trust between the researcher and the participants was developed that facilitated the free expression of ideas, feelings, and descriptions of experiences without intimidation or fear of retribution. At the conclusion of three of the five interviews, after the audio-tape recorder had been switched off, the participants began to reflect on the interview topics with the researcher. The researcher obtained verbal permission and restarted the recorder to glean further, invaluable description and perspectives. This type of impromptu data collection is unique to qualitative research and lends unique value to the study (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 1990).

2. The text of the transcripts were analyzed by the researcher for the purpose of developing codes and identifying categories and common themes within and across interviews for each participant. In a subsequent analysis of all of the interviews,

categories and common themes developed individually were analyzed across participants.

In the analysis following each interview, the researcher added codes to the transcriptions to identify themes, key phrases, and recurring ideas. Throughout the iterative process of subsequent interview and analysis, additional codes were added and existing codes were narrowed and redefined to more specifically reflect the emerging themes. The codes allowed the researcher to develop an overview of the common themes across interviews and across the participants during successive iterations of the analysis. Table 3.4 provides a sampling of the codes developed and their meanings.

Table 3.4

*Codes and Meanings*

| Codes | Meanings |
|---|---|
| ADM | Administration |
| AGE | Age as a Factor |
| ALG | Algebra |
| AVST | Academic Versus Technical |
| CHRT | Cohort Group |
| COC | Commission on Colleges Accreditation |
| DVS | Developmental Studies / Remedial |
| ENG | English |
| ET | Entrance Test |
| FAM | Family Issues |
| FIN | Financial Issues |
| IT | Industry Update Training |
| LSPT | Lack of Support |
| MSN | Mission |
| PROF | Professional Affects |
| REL | Relationships |
| SPT | Support from Administration |
| VSTU | Vocational Students |

3. The researcher developed categories that organized the data in relation to the overall research questions, further delineating the data.

Each category was aligned with one of the four corresponding overall research questions that guided the study. Table 3.5 illustrates the research questions and the categories that were developed to accompany them.

Table 3.5

*Research Questions with Accompanying Categories*

| Research Questions | Categories |
|---|---|
| How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty? | Feelings on Initial Receiving of Mandate<br>Affects on Family and Hobbies<br>Resistance to the Forced Nature of Mandate<br>Frustrations |
| How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self? | Self Image in Relation to Preparation for Career<br>Self-Confidence in Ability to Teach<br>Perceptions of How Others View Self<br>Historical Stigma of Vocational Educators |
| How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants on a professional level? | Inapplicability of the Associate Degree<br>Affects on the Vocational Students<br>Positive Affects on Teaching Practices<br>Negative Affects on Teaching Practices<br>Academics in Technical Education |
| What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school? | Need for Organization and Planning<br>Need for Moral Support<br>Financial Reimbursement<br>Organization of a Cohort Group<br>Communication |

During this study, the process of analysis began with the collecting of data and continued as a repetitive process through the development of codes, categories, and themes. As Patton (1990) reported, it is difficult to determine a precise point where analysis begins. "In the course

of gathering data, ideas about possible analysis will occur. Those ideas constitute the beginning of analysis; they are part of the record of field notes" (Patton, 1990, p. 377). Findings and conclusions were drawn from the analysis as the interpretations of the participants' experiences with mandatory education.

## Trustworthiness

"Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, in which practitioners intervene in people's lives," according to Merriam (2001, p. 198). Consumers of research must be able to depend on the findings that have been gathered and analyzed. While qualitative research and the methods involved have gained much credibility, some paradigms from that of the more traditional quantitative methods have migrated over into the qualitative realm. Two of these paradigms are the notions of validity and reliability. In an attempt to establish trustworthiness with qualitative research, the researcher must address the issues of validity and reliability (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 1990). For the sake of qualitative research, validity is discussed as two component parts: internal validity and external validity.

Internal validity is a measure of how well the study adequately relates to reality (Patton, 1990). In qualitative research, participants express their perception of a conceived reality, and the researcher seeks to, as accurately as possible, interpret and report that perceived reality. Internal validity is considered a strength of qualitative research because the researcher is closer to the data and its collection than the inanimate instruments of the quantitative counterpart (Merriam, 2002). Several methods can be used to ensure internal validity in qualitative studies, including member checks, peer review, and triangulation.

External validity, or generalizability, is a much more obscure concept as it relates to qualitative research. These terms are paradigms from quantitative research where a random sample is studied with intentions of applying the results to a larger population. Qualitative research, however, involves a purposeful small sample that is not meant to be generalized, but studied as a unique entity or phenomenon (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 1990). Qualitative research can be used, however, to apply learned behaviors and methods to new, similar situations. In this context, one may say that the study has external validity. The critical point is that the researcher allows the reader to decide how generalizeable the study is to his or her own situation based on the comprehensive description of detail contained within the qualitative study (Merriam, 2002).

Reliability is another term that must be applied differently to qualitative research as opposed to its application in the quantitative methods. Because of the unique nature of the subjects of qualitative research, replication is not an option (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Patton, 1990). Reliability, therefore, must not be concerned with being able to repeat results, but whether the results make sense and are consistent with the collected data. To ensure this type of reliability, qualitative researchers may employ methods such as triangulation, peer examination, audit trail, and investigator's position.

In the process of examining the experiences of postsecondary technical faculty that were returning to college as a requirement of continued employment, several strategies were employed to ensure validity and reliability. Peer examination, in the form of a dissertation committee, was an integral component of the research process for this study. Members of the Graduate Faculty in the College of Education at the University of Georgia served on a committee that would periodically evaluate and provide feedback on the research being conducted. One member of the

committee served as a methodologist to ensure that proper analytical procedures were followed. This helped to ensure internal validity as the committee members continuously assessed the strengths of the study and how closely it depicted reality. The peer examination also helped to ensure reliability through the measuring of the applicability of the study. The dissertation committee's final evaluation of the completed work assisted in determining whether the findings were consistent with the data.

Member checks provided more insurance of internal validity. Each participant in the study was given drafts of interpretations gleaned from the interviews. The participants were then asked to evaluate the accuracy of these interpretations and to note discrepancies. This was a continuous process throughout the course of the study to ensure correctness with the interpretations before interpretation of the data was finalized into the completed research document. The participants recommended no changes, additions, or deletions to the material provided for their review.

The fourth strategy implemented was the rich description of the data. By providing the reader with a detailed account that was comprehensive on every conceivable level, readers have the opportunity to evaluate the study in relation to possible similar situations where the conclusions may be applied. This speaks to the reliability of the study in that the reader will be able to make the determination, as a result of the detailed account of the findings, whether or not to generalize to her or his own condition.

## Limitations

Limitations did exist in this study. This study was limited to the perspectives of the five veteran vocational instructors at two postsecondary technical colleges; the perspectives of other instructors were not solicited. The detail and accuracy of the descriptive information recorded

concerning the instructors' experiences in higher education as vocational teachers was limited to their willingness to be candid with the researcher.

## Chapter Summary

A qualitative approach was used to examine the experiences of veteran vocational postsecondary teachers that were required to attend courses in higher education due to new accreditation requirements. The participants were chosen based on their years of teaching in technical education along with their situation of having to return to school for further credentialing. The accessibility of three of the five teachers being at the same place of employment as the researcher provided convenience, familiarity, and trust with the participants.

Data were collected from the five instructors through three sets of interviews with each. Questions for the interviews were predetermined but were constantly revised to allow for deeper understanding and probing of responses. Fieldnotes were taken during the interviews. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed immediately upon completion of the interview. Additional data were obtained and analyzed after each set of interviews.

The study began in June 2002 with the review of the literature. The first interviews were conducted in October 2003, the second interviews were recorded in November 2003, and the third set of interviews occurred in December 2003. The researcher completed the analysis of the data concurrently with data collection.

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements affected the personal and career development of postsecondary vocational teachers. The researcher sought, through a basic interpretative qualitative approach, the perspectives of five (*N*=5) veteran vocational teachers who were actively taking college courses under an administrative mandate to achieve a college degree or to suffer termination of employment.

Burke (2001), in his research on teachers' career stages, divided factors influencing behaviors into two categories: personal environment and organizational environment. The factors influencing the teachers' personal environment were identified as family and hobbies, public attitudes and pressures, working relationships, background and preparation, and external influences. The factors from the organizational environment included teaching and learning, evaluation, instructional management, union and professionalism, professional development, and non-instructional duties. The questions used in this study applied the same two basic categories of personal and professional environment when analyzing the effects of veteran teachers actively working toward a mandated degree.

Five (*N*=5) participants were chosen from three different postsecondary technical colleges in the southeastern United States. The participants were each interviewed three times from October, 2003 to December, 2003. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty?
2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self?
3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants on an organizational level?
4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school?

In addressing these questions, the researcher used a qualitative approach applying Blumer's (1969) theory of symbolic interactionism. A data analysis was conducted using the constant comparative method to uncover common themes and categories. Data were derived from the interviews with the participants and the fieldnotes of the researcher. The overall research questions provided the baseline for compilation of the open-ended questions to be used in the interviews. Each participant was interviewed using the same set of questions, however, additional questions were spontaneously added in each interview for probative value and for clarification.

The interview questions, like the research questions, were divided into two basic categories: personal affects and career and job affects. Within the personal affects category were the two research questions related to morale and view of self. Interview questions were designed to probe the various aspects of the participants' morale and their view of self. The career and job affects category included the two research questions related to career and job affects and support needed from the administration. The primary interview questions as they relate to the research questions are displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Examples of Interview Questions Related to Research Questions*

| Research Questions | Interview Questions |
|---|---|
| 1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty? | What were you first thoughts/impressions when told that you may have to return to school for additional education as a requirement for continued employment?<br><br>What feelings do you have about accreditation requirements that place minimum education levels on existing faculty with considerable experience? |
| 2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self? | What affect has returning to school to earn a degree had on your self-esteem?<br><br>In what way(s) did returning to school affect your home life and personal life? |
| 3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants on an organizational level? | In what way(s) did returning to school affect your teaching?<br><br>In what ways have your students reacted to your attending school?<br><br>In what ways has your returning to school affected relationships with co-workers? |
| 4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school? | Explain how you were told that you would have to earn a degree to keep your position.<br><br>What accommodations have been made on the part of your administration to assist you in the process?<br><br>What types of help did you seek that were not readily available?<br><br>What actions might have your school's administration taken to better facilitate this process? |

## Context of the Study

This study focused on the experiences of veteran technical instructors returning to higher education under mandate and was conducted in three postsecondary schools in one of the Southeastern United States. The technical college system in this southeastern state is comprised of 34 colleges with 18 satellite campuses. The curricula for all of the programs within the state system are standardized. A local board of directors manages each individual college. The mission for the State Technical College System (STCS) is:

> To contribute to the economic, educational, and community development of [the state] by providing quality technical education, adult literacy education, continuing education, and customized business and industry workforce training to the citizens of [the state].

The progressive nature of STCS is evidenced by a continuous growth in enrollment that has lasted for more than a decade. The 1994 enrollment figures totaled 64,101 credit students. In 2003, the most recently reported statistics reflect a credit enrollment of 153,444. There were 26,571 graduates, 98.6% of which were successfully placed in jobs directly related to their field of study. Of the students enrolled in 2003, 51% were over the age of 25, 60% were female, and 19% were considered either disabled or disadvantaged. Disadvantaged is defined as a student who is one or more of the following: displaced homemaker, single parent, limited English, academically disadvantaged, or economically disadvantaged. Caucasian students were in the majority at 53%, African American students represented 41%, Hispanic students carried 2%, and the remaining population was from other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Critical to the mandate that the participants in this study return to higher education is the reference to “seamless education” in the STCS vision statement:

> This system will be part of a seamless educational process in which students can easily transfer credits as they move among secondary schools, to technical colleges, and colleges and universities in which all [state citizens] can readily access information and advanced educational resources.

STCS has only recently converted the name of the postsecondary technical schools under its domain from “institutes” to “colleges.” While the mission of the state agency did not change, each school had to offer at least one Associate Degree to qualify for the name “college” under the existing accreditation of the Commission on Occupational Education (COE). Student expectations of transferability lead to the migration toward SACS/COC accreditation that would facilitate the transferring of individual course credits between the technical colleges and baccalaureate schools accredited by COC.

McCaslin and Parks (2002) reported that an instructor may teach trade and industrial vocational courses with only a high school diploma and occupational experience ranging from two to nine years. Accordingly, technical instructors within the STCS system are not required to hold any specific teaching certificate. There is no established minimum credential required by the state agency; rather, this is left to the requirements of the regional accrediting agency chosen by the school. It is the policy of the STCS, however, that each technical college within the system be accredited by a “regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Federal Government, Department of Education” to accredit the institutions to offer postsecondary diplomas and degrees.

The Council on Occupational Education (COE) accredits all of the technical colleges within the STCS. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Commission on Colleges (COC) also accredits twelve of the state schools in addition to their COE accreditation. The state agency, STCS, has required the additional accreditation by SACS/COC of the remaining 22 technical colleges for the primary purpose of facilitating credit transferability to the SACS/COC accredited universities. The 22 remaining non-SACS/COC schools have less than ten years to complete the new accreditation process.

Staff Development activities and requirements are left to the discretion of the local Technical College President according to the Procedure on Staff Development section of the STCS State Policy Manual. The policy statement reads:

> The Technical College President shall direct the coordination of all staff development activities for employees at the Technical College. Approval of the Commissioner or Technical College President, as appropriate, shall be required for any exceptions to this procedure. Participation in staff development requires prior approval by the employee's immediate supervisor and the appropriate Assistant Commissioner or Vice President.

The responsibility for planning, implementation, and evaluation of all staff development is placed at the school level and is, therefore, delineated by the individual administration of each technical college. The administrative hierarchy for the instructors who participated in this study was uniform across the three schools. Each instructor reported to a Director of Instruction who is under a Vice President for Instruction. The Vice President for Instruction reported to the school President.

Each of the three schools in this study used the same basic policy and procedure for instructor staff development. Instructors were required, at the end of each fiscal year, to complete a Staff Development Plan. The plan delineates the training and education that each instructor expects to accomplish within the following 12 months. The plan is submitted to the Director of Instruction prior to the end-of-the-year performance evaluations. The Staff Development Plan is reviewed and revised, if necessary, by the Director of Instruction. The instructor, the Director of Instruction, and the Vice-President of Instruction sign the finalized plan.

Alpha Technical College, one of the technical colleges in which a participant teaches, required a minimum of 50 total contact hours of staff development in a given year. For instructors in technical and industrial areas, such as the participants to this study, a minimum of

16 hours of “back-to-industry” training is required. Each instructor submits documentation as staff development activities are completed during the year. The documentation contains the name of the activity, the number of contact hours completed, a statement explaining the objective of the activity, and the relevance to instruction. If the staff development activity is a college course, the instructor is required to include a grade report indicating successful completion of the course. For seminars or other short-term training, appropriate agendas and certificates are included as supporting documentation for the goals and objectives identified in the Staff Development Plan. This documentation is compared to the Staff Development Plan during the annual performance evaluation to determine accomplishment of goals outlined in the Staff Development Plan. The following statement has been included in the Staff Development Plan for the instructors in this study: “The instructor is actively pursuing education to satisfy the minimum credentials as set forth in the standards of the SACS/COC guidelines contingent upon availability of staff development resources.”

The five participants of this study were employed at three schools within the STCS. Alpha Technical College, Beta Technical College, and Gamma Technical College (all pseudonyms) are postsecondary technical training facilities in the STCS. Each school experienced a change in the school name to include the word “college” within the past four years. All three of the schools have a four-year state university within 10 miles of their main campus. Contextual reference is provided for each of the individual schools in the following sections.

*Alpha Technical College*

Alpha Technical College is a rural postsecondary school in the STCS system. Alpha has been serving the six surrounding counties for over 50 years. Established in 1948, the school is

the second oldest postsecondary training facility in the state. Offering 28 diploma programs and 8 Associate Degree programs, Alpha Technical College prepares the workforce for business and industry of the local region that covers approximately 300 square miles. Of the 61 full-time faculty members on staff at Alpha Technical College, 12 have been required by the administration to earn a degree that will bring their credentials up to the minimum standard as expected by new accreditation under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges (COC). Alpha Technical College is accredited by COE and the administration has announced plans to apply for accreditation with SACS/COC within one year. The mission of Alpha Technical College reads:

> [Alpha] Technical College is a public two-year postsecondary unit of the [Southeastern State Technical College System] with the principal focus of providing learning opportunities through technical education programs and services that meet the needs of the citizens, businesses, and industries of its six-county service delivery area by:
>
> - providing administrative support and educational training of skills utilized in the world of work
> - forming business and industry collaboratives to provide customized training
> - offering quality student services, educational facilities and state-of-the-art equipment and technology
> - providing qualified faculty and staff
> - promoting lifelong learning through contributions to the educational culture of the communities served

Alpha Technical College serves a quarterly full-time student enrollment of 1,671 in credit courses. Students in non-credit courses total 1,594. The student population of Alpha Technical College is diverse. According to the most recent statistical report, 59% of the students are between the ages of 16 and 25. African-American students carry the majority with 56% while 42% of the students are Caucasian. Female students are in the majority at Alpha Technical College with 54% of the population. Disabled and disadvantaged students comprise 42% of the

total student population. Table 4.2 provides an overview of Alpha Technical College's demographic data in comparison with the other two schools in the study.

The college also has adult literacy programs that provide services to 2,139 students and continuing education programs that enrolled 5,801 students in a given year. The college's 17 building, 300-acre main campus is located 3 miles from a small town with a population of 17,000. The school boasts a job placement rate of 99% of its graduates.

Three of the veteran technical instructors participating in the study were employed at Alpha Technical College. Alpha Technical College had a total of 12 teachers returning to school under administrative mandate. Jerry Tyson was a Diesel Technology instructor employed with Alpha Technical College for 25 years. Randy Dennard was a Heavy Equipment Technology instructor and had been with Alpha Technical College for 19 years. Mark Roberson, an Aircraft Structural Technology instructor, had taught with Alpha Technical College for 20 years. All three of these instructors were seeking the same degree, an Associate of Applied Science Degree, and they were attending the same four-year state university located approximately seven miles from the Alpha Technical College main campus.

*Beta Technical College*

Beta Technical College is located on the outer edge of the industrial district of a relatively large southern town with a population of 44,700. Beta Technical College was founded in 1963 under the authority of the local school board. The college became part of the STCS 25 years later. Beta Technical College offers over 70 programs including various industrial, medical, and computer certifications, diplomas in business, industrial, and medical fields, and Associate of Applied Technology Degrees. Beta Technical College's main campus covers 123 acres and serves a region of six counties. Of the 144 full-time faculty members at Beta

Technical College, 14 have been required to earn additional credentials due to the new accreditation application. Beta Technical College is accredited by COE and plans to apply for accreditation with SACS/COC within two years. The mission of Beta Technical College reads:

> The mission of [Beta Technical College] is to provide quality instruction enabling students to develop knowledge, skills, and good work ethics resulting in entry-level employment, career advancement, and the promotion of lifelong learning.

Beta Technical College has enjoyed a consistently increasing enrollment for five years. With an average quarterly enrollment of 2,022 students in credit programs, the school expanded with a satellite campus out of necessity. Attending Beta Technical College are students who are 36% African American and 59% Caucasian. Younger students were in the majority with 53% ranging in age between 16 and 25. The female population was 62%, and 53% of the students at Beta Technical College were considered disabled or disadvantaged. Beta Technical College boasted a 98.7% placement rate in the most recent report with a 5-year average job placement rate of 95%. An overview of demographic information for Beta Technical College with the other schools in the study is provided in Table 4.2.

Bobbi Johnson, a 51-year-old Printing and Graphics instructor for Beta Technical College, was chosen as a participant in this study based on the required criteria. She was seeking an Associate of Applied Science Degree at the university in the same town as Beta Technical College. As with all other instructors participating in the study, Johnson would not have enrolled at the university for work toward the degree had the administration of Beta Technical College not required her to do so as a condition of continued employment.

*Gamma Technical College*

The 75-acre main campus of Gamma Technical College is strategically located on the edge of the downtown district of the community it serves. Surrounded by local businesses and

major industrial facilities that hire many of the school's graduates, Gamma Technical College is the largest of the schools participating in this study. Serving the local community of 75,350, Gamma Technical College has an average quarterly enrollment of 3,177 credit students. Program offerings are available in 39 areas of study including various industrial, medical, and computer certifications, diplomas in business, industrial, transportation, personal services and medical fields, and Associate of Applied Technology Degrees. Gamma Technical College also has a satellite facility approximately 40 miles from the main campus that absorbs some of the relatively large enrollment from the 8 county service areas.

The mission for Gamma Technical College reads:

> [Gamma Technical College,] a public postsecondary institution of the [Southeastern Technical College System,] provides technical education and training support for evolving workforce development needs of [the state.] To accomplish this mission, the college utilizes traditional, online and distance learning methods. The following purposes of [Gamma Technical College] are based on the concept that education benefits individuals, businesses, and the community.
>
> - To provide quality competency-based Associate Degree, diploma and technical certificates of credit programs that prepare students for employment in business, technical sciences, allied health, personal services and industrial careers.
> - To provide basic adult education and development programs to help adults improve life skills and prepare for continued education and training.
> - To contribute to the technological advancement of area businesses and industry through education and training.
> - To offer comprehensive continuing education courses and programs for the advancement of skills, knowledge and personal growth.

With the largest full-time teaching staff of the three participating institutions, Gamma Technical College has 180 full-time faculty members. The job placement rate is high at Gamma Technical College, reporting a 96% success rate for graduate placement across all fields of study. The student population averages 3,160 per quarter. Only 35% of the credit student enrollment is male. African-American students carry the majority with 68% while Caucasian students comprise 30% of the population. An even 50% of the students are between the ages of 16 and 25

while 25% of the total population is disabled or disadvantaged. A demographic overview of the Gamma Technical College's student population is available in Table 4.2

Like the other schools of the participants in this study, Gamma Technical College has a four-year state university within 10 miles of the main campus. There is also a two-year state community college within five miles of the Gamma Technical College campus. Unlike the other two technical colleges in the study, Gamma Technical College has received accreditation with SACS/COC. Awarding a SACS/COC accredited degree is not possible in the Industrial Electrical Technology Program, however, until the instructor, Roy Muldin, completes an Associate Degree. Muldin is under mandate to earn the degree, and is enrolled at the community college near Gamma Technical College.

Table 4.2

*Overview of Population Demographics*

| Participating College | Avg. Quarterly Enrollment | Female | Male | African-American | Caucasian | Age 16-25 | Disabled And/Or Disadvantaged |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alpha Technical College | 1671 | 54% | 46% | 56% | 42% | 59% | 42% |
| Beta Technical College | 2022 | 62% | 38% | 36% | 59% | 53% | 34% |
| Gamma Technical College | 3160 | 65% | 35% | 68% | 30% | 50% | 25% |

## Overview of the Participants

Analysis of the interview transcripts and fieldnotes provided critical information pertaining to the experiences of veteran vocational teachers returning to higher education under mandate. The participants in this study ranged in age from 42 to 53 years. All of the study participants were Caucasian males with the exception of Bobbi Johnson, a Caucasian female. The experience teaching in technical education ranged from 11 to 25 years with a total of 86 years of cumulative experience between the five instructors. The participants came to the vocational teaching profession with occupational experience ranging from 3 years to 15 years. According to Gray and Walter (2001), minimum teaching credentials for trade, industrial, and health occupations teachers in secondary education need only to include a high school diploma with relevant work experience and licensure.

All of the participants are under a mandate by the administration of their individual technical college to complete an Associate of Applied Science Degree. While none of the participants possess a college degree, two of the five had taken at least one college course earlier in their career. Due to a failing grade in one case and a large time span in the other, no credits for the courses taken would transfer to the mandated Associate Degree. Upon taking the college entrance exam, all five of the participants were required to take the remedial Algebra Course. Algebra is the only subject area where remediation was required among the participants. The five participants were actively pursuing the mandated degree at the time of data collection with completion percentages ranging from 40% to 75%. As the remedial courses were not for credit, the time of matriculation through these courses were not considered in computing the percentage of completion. An overview of the participants, their age, length of service in the profession, and other pertinent information is presented in Figure 4. 3.

Figure 4.3

*Participant Overview*

| Name of Participant | Age | Years Teaching | Previously Attended Higher Ed. | Years of Occupational Experience | Percent of AAS Completed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jerry Tyson | 53 | 25 | No | 10 | 65% |
| Mark Roberson | 42 | 20 | No | 3 | 40% |
| Randy Dennard | 45 | 19 | Yes | 8 | 75% |
| Bobbi Johnson | 51 | 11 | No | 15 | 65% |
| Roy Muldin | 42 | 11 | Yes | 13 | 50% |

The nature of the mandate for each of the five participants in this study was such that no time limit was determined for completion of the Associate Degree. All of the participants, however, stated that their individual yearly performance evaluations contained the statement, "Actively pursuing education to satisfy the minimum credentials as set forth in the standards of the SACS/COC guidelines contingent upon availability of staff development resources." The following section describes the experiences of these veteran instructors as they work toward completion of the required Associate of Applied Science Degree.

## Case 1

### *Jerry Tyson, Diesel Technology Instructor – Alpha Technical College*

Jerry Tyson has been a Diesel Technology instructor at Alpha Technical College for 25 years. Jerry is a married Caucasian, 53 years of age, and father of 2 children with 1 still in school. A high school graduate, Tyson's highest level of education was the technical diploma in Farm Machinery that he received from the same school to which he has devoted the majority of his professional life, Alpha Technical College. According to Tyson, the Farm Machinery

Diploma was awarded after successful completion of 18 months of a specialized curriculum that contained "none of the basic skills courses such as math, English, or reading." The classes in Farm Machinery "largely consisted of working on tractors and the like." Jerry described his training with an unapologetic southern dialect:

> Well, I've been around mechanics and shops all my life. As a matter of fact, I can't remember the time when I didn't know what it was like to be around all this. My Dad was a mechanic and I was with him just as far back as I can remember, helping him. So I just grew up in it, and I'm still in it. I graduated from here [Alpha Technical College] from the old Farm Machinery Program which was later absorbed up into the Diesel Program. That allowed me to go to work for a John Deere Tractor Dealership and I went to all of their schools for training.

Jerry explained that working for the John Deere Tractor Dealership provided the occupational experience that was necessary to teach in vocational education. He confided, however, that most of his skills began to "be sharpened" as an adolescent working with his father but added "it was nice to get paid for it at John Deere."

Jerry is the only instructor in the Diesel Program at Alpha Technical College. Jerry Tyson's personality was reflected in the classrooms, office, and laboratories of the building dedicated solely to the Diesel Program. Pride and respect for the diesel equipment on which he trained students to work was evidenced by the framed, faded, un-glassed photographs of heavy equipment machinery that were hung high on the walls of the large three-bay lab. The air was thick with the smell of diesel fuel and, although far from clinical, the entire building was neat, organized, and well maintained. The shop floor itself housed a truck tractor, a farm tractor, and a new front-end loader. The interviews were conducted in one of the two identical classrooms adjacent to the shop area. The classroom, like the lab, was decorated with photographs of bulldozers, front-end loaders, and large trucks. The desks were arranged in a "U" fashion with a large truck transmission on a rolling stand in the center of the room.

The average quarterly enrollment for the, consistently male only, Alpha Technical College Diesel Program was 20, but Jerry stated that rarely would all of the students be in the classroom at once due to individualized instruction. Some of the students may be in the classroom for lecture, others at the computers, and still others out in the shop area working. The white marker board at the front of the room displayed a quadratic equation along with a series of steps solving for "x." Jerry indicated that the Algebra on the board was a remnant of his study group that had met in the classroom on the previous evening. As the classroom was in the corner of the building, two of the four walls were dominated by large ceiling to floor windows with no curtains, blinds, or shades to inhibit the outside view. The classroom furniture, consisting of stand-alone desks and secretarial type cushioned office chairs, was only a few months old. Jerry, commenting on how he had found one of his students using one of the new desks as brace to cut a part, pointed to an obvious saw-toothed nick on the edge of one of the new desks, shook his head, and said, "It's my job to teach 'em better."

Jerry Tyson's history with Alpha Technical College began in 1978 when it was still referred to by the locals as "The Trade School." Jerry reflected:

> I was a little daunted by the idea of teaching, myself. But by this time I had worked several years in the industry and I was teaching people in my shop. We had several little classes there, especially in electricity and I'd already been trained in that out here [Alpha Technical College] and that gave me a little help, a little confidence, so I took the job. I knew at that time that if I took the job and it didn't work out that there was always people looking for Diesel technicians so there would always be opportunities to find a job…a good job. So I really wasn't worried about that but as it turned out, well, I've been here 25 years now.

Jerry continued describing his vocational teaching career as "rewarding and thoroughly challenging." When relaying stories of students who had graduated from his program and had come back in later years as successes, his countenance affirmed the genuine feeling of pride and accomplishment that he had attempted to put into words. The students who "gave him trouble"

that later returned to express gratitude at having been given the training to earn a strong livelihood seemed to evoke the most pride and emotion from Jerry. He attributed his desire to teach to his personal experience at Alpha Technical College as a student:

> Now, I really like this job and the reason I like it is because I know how it was for me up here as a student. Now when I was a student here, I was here by myself. My family lived in Florida and I lived here in the dorms. You know it was a great experience and I lucked out and had a really good instructor. Not that all of them aren't good, but I lucked out. He spent a lot of time with me one on one…a lot more than a lot of people would have. He helped me get my job that I started off with.

Jerry Tyson aspired to give his students the same "feeling and sense of security" that his teacher had given him years earlier. He reflected, "A lot of these guys tell us things they wouldn't even tell their own family members. That's just the kind of relationship we have. It's great." The enjoyment of his profession was "interrupted" as, 22 years into his teaching career, Jerry was told that he would have to earn an Associates of Applied Science (AAS) Degree to keep his teaching position as a Diesel Technology Instructor at Alpha Technical College.

*Jerry Tyson: Affects on Morale*

Jerry Tyson recalled feelings of "resentment" on being informed that his continued employment with Alpha Technical College was contingent on earning an AAS degree. According to Cutz (1997), negative emotions, resentment, and fear are among the first reactions to required adult education. Tyson reflected that his initial response was "negative," and he felt "resentful." His tone was more resolute than bitter when describing his first impressions at the mandate. Tyson asserted, "I really didn't like the idea of being told that I had no choice in the matter. I didn't like that at all." He further explained that Alpha's administration "lacked any expression of understanding or empathy" toward his plight. "The only rationale given to me at the time was that it was mandatory. That if you are going to offer the degree that you have to hold the degree." The fact that Jerry received no comfort, reassurance, or encouragement from

the Alpha Technical College administration when the mandate was issued served only to perpetuate his sense of resentment, even 65% into matriculation of the degree. The negative feelings resulting from the presentation of the mandate had not softened over time.

Raelin (1984) reported that in the late career stage employees do not expect to find employment elsewhere due to a number of internal and external circumstances, and, therefore, will remain in a job even when they become dissatisfied. Jerry Tyson said that he felt "trapped" and "stuck" because of his "age and the time" he had already invested in his career at Alpha Technical College. If he were younger, Jerry admitted he "probably" would have responded differently to the mandate:

> I probably would have left right then. I would have gone right back to industry because at my age now, I'm kind of stuck. I'll be 54 in January, and I don't know that I could get the salary that I make now in industry being the economy what it is.

The description that Tyson gave of the requirement to pursue higher education depicted the Alpha Technical College administration as antagonistic. He made the statement: "Its like they have me over a barrel." The perception that Jerry gave was such that the school administrators were taking advantage of him because of his age and his inability to be mobile. Bitterness and resentment at the onset of the mandate evolved into "stress" upon entering the coursework.

Jerry described how the frustration later "gave way to stress." He stated, "There's so much stress on you that it does change your temperament whether you want to realize it or not." When Jerry was asked how he dealt with the stress, he explained that he had a "love for music," and that music had always served as a "stress outlet." Jerry's temper welled with frustration as he expressed his inability to pursue his hobby of music:

> Now I have an old guitar that lays down there in the den and when I finally get so aggravated that I may go down there and pick it up for about five minutes. But I don't really play anything. I just go down there to get away from this stuff here. [Jerry gestured toward an Algebra problem on the marker board.]

He continued describing how disappointed he was that the blue grass band of which he was a part had failed to practice in over three months because of his new endeavor with higher education. The music was more than a "stress reliever" to Jerry as he later described it as "a way of life" that he had been "robbed of" by time taken to work on the degree.

Other areas of Jerry's personal life were negatively interrupted resulting in the further eroding of his morale. His resentment was clear when he talked about the lifestyle that he "enjoyed before school came along."

> I live in the country and you have animals. You know you have to feed them and all, and that's your lifestyle until, bam, they throw this in your face and say, 'Here, this is what you've got to do if you want to keep this job.' I just think it was not handled very well from the get go.

In addition to the music and the need to spend time with his animals, Jerry's private business had to be put "on hold" as well. He seemed less bitter about losing the extra income in profits from the business, than in his disappointment at not being able to work on engines during his personal time. He referred to his private business as a "stress reliever" much like the music that he used to enjoy. Jerry confirmed that he still paid the shop lease as well as the utilities and insurance. Nevertheless, he capitulated, "I guess I do what I have to do."

The stress brought on by the "aggravation" of having to return to school under mandate also affected Jerry's family life. Tight (1999) reported that adult learning has led to family break-ups due to stress, financial strain, and time away from home. Jerry's demeanor shifted from humorous to regretful as he relayed a situation with his wife:

> I know that, even at the house…my wife now…with this math…she makes me go out on the porch because she don't want to hear it. [laughter] And I don't blame her. She don't need to have to deal with that along with everything else. But it has affected her. It does shorten your temper a lot more than normal. Normally things that go on around here never really bothered me because, you know, it's been my environment for, well, 25

> years now. So it really hadn't bothered me until you get all this extra load on you. And you are under the gun because you know you have to do it.

Tyson expressed resolution in assuring his wife and family that the "education would never interfere" with his family life.

Still, another area where Jerry's countenance expressed frustration dealt with the financial hardship of going to school. Alpha Technical College would pay only for the course tuition if the instructor "successfully" completed the class. Jerry felt the brunt end of this policy when he chose to drop an Algebra class after realizing he needed remediation in the subject. "I lost about $170 out of that deal." He made the decision to audit the Algebra class at Alpha Technical College in an effort to better prepare himself for the one at the university. "I'm auditing the class so it doesn't cost me anything. But it's still a major investment of time on my part." Tyson exhibited a sense of responsibility to complete the degree regardless of the stress, "whether financial or otherwise."

While Jerry readily expressed feelings of resentment, frustration, and even anger with the mandate, his attitude toward learning remained evidently positive. His self-motivated effort to improve his Algebra skills by voluntarily auditing classes was evidence of a sincere desire to do well. The attitude he exhibited toward his school administration and the college mandate, however, was an indication of a diminished morale.

*Jerry Tyson: View of Self*

Kerka (1995) identified lack of confidence as a primary factor in an adult's reluctance to attend mandatory classes. Jerry, however, did not appear to fall into this pattern. When directly asked if the mandate to return to college had affected his self-esteem, Jerry Tyson responded quickly, "No, not at all." The confidence with which he described his personal training and experience in his craft also affirmed to his positive self-concept. There were situations

surrounding the mandate and his return to education as a student, however, where Jerry was made to feel uncomfortable.

The greatest concern expressed centered on the age difference that existed between Jerry and his fellow students.

> I felt like the odd man out. And I found out that I don't have the temperament that I used to have. You know, it was just so totally different than what I'd been doing before in my other training. You know, you have people in your training that are in the exact same business as you are, not exactly in the same age group, but we are all on the same page. We can interact in class and that's where you get your best information in those training classes is from the other people who are in the shop everyday…they can give you all those little tips. …but me being in the classroom with somebody that's 18 years old and can't be still for five minutes? [shakes head]

Jerry Tyson, at the age of 53 exhibited evidence of the belief that, because of this age, his mental capacity to retain information and his level of intelligence had diminished. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) reported, however, that the idea held by many older adults that mental capacity diminishes with age is a gross misconception and that research has shown that intelligence levels remain consistent well into the 90s. He expressed concern with the fact that the majority of the younger students in his class had an advantage because their secondary education was fresh. "As soon as the instructor asks a question, they pop right up and answer." He reasoned that the instructor would "pace the class according to the fastest person," not the slowest. Therefore, when a young student answered a question in class, the teacher would "move on," "leaving behind" those that might not have a grasp of the concept under study.

Tyson continued in describing his "aggravation with the immaturity" of the students in his classes at the university. "The general population in the class was teenagers and, of course, they don't appear to be interested in what you are doing at the time. They come and go in the middle of class." Jerry quickly added that he had "a little better discipline than that" in his classroom at Alpha Technical College. "But they don't come in prepared and that aggravates

me…them not being prepared." Upon further discussion, Jerry revealed that he felt unprepared for the class meetings, himself. His frustration with the younger students centered on the fact that they were unprepared out of negligence and apathy whereas he felt unprepared due to a weak background in Algebra and a 30 year time span since his last experience with that type of class.

When examining Jerry's view of self, one of the most poignant phrases that emerged was, "I'll tell you what it makes me feel like: it makes me feel like they are not satisfied, like they are ashamed of people that work with their hands. That's what I feel." The "they" in Tyson's statement referred to the Alpha Technical College administration. Prentice (2001) described the view that society believes occupational education is inferior to academic education and that institutional leaders will reflect this belief. Frustration, anger, and resentment all melted into a perceived emotion of hurt from Tyson.

While Jerry's self-esteem may not have been dampened by the experience of returning to college, he admitted that, as he struggled with the Algebra course, he briefly questioned his abilities as a teacher. The first course in Algebra that Jerry attempted brought on the personal realization that he needed remediation before continuing. Grasping this realization, Jerry dropped the course to allow time for remediation. Jerry demonstrated the most visual expressions of frustration when describing this experience:

> Oh, it's terrible! I ain't never quit nothing in my life. It's just killing me. I know that I ought to be able to do it, but with all the other things that I have going on out here…Of course, you know you've always got to worry about someone getting their arms cut off in a machine or getting killed or something like that with all the things that we do. Its just …it just wears you down. It seems like it just gets worse.

Jerry's statement begins with a tone of defeat and disappointment at the idea that he had to quit something. Immediately, however, Tyson trivialized having to drop the Algebra course

by emphasizing the importance of his work. He chose to discuss the safety issue of his job and how, if he lost focus, it could become a life or death situation. At the least, "someone could get their arms cut off." This defense mechanism was evidence of Jerry's ability to protect his self-image by keeping the college degree work in its proper perspective in contrast to his life-long career as a Diesel Instructor.

Tyson explained that he had used algebra all of his professional life. "Various formulas, calculations, and mathematical conversions are required" in the diesel industry, and Jerry expressed confidence when describing that he had never experienced difficulty with them. "We need to be able to use the math to be able to understand how fast a hydraulic cylinder will move or a ram will move for a given gallons per minute and the amount of time that it takes." Tyson's description of a relatively complex application of math indicated an effort to reaffirm his abilities and, thus, resist the temptation to lower his self-confidence because of a "a grade."

Despite the negative feelings of frustration that Jerry expressed with his university experience, he noted one positive result. "Well, I've been helping my little girl at home. She loves to write plays and stories and stuff like that." Jerry continued to explain that, in the past, he had not felt "qualified" to offer help to his sixth grader in certain areas of her school work, particularly English. Since taking, and successfully completing, the college English class, however, Jerry felt a new connection with his daughter and her interests in literature and writing. Grimminck (1993) cited an identical instance when he described that personal embarrassment at not being able to help children with homework was a catalyst for the decision to return to school.

There is evidence to suggest that Tyson's self-confidence was put to the test as situations arose causing him to question his abilities. Taking classes with young students, quitting the

Algebra course, and perceptions of an "ashamed" administration all generated feelings within Tyson that carried the potential to decrease self-esteem.

*Jerry Tyson: Career and Job Affects*

The career and job affects of Jerry Tyson's education experience were largely negative. He began the discussion by objecting to the trend toward more academic courses in technical education that caused the mandate. Tyson explained that the employers of this graduates did not expect extensive academic knowledge and skills. He then focused on the more narrow Career and job affects by discussing the time taken away from his students and his inability to remain updated with changes in the industry. Jerry concluded on a positive note, however, by describing how he was able to translate skills acquired in an English course to help his students.

The traditional vocational training environment of which Jerry Tyson had been a part for many years began to change to include more academic courses in the curriculum. While he commented on his understanding of how some changes were the positive result of new technologies in the industry, he expressed disappointment at the emphasis on academics over the practical application of skills.

> It looks like the world is changing and our mission is changing to move more toward the academics. I have nothing against academics. I don't have anything at all against Algebra or any of that stuff. It has its' place. However, if the course is not used in what you teach, I won't say that you shouldn't know anything about it, but it shouldn't be forced on you to the point that you've got to go through and learn all of that knowing the whole time, that at the end of the day, that you are going to go right back to those same formulas that you were always using and use them and keep right on going.

Jerry's discussion of the new emphasis on academics shifts from a broad, holistic view of technical education trends, to the requirements that he faced in a liberal arts degree. He defends the need for emphasis on practical application in the industry by focusing on the "forced" nature of his professional requirement.

Jerry further explained that he was responsible for placing his students in jobs directly related to their program area. He boasted that nearly 100% of his graduates were placed "in field and making real good money." The advisory council for his program, comprised of professionals in the diesel industry, all potential employers of Jerry's students, discussed their expectations with Jerry. Jerry relayed their wishes about his students in context of his earning an Associates Degree with more emphasis on academics:

> I have not had anyone come up to me of the industry that hires our students, and these industries are from all over the world, but no one has come to me and said, "Do these boys know Algebra? Can this boy write a ten page thesis on exhaust emissions?" No, they don't do that. That's not the business. And that's pretty much the consensus of everyone I talk to in the industry.

Once again, there is a sense of displacement in Jerry's conversation. He is justifying his own frustration with having to take the academic core required in the Associate Degree by generating a rhetorical set of questions that exhibit the futility of general core classes in a diesel curriculum.

Tyson expressed that his Diesel Technology students were being affected by his work toward the Associate Degree. He explained how he had arranged for a fellow instructor to come in and "watch his class" while he went off campus to attend a one hour class meeting. The main concern that Jerry expressed with this type of scheduling dealt with safety. Tyson talked about the dangerous nature of the work and the equipment in his laboratory. He compared himself to other instructors at Alpha Technical College who were also attending classes at the university, and who could take time out during the day to study. The safety issue prevented him from being able to turn his attention away from the students.

> In this place down here, you are busy and walking all day long. You've got some in the shop working and you have some in the classroom and you're trying to balance that and keep an eye on that. The rules say 'I'm supposed to be out there with them in the shop when they are working.' If anything happens to them out there, then I'm held liable. So I'm back and forth all over the place staying active. Its not like most educators think of because we are having class out there, on the iron.

Tyson attempts to trivialize the degree work by emphasizing the imperative nature of his focus on the diesel students, and his concerns about safety, danger, and liability when stressing the importance of his presence as an instructor in the program.

Most poignant of his description of the affects on his students was the statement that his own education "interrupted all of this." "All of this" referred to his work training the diesel students. He shook his head in frustration when he relayed that his students continually ask, "So how much longer do you have on this?" Jerry Tyson's students see his education as an interruption in their own educational process. He was quick to point out that the students were asking about his completion, not out of curiosity or interest in him as a person, but out of their own eagerness to see Jerry's complete focus return to teaching them.

As technology advances and the inevitable changes occur in the diesel industry, those teaching the discipline must attend seminars, update sessions, and short courses to keep abreast of new standards in the industry. For Jerry Tyson, industry updating was critical to his ability to adequately prepare students and, until recently, comprised the majority of his staff development activities. The additional load of having to work on an Associate Degree, however, has replaced the time and financial resources for Jerry to attend needed industry update sessions. Jerry expressed how much he "enjoyed learning the new methods, equipment, and techniques." He discussed how the industry staff development was vital for his contacts with many of those in the diesel industry that hire his students, and how those connections were lost when he was not actively involved in the training.

> It [the diesel industry] has changed a lot and I have not been able to go to any formal training myself because any time that I have to myself has to be spent on preparing for a class…studying and whatnot. I can't leave and be gone for a week because I'd miss two days of my class at the university and that'd be bad…so I'm just getting behind with the

> industry. I know that they'd give me staff development time here at work, but I'm still away from town, and can't go to my classes so that's out.

Imbedded in Tyson's statement is the recognition of the fact that "they'd give me staff development time here at work." He is confident that his administration would not prevent him from going to the training that he needs, but because of his commitment to the education mandate and success in his college courses, he realizes that he cannot go. This compounds Jerry's frustration because he sees his own sense of responsibility as the obstacle to his industry update training as opposed to being able to blame his school administration.

When asked about how he expected the Associate Degree to help him professionally, Jerry was less than optimistic. Although Jerry believed the degree would help him maintain his job for the immediate future, he was openly suspicious of the direction that his administration would take toward the education held by trade and industrial instructors. "I can see on the horizon that we are not going to just stop at the Associate Degree but we are going to have to have the Bachelor's Degree also just to be able to offer the Associate Degree." Jerry's plans were to maintain his position as diesel instructor until retirement "pending good health." Jerry stated that he could retire at age 58, but he wanted to work at least until he reached age 62 to earn maximum retirement benefits. In reference to the new accreditation sought by Alpha Technical College that resulted in the mandate that he return to college, Jerry stated, "I don't know what is going to happen, but I still want to be here as a teacher as long as I'm effective." This is congruent with the work of Fugate and Amey (2000), Lynn (2002), and McInnis (2000) who emphasized the differing needs of late career stage educators from those in the early- or mid-career stages.

The one positive effect that Jerry identified in relation to his work toward the Associate Degree dealt with increased English and writing skills. He expressed that the English broadened

his vocabulary, and that he has applied the new skills directly in his program by helping his students with report writing.

> Now, I have to say, that I did enjoy the English classes. Being a hard-core southerner, I really needed the English classes for my vocabulary, [laughter], and writing skills. But I pass that on to my students because they have to write reports, especially during warranty work and everything.

Jerry's enthusiasm for his ability to translate learned skills from the Associate Degree coursework did not extend to any of the other classes he had taken. He expressed no practical use for the algebra or political science in his dealings with students. He said that the "good that came from the English class" did not outweigh the negative feelings, nor did this effect the time that he was pulled away from his students.

Jerry Tyson's development as a professional was minimal in comparison to the negative affects that working on the Associate Degree had on him as a teacher. The time taken away from his students and his ability to maintain current with new practices in the industry were of primary concern to Tyson's professionalism. His fear of more education requirements, beyond the Associate Degree, indicated that he wanted to "hurry up and retire" before the trends of technical education forced him into obsolescence.

*Jerry Tyson: Support Needed*

The eagerness with which Jerry Tyson responded to questions about support needed for the Associate Degree work indicated that he had strong feelings about the subject. He primarily focused on the issue of administrative support through planning and organization. Jerry explained that he was 1 of approximately 12 instructors at Alpha Technical College, and countless instructors statewide, who all needed to earn the degree. He commented on how this ubiquitous problem could be better solved by a statewide approach rather than each instructor forging his own way.

> I just think it was not handled very well from the get-go. The state should have figured out some things to do instead of just saying it and then letting each school figure out how they were going to handle it. The state could have jumped on that right off the bat and given everybody some guidelines.

The work of Doolittle and Camp (1999) confirmed the necessity of an organized approach to providing career development for experienced vocational educators. Tyson's expression of a "higher authority" taking control and developing a goal-oriented path indicates the need for a specialized curriculum that would be useful and beneficial to the instructors, statewide, under the mandate.

Tyson described how he felt that Alpha Technical College's resources could have been used in a "planned, organized fashion" to better facilitate and expedite the educational process for all of those involved. The primary resource that Jerry alluded to involved the core teachers on Alpha Technical College's main campus that had availed themselves for help and remediation. "I've got to say that there's a lot of instructors here, [Alpha Technical College], that helped me and my co-workers a great deal, and they did it on their own time. Its just that everybody's willing to help but its random." Tyson stated that he believed that all of the instructors under the mandate on Alpha Technical College's campus would be finished with the Associate Degree if Alpha's administration had organized and planned properly.

Jerry went on to explain that other instructors at Alpha Technical College who were in the same situation with needing help in algebra created a study group on campus. This seemed to restore Jerry's positive demeanor as he described how they worked together as a group.

> Our little study group here, at the school, [Alpha Technical College], meets in here [diesel classroom] everyday at 3:00 when our students leave. Unless we have something to interrupt us, we are in here working on this just as hard as we can go. We are all struggling very hard with it.

Jerry gestured to the algebra work on the board at the front of the classroom and commented, "It looks like something you'd have found on a crashed spaceship. I see the formula up there on the wall but, right this minute, I couldn't tell you what it was for." Tyson expresses the personal perception of the uselessness of the material he is required to learn. His description of the self-formed campus study group, however, demonstrates an intrinsic desire to succeed regardless of the circumstances surrounding the mandate.

When first told of the requirement to get the Associate Degree, Tyson said that he and his co-workers all assumed that Alpha Technical College's administration would handle the details and facilitate the process for them as a group.

> In fact, we all thought of that early on. We thought that would be the way to go with this. A bunch of us was of that opinion. But that didn't happen. You were pretty much just thrown to the lions. I know some of them, [Jerry's co-workers], had a lot of trouble even getting in out there [at the university]. So that was one of the things that I was disappointed about and several other people, too, were disappointed about that. We all figured, 'Well, they'll help us' you know? Well, the only help you'll get is whatever help you can find for yourself.

Jerry was asked how, specifically, the administration of Alpha Technical College might have facilitated the process. He responded, "Well, for one thing, they should have assessed all of us." He pointed out that an initial assessment would have immediately identified those individuals with the algebra deficiencies, and Alpha Technical College could have provided help prior to admission to the university.

Another specific area where Jerry offered a better alternative dealt with the offering of the courses themselves. Tyson suggested:

> I know for a fact that there'd have been enough people to make any course that we took out there, [the university], to have the instructor come out here, [Alpha Technical College's main campus], and offer the class. They could have come out here and taught us as adults as opposed to me being in the classroom with somebody that's 18 years old.

Jerry's plausible suggestion was thick with emotion as his dissatisfaction with having to take classes with younger students, once again, resurfaced. The phrase "taught us as adults" indicates feelings that he, along with other instructors, were being treated like children.

Departing from the discussion on planning and organization, Tyson approached the subject of financial support. While Alpha Technical College's administration had, indeed, made some accommodations in the form of financial reimbursement for tuition, Jerry did not feel that it was enough. He complained that he had to buy his own books and pay the tuition for classes that he did not successfully complete. He complained that the cost of books exceeded the cost of tuition for many of the courses. He laughed sarcastically when he recalled that one of the Alpha Technical College administrators suggested that he sell his books back to the bookstore or share books with other Alpha Technical College instructors taking the same course. "They want me to buy a book for $80.00 and sell it back for $8.00. I might not be the best at algebra but even I know that's a losing proposition."

When summarizing his thoughts and opinions of the support he wanted from the administration of Alpha Technical College, Jerry concluded:

> It's all up to us anyway. So it really wasn't nothing they could do. No, they just told you what you had to do and that's what you had to do. So its just like, you have to jump up and run out there in the middle of your day, or your lunch hour, or something and register. Just odds and ends and little things like that that they could have made easier if they wanted to. But I get over it.

Planning, organization, and more financial assistance were paramount in Tyson's expressions of needed support from his school administration. The phrase "but I get over it" is indicative of his resolve to complete the degree regardless of the lack of support he perceives. The personal resolve, however, did not recant the frustration and resentment that Jerry Tyson had developed from not receiving the minimal support that he felt he "was due."

*Jerry Tyson: Case Summary*

An examination of Jerry Tyson's experiences of returning to higher education under administrative mandate revealed strong feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction. He felt "trapped" because he had no options due to his late career stage and relatively close retirement. Time spent in class and studying were robbing him of the opportunity to do things that he enjoyed with his family and pursuing his various hobbies. The business that he had operated for many years during evenings and on the weekends had indefinitely been "put on hold." He felt like his lifestyle was "interrupted."

While Jerry's self-esteem was not damaged as a result of the return to school, he admitted that he was definitely out of his comfort zone taking classes with much younger students. One algebra class that Jerry had to drop caused a considerable amount of stress, as he "had never quit anything in his life." He expressed a feeling that his administration was "ashamed" of him for "working with his hands." Tyson did, however, find positive solace in the fact that he could use newly acquired English skills to help his daughter at home as well as his students at Alpha Technical College.

Jerry Tyson's professional life was definitely affected by the Associate Degree experience. Most of the impact on his professional life, however, was either negative or indifferent. He did not feel that the material covered as requirements for the Associate Degree was relevant to his profession as a diesel instructor. Moreover, the enormous time constraints of the coursework prohibited Jerry from pursuing much needed industry updating. He felt that this actually put him further behind as a teacher. Tyson noted that even his diesel students recognized his degree pursuit as an interruption on their time and education.

Jerry believed that the support provided by Alpha Technical College for the attainment of the mandated Associate Degree was minimal. He expressed that tuition reimbursement for completed courses only was not enough. Not only did he want help with other fees and book costs, but he also made several suggestions that centered on better planning and organization on the part of Alpha Technical College's administration. Pre-admissions assessments, formulation of a campus cohort, and on-campus classes specifically for Alpha Technical College teachers seeking the Associate Degree were among Tyson's suggestions for better support from the administration at this technical college.

## Case 2

*Mark Roberson, Aircraft Structural Technology Instructor – Alpha Technical College*

Mark Roberson became the Automotive Collision Repair Technology instructor at Alpha Technical College at the age of 22 after receiving a technical diploma in the Automotive Body Repair Program three years prior. This 18 month technical diploma was the highest level of formal education that Roberson had prior to his return to college under the administrative mandate. At 42 years of age, Mark had been teaching in the vocational environment for 20 years. Seven years into his teaching career, Mark migrated from the automotive body area to the Aircraft Structural Program at Alpha Technical College. A married father of three children, all still in school, Mark enjoyed a healthy family life and a settled career in teaching.

As the only instructor that Alpha Technical College employed in the Aircraft Structural Technology Program, Mark explained how the Auto-body Repair and Aircraft Structural Programs were quite similar:

> Well, I teach the Aircraft Structural Program which is primarily manufacturing style aviation sheet metal where new components or replacement components are built. My background is in Auto-collision but the two are very similar. In both cases, you need to understand the basics of metals and how they react under different pressures…bending,

> riveting, and welding. It all transfers from one type of vehicle to the next. Of course, with aircraft, you have a lot higher specs to deal with and you have to know a good bit about FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), regulations and so forth.

Mark described how he worked in automotive body shops for three years prior to his becoming an instructor at Alpha Technical College. "They want you to have at least three years of occupational experience before you come here to teach." Mark expressed how he felt that the three-year minimum was a valid requirement, and that many teachers did not have adequate competence in their subject matter because they lacked this basic field experience.

> Obviously a person needs the technical background. To have worked in the field and got their training in some fashion is crucial to being a good technical teacher. And I think the minimum training would have to be at least three years in the field. As far as a higher education beyond that, obviously I've never felt that one was needed or [that I] have had to have one in the past.

Mark was quick to note, however, that a strong practical background in the subject matter did not automatically equate good teaching. He described the "special individual" that is "basically born with those traits." Gray and Walter (2001) reported findings that "the old adage that people from the workplace are always natural teachers is hogwash" (p. 37). Roberson admitted that he knew a lot of people in the industry who possessed expert knowledge in the subject matter, but these individuals "couldn't teach." Mark summarized his philosophy of the vocational teacher:

> I've seen it a hundred times or more. I've seen people that are excellent at what they do and not worth a toot at teaching somebody else how to do it. You know, I really think you are born with those skills. A good instructor is born knowing how to teach somebody else. You know, I don't know that that's a hundred percent trainable. . . something that you could go to college to learn how to do. I guess if that's your hearts desire, your goal, then you could gather all the education you can and could be a successful instructor through training. But I think…I really believe that most of it is inborn. You have to have a knack for doing it. It's a gift or a curse, whichever way you want to look at it. [laughter]

Mark Roberson's depiction of the characteristics of a "good teacher" laid the foundation for his feelings on teacher education.

Mark was the only instructor in the Aircraft Structural Technology Program at Alpha Technical College. Two other Aviation Programs existed at the school, Aviation Maintenance Technology and Avionics. The three Aviation Programs had a 50,000 square foot facility complete with a large hangar, 4 laboratories, and 5 classrooms. Numerous small planes, three of which were airworthy, and four non-airworthy helicopters sat on the large paved tarmac adjacent to the facility. Mark had one classroom, office, and a large laboratory dedicated to his Aircraft Structural Program. His lab was very neat with one bay door that opened out onto the tarmac. In the center of the lab sat the hull of a Bell Helicopter. Roberson boasted that the helicopter body contained over 40,000 rivets, all applied by hand. Sections of partially repaired airplane wings were scattered on the many worktables throughout the lab. Drill presses, grinders, a band saw, and mechanical devices designed to bend and cut relatively large sections of sheet metal lined one of the walls of the lab area. A high, 25-foot arched ceiling completed the ambiance of the aviation work area.

Mark's Classroom was in one corner of the facility. With floor-to-ceiling windows on two of the walls, students enjoyed a picturesque view of the Alpha Technical College campus. Two airplane models were suspended by fishing line from the drop-tile ceiling at the front of the classroom. A plastic framed picture of various military aircraft hung on the white cement-block wall. A single bookcase with shelves of parts manuals, textbooks, and other reference books sat at the front corner of the class. A relatively small marker board lined the front wall containing a roughly sketched diagram of an airfoil cross-section. The cushioned stationary chairs, obviously designed for adult students, were placed along short tables designed for three to four students

each. The classroom was furnished for 25 occupants. Mark's program had been averaging 20 students per quarter, holding a constant enrollment in spite of the aviation industry downsizing resulting from the events of September 11, 2001. Of the 20 average students in the Aircraft Structural Program, approximately 36% were female.

*Mark Roberson: Affects on Morale*

Mark Roberson faced the mandated education with mixed feelings. When describing his morale, he fluctuated from the "automatic negative reactions" of resentment and frustration to attempts at "seeing the brighter side" of the issue. His morale was affected by time taken away from his family, frustration with the new trends of technical education, and having to take a remedial Algebra course. Mark concluded the discussion on a positive note, however, when describing how he and his fellow co-workers under the mandate had drawn closer because of the commonality of their frustrations.

Mark Roberson described a flood of emotions when he was first told that his continued employment with Alpha Technical College depended on the successful completion of an AAS degree. "My original thought was 'Oh God, at my age?' I could go on forever, I guess, about the different thoughts of that." Feelings of anger, disbelief, and helplessness, however, all eventually culminated into a sense of resolve on Mark's part.

> I guess my final initial thoughts were, 'Ok yeah, we'll see. If that's something we're going to do, then ok.' Without a doubt that was my decision. I can either decide to do it or not to do it. I mean, I'm not going to feel that I'm forced to do something. I always have options.

Mark gave the clear indication that, although the ultimatum existed with his job held in question, he was going to maintain control of the situation. In his mind, the decision to go to college was still under his power. He expressed that maintaining a sense of control was the appropriate reaction to keeping a positive attitude and, ultimately, being successful.

Mark continually exhibited feelings and behaviors that indicated he wanted to embrace the new education experience as something valuable. Invariably, however, the negative thoughts would emerge. While Roberson expressed a desire to "buy in" to the educational mandate, he still had feelings of resentment.

> Whether you are going to school at night or whether you are going to school in the daytime during your lunch hour or whatever, it doesn't matter. I mean, that takes time. It affects your family life. And I think I felt a lot of resentment. When I did that I said, 'Why in the heck am I doing this?' You know?

This resentment grew out of the idea that Mark was being robbed of time with his wife and children. He explained that he was the coach of his son's baseball team, and that this hobby was not limited to seasonal play. The team practiced year round and Mark did not want to give up his coaching for the sake of school. He unsuccessfully tried to balance time between the baseball team and his schoolwork. Mark's reflection on the impact of time with his family clearly shifted to feelings of hostility directed toward Alpha Technical College's administration:

> I guess the toughest thing is where I'm at now, [in life]. I have kids. The kids, you know, they take a lot of time and I want to spend time with them. Probably the poorest thing was the way it was handled, the way they, [Alpha Technical College's administration], shoved it down our throats all of the sudden. That was pitiful.

In a study of adults refusing to participate in a literacy program, Cutz (1997) revealed that two of the most common reasons given were related to time away from family and time away from second jobs. Roberson was no exception and the bitterness that surfaced when discussing time was evidenced by the phrases, "shoved down our throats" and "that was pitiful."

Roberson described other feelings of frustration concerning the unfairness of having the "rules changed." Mark compared his job to a ball game that had been played for 19 years by one set of rules, only to have those rules modified. He felt like he had not been given credit for "playing by the rules" for all of those years. He explained, "It is unfortunate that, you know, you

can work somewhere 19 years, then all of a sudden, if you don't get this degree, then you are not fit to teach."

Perhaps the most demoralizing aspect for Mark Roberson stemmed from the fact that he saw "no personal benefit" to attending school and earning the degree. He compared his situation to that of elementary and secondary educators within the State Department of Education who could anticipate a pay raise or some type of promotion as a result of attaining a degree. Mark, on the other hand, could see only personal expense in time, money, and effort with no positive results either tangible or intangible for his efforts to obtain the advanced degree.

> You realize that there is nothing in it for you financially or otherwise. It's going to cost you money and its going to cost you time, but there's no money involved in it for you. Coming from no degree, following the salary structure the way its set up, you have to go all the way to a Master's Degree level before you realize any additional income. So that means that you'd have to go from where I am now with no degree to a Masters to ever see a penny.

The demoralizing part of the picture painted by Roberson lay in the fact that he saw no value to the tremendous effort involved with the earning of a degree. To be able to "keep the job," something he had "kept" for 19 years without a degree, brought no consolation to the idea of extensive personal expense and inconvenience.

Mark continued explaining the dilemma that was affecting his morale by addressing the new mission of technical education. He described a "fear" that a liberal arts tradition, or academic environment was going to "invade" the traditional shop of the vocational school.

> That's the fear that I'm trying to express that I hear other people saying that you are going to bring that kind of situation [liberal arts and academic focus] into this environment. It's going to wind up being nothing but academics. And what's going to happen in the end is it's going to be like the dog that bites his own tail off.

Roberson continued asserting his point about this fear. He discussed what he considered to be his customers, the employers of Aircraft Structural graduates: "If you are going to judge [a

graduate] solely by the degree that they have, and not necessarily the experience that they have, then that could get dangerous to this business…real dangerous." Roberson introduced the element of danger with teaching students who will, one day, "be working on airplanes that all of our families will be flying." By making his teaching a potential matter of life or death, Mark was able to trivialize the value of academic courses, both for his students and for himself.

Shifting the discussion from the holistic view of the trend of technical education toward including more of an academic core, Mark brought up another demoralizing component of his complex experience in that he discovered he would need remediation in algebra. Roberson explained that he had heard "rumors" that Alpha Technical College would reimburse instructors for all courses, including remedial non-credit courses. Mark later found these rumors to be false, and he would have to pay for all non-credit classes, including remediation courses. This would not have been as frustrating an issue, according to Roberson, had he not been lead to believe, earlier, that all expenses would be covered.

When discussing morale issues associated with returning to college under mandate, Mark Roberson offered one positive aspect. He indicated he and his fellow co-workers "in the same boat" actually drew closer. "It seems like there is a drawing together of those who are going to have to do it. Its like we are all going to have to live through this together. We'll survive it together." This "coming together," while positive in its own right, was more indicative of a diminished morale and a strong need for support among the instructors under the mandate.

Roberson repeatedly attempted to invoke positive statements throughout his discussion of morale. The experiences and feelings that he relayed as seemingly positive, however, were betrayed by his gestures and facial expressions and pointed to evidence of a decline in his morale. The reasons behind the mandate, the time taken from his family, and the idea of having

to take a remedial course all served to diminish the enthusiasm that Mark felt for his job and career at Alpha Technical College. His efforts to "find the brighter side of the issue," however, were strong indicators that, regardless of the circumstances, Roberson would not allow his self-image to be damaged.

*Mark Roberson: View of Self*

The administrative mandate to return to school did not have an overwhelming negative affect on Mark Roberson's view of self. He discussed a callousness that he had developed to the predominant view of vocational educators as inferior. While he perceived his administration to be saying that he was "unfit to teach," Mark asserted that his confidence was in his own experience and not based on someone else's beliefs. The discussion of self-image caused Roberson to repeatedly digress on the value of college education and the dichotomy that existed between occupational and academic studies. He also interjected the affects of having to take the remedial Algebra course.

Mark recalled that there had always been a "stigma attached to vocational teaching," and that he had "learned to live with it." Kincheloe (1999) also described the societal view of vocational education as having a stigma along with being considered a societal ill and substandard. Roberson compared the teacher of academic subjects, who would have entered his or her career with a higher education degree, to his own position as a "shop teacher." He explained his idea that the academic teachers were automatically assumed to be good teachers. He noted this as a fallacy. "See, in my experience, some of the instructors who have the degrees and are 'qualified' to teach aren't always necessarily your best teachers." He went on to say, however, that the stigma attached to vocational instructors usually carried the connotation of being first a tradesman and second a teacher. This implication perpetuated the belief that

teaching was a lesser skill. Mark's perception of how his profession was viewed became something that he had "learned to live with" and, perhaps this rationale served to strengthen his self-concept as a teacher.

Roberson was disappointed with his administration's apparent negative connotation for occupational education. He expressed that Alpha Technical College's administration was saying that he "wasn't fit to teach" by placing the Associate Degree requirement on him. He admitted that a younger teacher might have found this to be disconcerting to the level that self-esteem would be shaken. Mark explained that, at his age and level of achievement as an instructor, his confidence was founded in past experiences and evidenced by "well-trained graduates and the satisfied employers who had hired them." His personal feelings concerning his value in the classroom as an Aircraft Structural Instructor could neither be improved nor threatened by the administration of Alpha Technical College. "If I took to heart everything they told us, I'd be a basket case by now," Mark said half-jokingly.

Roberson admitted that there were skills that he lacked that could only be acquired through the appropriate staff development, and the Associate Degree would not satisfy these needed areas. Mark explained:

> There's a lot of things I need. I don't personally feel that I need that degree to be successful at this point. Now, if I could turn the clock back, knowing what I now know, if I could go back 20 years or so, there's no way I could go on without getting a degree. But at the time, I mean, when I came along, and came to the technical institute back in the 70s, there was no hint of getting a degree. They were two separate things, you know? The college was over here and the technical institute was over here and there was nothing in common between the two. You either went to one or the other. They were like total opposite sides of the fence from one another. That's the system I came through, and now all of the sudden that system has a bridge across it, now.

Prentice (2001) asserted that the divide between postsecondary occupational education and higher education was at the heart of the issue with the overwhelming negative perception of

vocational training. When describing this former dichotomy, Roberson's statement appeared contradictory. His point, however, was that there is now a "bridge," and he used the word "across" to describe the gulf between the two types of education. Given the opportunity to relive his earlier years, Mark would have pursued a college degree because the degree would have had a legitimate value to him in earlier years. As he relayed how he encouraged his students to continue on to the university to earn a degree after the technical education experiences, he concentrated heavily on the importance of goal setting:

> Yeah, I'd probably try to get the AAS. I don't know if I'd go the full four years for the Bachelors and then get the Masters, but, you have to have a goal. A lot of youngsters are running around here and there without a goal. You have to have become employed before the goal starts to show up that you can take a degree and go with it. I think I would do, what I recommend that students do, and that is to get your technical education first. Then get at least the AAS degree and see what doors that opens for you. You can easily go on to college after you become employed. That's what I see a lot of my graduates do, and that's what seems to work for most in this field.

Mark conceded the fact that the college degree was necessary in the aircraft structural industry of today, but that this trend was new and did not exist when he was preparing for his career.

Mark shifted from the discussion of the divide between academic and occupational education and focused on his existing situation. In relation to his view of self, Roberson was not indifferent to the fact that he was required to attend remedial Algebra classes after scoring low on the placement test. He stated that 25 years had passed since his last Algebra class in high school; therefore, he was not embarrassed, nor was his self-esteem affected by having to take the remedial class. He did, however, express disappointment and frustration at the inconvenience and expense of the non-credit remedial course, but repeated that it did not upset his view of self in any way.

When asked about his personal goals for the future, Mark simply affirmed that he wanted to continue teaching in the technical arena. He affirmed that he had no desire to "move up in the

ranks or move to a higher level as far as administration goes." Roberson expressed that he was eager to return to his "normal life" as it was before he started working on the degree. He added, with pride, "and I would like to see myself still here doing what I love and enjoy doing."

The various circumstances surrounding Mark Roberson's return to higher education had the potential to lower his self-esteem. Roberson asserted himself in his own experience and track record and refused to allow any outside opinion influence how he viewed himself. Being required to take remedial algebra and feeling that he was "unfit to teach" in the eyes of his administration did not waiver his self-confidence. Mark's philosophical view of the value of technical education combined with a college education dominated the discussion of his self-image.

*Mark Roberson: Career and Job Affects*

Attending university classes has not been without influence on Mark Roberson's professional life as a vocational instructor. Mark cited several negative affects of the experience and one affect of a positive nature. He never committed to a decision as to whether the degree work was a waste of time or worth the investment. His major concern, however, revolved around his students and the quality of education and instruction they were receiving from his instruction at the time when his attention was divided between their schooling and his own.

When first asked about the Career and job affects of the required education experience, Roberson focused on the time consuming nature of working on a college degree. He described how the distraction had a direct affect on his job:

> Well, the biggest problem would be the time constraints. I don't care how you look at it, it hinders the job that you are presently doing now. There's no way that you can commit to going back and taking college courses and it not affect the job you are doing. Whether you are going to school at night or whether you are going to school in the daytime during your lunch hour or whatever, it doesn't matter, I mean, that takes time.

When asked how, specifically, he felt the additional work "hindered" his job, Mark explained that his focus was divided between his students and his work as a student. He described feeling "frustrated" when he was studying, writing a paper, or working algebra problems for his AAS, yet his "mind would drift" to what he felt like he needed to be doing with his own students and classes. Then, when he would spend additional time with one of his students that needed help, he felt like he needed to be working on his own school assignments. Mark recalled how his students noticed this conflict:

> If you are allowed to take work time to go take classes, even if you aren't taking student's class time, you are taking your planning time and it takes the concentration level away from your program that you are trying to teach to go prepare and study for your college courses. There's no doubt it's a distraction. And the students notice it. The students actually say things like, "Why are ya'll having to do this?"

Mark described instances where his aircraft structural students would engage in discussion about the Alpha Technical College mandate. The students would express "resentment and disagreement" with the changes that technical education appeared to be taking. Mark relayed students' comments such as "Why are being called a 'college' now instead of a 'technical institute'?" and "If I wanted to go to a college, I would have gone over to [the university.]" Roberson explained how he viewed negative comments as an indirect sign of "non-support" from his students. While he agreed with their opinion, the fact that there was no encouragement from the students he taught, added to feelings of futility at the extra work he was doing.

Career and job affects from the administrative mandate to return to school extended into Mark's handling of the supplies and equipment under his control. He talked about the overall expense, on the part of Alpha Technical College, involved with sending instructors back to school while seeking the new accreditation. He explained that enormous expenditures were

being made in areas where they were not necessary and, in fact, taking the school in the wrong direction. Monies that could be spent effectively in his program, and programs like his, for practical application of industrial training, were being "diverted:"

> I think we get distracted primarily with stupid things like this COC [Commission on Colleges] accreditation thing. I mean, my gut feeling is, we just don't need to be there. We really need to leave that for someone else to do, and we need do what we are commissioned to do. And I think anytime we get distracted like that it causes more money to be spent, and it's just a big distraction. I don't see a return on investment with that money for the school. That money is somewhere, but it is not in the grass-roots technical education programs like this one. I don't know, I'm not the one they ask, but I know in a sense of the word you could do a lot for technical education with that money.

Once again, Roberson displaces personal feelings of mistreatment and unfair practices toward occupational educators. Though originally discussing the Career and job affects of the mandated education, he directs the conversation to the broader system and budgetary inequities. He interprets the trend toward transferability of credit, and the finances disbursed on facilitating such as having a direct negative affect on his profession.

Maintaining the broader view of how the situation was affecting him as a professional, Roberson expressed concern over the number of co-workers leaving the profession because of the education ultimatum. He felt like the system, as he knew it, was changing in a direction that would leave him, and others like him, behind.

> Well, I think they are going to end up running a lot of good instructors out of the business. Now, I know there are some provisions for instructors that only have like five years or three years to retirement. I hear that they don't have to do this. So I think a lot of them will move on out without having to do this.

Roberson continued in explaining how this forcing of the issue had left "much dissention among the ranks." He talked of rumors concerning one instructor who was going to refuse to accept the mandate and challenge the administration. Mark shook his head and stated he "didn't work that way." He admitted, however, he had weighed his options and that one of those options included

approaching the administration and saying, “I’ll stay here until you absolutely have to have somebody with a degree in my position and at that time, I’ll resign and you hire somebody.” While Mark shared frustrations and disappointment with the mandate, he still felt a loyalty to Alpha Technical College that called for fair play on his part should he decide to “move on.”

After discussing the various negative affects that the mandate and returning to school had on his job and career, Mark added that there was “something to be said for taking all of those classes.” He remarked of increasing amounts of “clerical work” in the form of reports, data collection, and budgeting that was required, “even at this level.” Roberson stated that the English classes had improved his writing abilities, and he was beginning to see where it was helping in the performance of his “secretarial duties” as an instructor. He later added, with a humorous tone, that all of the new paperwork and data collection that had been required of him would not have been necessary if the school had not chosen to pursue the new accreditation. “It seems like they are training me to do the work that justifies requiring me to get the training,” Mark scoffed. Roberson concluded that it was just another of the many “vicious cycles” that education would endure, but that he was, indeed, learning “a little something” in the process.

The discussion on the Career and job affects of working on the Associate Degree was dominated by Mark Roberson’s opinion of the trends of technical education to include more academic core. He briefly discussed the time taken from his students but elaborated on the “money wasted” on seeking new accreditation that would facilitate credit transferability. He also brought up the fear of “good teachers” leaving the system rather than achieving the necessary credentials. Typical of his previous efforts to remain positive, Mark concluded the discussion by focusing on the benefits he had received from the English course he had taken under the mandate.

*Mark Roberson: Support Needed*

Mark Roberson freely shared his opinions on the administrative support that he needed to accomplish the task of completing the Associate Degree. He described a "hands-on, hands-off" approach whereby the school administrative could best serve him by helping, organizing, and planning at critical points where necessary, yet allowing him to do the work without interfering. While Mark's prescription for administrative facilitation may have sounded, first, contradictory, he explained his concept by illustrating the events of his initial experiences with being told that he would have to get the AAS to maintain his teaching position.

Planning and organization on the part of the administration of Alpha Technical College was lacking in Roberson's experience.

> Well, I just think this whole thing could have been planned differently. I mean, you had, I'm just guessing now, 10 to 12 people on this campus that all are in the same boat. A lot of concessions could have been made probably saving the school a lot of time as well as the faculty members that were involved.

Mark was asked to delineate the concessions to which he referred. He gave the example of "some type of bulk registration" where the administration of Alpha Technical College would have communicated with the registrar of the local university. Since the Alpha Technical College faculty members under the mandate were all "in the same boat," advisement, orientation, and registration could have been made much simpler by having a special session exclusively for those Alpha Technical College teachers seeking the Associate Degree.

Another "concession" that Roberson described involved the offering of special classes, again, through a joint effort by Alpha Technical College and the local university. "We could have gotten some classes together if everyone needed the same class, especially some of the core like English and math, and brought their instructors out here for our convenience." Roberson explained that having classes with the other students at the university campus was not only

inconvenient, but also a "waste of resources" since many of the Alpha Technical College people could have worked together. Without the facilitation of organized classes for the Alpha Technical College faculty, several of the classes they needed "closed-out." The Alpha Technical College faculty, therefore, started off with various schedules that were staggered. The advantages of taking courses as a cohort could, therefore, never be realized. Mark concluded, "I think a lot of that could have been handled a lot better if somebody had done some planning on this side of it."

Another area of needed support, according to Mark, involved an intangible sense of understanding and compassion on the part of the administration of Alpha Technical College. He expressed sensing feelings of antagonism and detachment from the administrators at a time when he needed understanding and moral support. He began describing this need by recalling how he was told that he would have to get the degree:

> Well, basically, you know, we were hinted at around at back in June, you know, by the President, that we wanted to go to COC and all these accreditations and that we want to have all the faculty to have degrees. We didn't really think anything about it then. Later, we were called in by the Vice President, and told, 'Ya'll got to go to college and this is going to start next week so ya'll need to go test at the college tomorrow. They are going to be waiting for ya'll to come test.' This was told to us on a Thursday afternoon, and I was told I was going to have to go test that next morning.

Roberson expressed visual frustration at the choice of words, method of delivery, and lack of planning surrounding the news of the ultimatum. Mark stated that he understood the mandate and accepted the facts of the requirement, but that the handling of the news could have been more professional in considering his feelings and personal inconvenience.

Mark attributed his low score on the algebra portion of the entrance test, in part, to the problems involved with the logistics of having to take the test the next day.

> Well I live 70 miles from here and I don't work on Fridays so that means I have to come over here 70 miles on my day off to take a test. So I got in my car and I drove 70 miles

> over here and took the test and flagged remedial on algebra. I haven't had algebra since the ninth grade and that was, lets see, gosh, lets do the math on it, 25 years ago since I've had any algebra. And we were told at the time 'don't worry about it.' The president said, 'We will prepare ya'll and get ya'll up to speed here with our Developmental Studies program.' And all of a sudden that wasn't possible because we were immediately tested and [the university] wanted to put us in their remedial classes. And then that created other situations that made it harder to get in and get started on this degree. So it was just kind of haphazard so to speak.

Had he received the "moral backing" that he felt he deserved, Roberson expressed that he would have felt better about the whole process, including having to take the entrance exam.

Roberson explained how he would have felt support from the Alpha Technical College administration, rather than "antagonism," if they had "sat us down and talked this thing over." He said that he wished his supervisor had simply come to him and stated, "We'd really like for ya'll to get a degree." "We'll start looking at this situation and discussing this. What are you concerns? What are you thinking? What are your fears?" Mark then concluded the description of his unpleasant initial experience with a positive twist. He reflected, "It may have been a blessing that the Alpha administration just stayed out of the way after telling us what was expected."

Financial support did not appear to be of major concern to Mark in his experience. He explained that Alpha Technical College would take care of the expense of tuition for credit classes successfully completed, and that he was responsible for all other "financial burdens." When asked if he had requested more financial support, Roberson replied, "No, the situation was such that I didn't want to go ask and have them turn me down. I'm a pretty independent person when it comes to things like this."

The support that Mark Roberson needed from his administration would require some professional intuitiveness. Roberson expressed a need to be helped with the logistics of getting into school then "left alone to do the work." He described a need for better planning and

organization on the part of his administration. Roberson did not place significant emphasis on financial support as he described himself as independent in that area. Most expressively of the support Mark desired was in his request for moral support, understanding, and encouragement in the task of obtaining the degree.

*Mark Roberson: Case Summary*

Mark Roberson's experience of returning to higher education under an administrative mandate was described as a matter of inconvenience and futility. While he understood the reasoning behind the requirement, he took philosophical objection to the direction that his school, Alpha Technical College, was taking. The futility of the experience stemmed from the fact that he saw no personal or professional benefit that justified the amount of time, effort, and expense required. His morale at work and at home was affected by the mandate because of the time that was taken from his family and his students. Roberson approached the task, however, with a decision of resolve wherein he was still in control of the situation. His positive approach strengthened his morale as he stated that he drew closer to co-workers who were also going to school under the mandate.

Roberson was a self-proclaimed independent worker who saw no detriment to his view of self due to the experience of having to complete an Associate Degree. He described his profession as a vocational instructor to be one with a "stigma" that he had long overcome. His self-confidence lay in his abilities that had been proven many times over the years of his career. The fact that he had to take remedial algebra classes did no damage to his self-esteem because he understood that he had not been in school for over 25 years and, therefore, expected to need some remediation.

Time constraints and the amount of attention that the degree work required were of the two most prominent Career and job affects of Roberson's experience. His students noticed the division in attention from their instructor, and Mark felt guilty about not being able to give them all of his focus and energy. He also expressed a declining attitude when referencing his supply and equipment budget due to the enormous expenditures he saw Alpha Technical College disbursing because of the new accreditation and degree work. While he admitted to improving his report writing and data collection skills, he concluded that these skills were needed in his job for the paper work required by the new accreditation. If the school had not sought the new accreditation, he would not need the new writing skills that he was applying from his degree work.

Support from Alpha Technical College's administration was greatly lacking according to Roberson. He discussed, at length, the antagonist and unsympathetic attitude his administration portrayed in relation to his age and level of experience. Suggestions of support that Mark gave included better organization and planning with the goal of keeping all of the instructors together as a cohort through as much of their educational experience as possible. He also expressed that he needed the moral support of his supervisors in the form of understanding and appreciation for the work and inconvenience that he was enduring to satisfy their mandate. Financial support was not of primary concern to Mark Roberson.

## Case 3

*Randy Dennard, Heavy Equipment Instructor – Alpha Technical College*

Randy Dennard served Alpha Technical College in the capacity of Heavy Equipment instructor for 19 years before he received the administrative mandate to earn an Associate Degree. Randy, a product of the institution to which he had devoted his career, received a

Technical Diploma in Diesel Equipment Technology from Alpha Technical College at the age of 20. He worked in the industry as a Truck and Forklift Technician prior to being hired as a vocational instructor for Alpha Technical College. Randy Dennard explained that the Heavy Equipment Dealers Training Program was designed to prepare students to work on large construction equipment, farm machinery, heavy duty trucks, and various equipment used in the logging and mining industries. He discussed his educational and experiential preparation for entering this vocational field:

> Well, I had my initial training here at [Alpha Technical College] in Diesel and went straight into the industry doing different things with what I'd learned here. I worked on off-road trucks and forklifts and learned a lot about the hydraulics and gearing and so forth that you have to know up and above just the engine aspect of it.

Randy continued explaining how "everything was mechanically driven" when he first entered the field. Over the years, computer driven systems replaced many of the mechanically driven systems. He stressed the importance of the update training that he received to stay abreast of the changes in industry.

Upon entering the teaching ranks, Dennard felt that his training, education, and experience did not adequately prepare him for all aspects of teaching. Early in his teaching career, he voluntarily took classes at a university that was 120 miles from his home. "I had some preliminary college courses, basic stuff when I first started teaching, on how to make a test, lab layouts, how to conduct students through that class…I guess the very essential things." Dennard stated that he was not on a degree track but felt that he needed the extra "training" to give him all of the tools he needed to be a good teacher. None of these courses transferred to the university that Dennard attended for the work needed to fulfill the mandate for the Associate Degree. Randy's highest level of education was the 18 month Diesel Technology Diploma he received from Alpha Technical College.

There was an “interim period” 13 years into Dennard’s teaching career where he worked as a tool salesman after losing his job as a result of a statewide reduction in force. Alpha Technical College administrators promised Randy that he would be given the option to resume his job when the financial situation was brighter and, four years later, fulfilled that promise. Randy resumed his teaching position as diesel instructor. He reflected positively on the experience as “an opportunity to grow, make contacts, and get re-connected with the industry.” The fact that the school administration held true to the promise of rehiring him gave Randy a unique loyalty to the school and supervisors over him.

Dennard was one of two instructors in Alpha Technical College’s Heavy Equipment Dealers Training Program. The program was a partnership established between Alpha Technical College and an international heavy equipment manufacturer. The business sought a centralized location where dealers could have their technicians train on their equipment and earn an Associate Degree in Heavy Equipment Technology. The partnership was formed three years prior to the administrative mandate for instructors to earn the very same type of degree. Randy Dennard was moved to the Heavy Equipment Dealers Training Program after teaching in the Diesel Program for 16 years.

An aircraft hanger, constructed in 1941, had been recently renovated to provide the Heavy Equipment Training Program one of the largest such facilities in the southeastern part of the country. Two well-furnished classrooms, with full multimedia presentation equipment, complimented the 40,000 square foot training lab. The state-of-the-art training environment was completed in the large shop area as the shiny-steeled computerized diagnostic equipment lined two of the walls. A large bulldozer sat in the entrance of one of the bay doors and a new backhoe filled the other opening. Four new engines, paint still fresh, lined the center of the floor.

The clinical environment was less like a vocational training shop and more like a highly technical scientific research facility.

Dennard shared a large, 25 by 14 foot office with the other instructor in his department. The office, also being newly renovated and furnished, had white cement block walls adorned with pictures of brand-specific heavy equipment engines, machinery, and trucks. In the center of the wall was a large framed composite of pictures from the recent dedication of the Heavy Equipment building where Dennard taught. The top of Randy's desk was lined with caps sporting the logo of the single heavy equipment manufacturer to which Dennard's program at Alpha Technical College catered exclusively. Service manuals and a laptop computer sat on his office desk along with an oily rag containing a small engine part Dennard had been using in a demonstration lecture.

*Randy Dennard: Affects on Morale*

Randy Dennard's morale progressively declined as he immersed himself in the work toward the Associate Degree. He described going from emotions of disbelief at the mandate to frustration at having no options to the point of questioning his own loyalty to the school. Helplessness because of the fear of "falling further and further behind" in the practices of the industry caused more detriment to Randy's morale. He concluded the discussion with a description of how his personal and family life had been negatively affected by "the interruption" in lifestyle imposed on him.

"First of all, I could not believe that we were being required to do that." Randy Dennard's initial response to the educational mandate was one of disbelief and denial. He had heard rumors that the administration of Alpha Technical College may ask some instructors to pursue degrees in their field, but he felt that he, and other instructors like him who had extensive

industry training and a long teaching career, would be exempt from the requirement. "Well, I classify myself as a veteran teacher, and I was very surprised at that. They threw me and [others] into the category of being unqualified to teach." The perception of "being unqualified to teach" is one that Randy chose not to accept individually but added the names of other veteran instructors who were also under the mandate.

Randy's tone was one of anger and resentment when describing how he first learned that maintaining his job was contingent on his earning an Associate Degree.

> I felt like the administration was a little bit hesitant on telling each individual what they had to do, simply because they brought everyone in one at a time. They didn't want the whole group to hear it like, 'you've got to do this.' I don't know what they figured…if there was going to be an outrage or a riot or what.

The "group mentality" was a major factor affecting Randy's morale. He noted how he talked with others involved with the mandate immediately after they were told, and Randy explained how his initial feelings of unbelief and indignation were confirmed as others expressed the same or similar feelings. "I don't know if it made it worse or better, but it seemed like it did help to talk about it with the other guys." The seeking out of others in the same situation was a coping mechanism that Dennard used to deal with the situation.

Randy explained that his frustration was magnified by the fact that he was given no options in the matter. Negative feelings toward the administration developed from their treatment of his career as if it were of "such a temporal nature" that it could be easily shifted to someone else should he not complete the AAS.

> The whole aspect of it was the way it was done. It was forced down our throats. And I would just like to add that nothing was ever taken into consideration for our experience in our occupation. I know that other schools consider professional experience and work time as a type of credit toward a degree but we were given no regard for that.

Dennard repeated the word "forced" several times, and he grimaced when describing the feeling of being required to do something of this magnitude at his age and level of experience. He reiterated, "It was like my time and experience that I had was not worth one dime. I mean, I hate to be blunt about it but it was frustrating. It was very insulting." Kerka (1994) identified "perceived deficiency" in an individual as the primary belief of the employee under an education mandate.

Randy talked about loyalty to the school. He noted that his enthusiasm for heavy equipment training and his dedication to his students had not dampened. Randy explained that his morale was now, however, tempered by feelings of being treated unjustly and a reduced "eagerness to please" when situations arose where the administration "would ask for extra work or favors." However, Randy quickly softened and recanted his statement. "I will always do whatever is asked of me because that's the kind of person I am. Its just that I might not have as big a smile while doing it." Dennard added that he "didn't hold grudges," and he would "get over it soon enough."

Further indications of a decline in Randy Dennard's morale surfaced when he discussed the amount of time that he had traditionally spent in between quarters preparing and planning for the courses he taught. The sense of frustration and helplessness can be detected in Randy's tone when describing the schedule differential:

> The biggest way it affected me was the planning aspect of my teaching. I virtually have no time whatsoever to plan for my classes here that I teach. Even when we are on a quarter's break, we are still in our college classes because we are on a quarter system here and, at the college; they are on a semester system. It's very conflicting there. Again, the biggest thing was not being able to plan, its very frustrating. And, also, lets go back to the breaks between quarters here, we generally used to use that time to go back to industry for updating and all…but being in these college classes, there is absolutely no time for that. Our technology is changing so rapidly that it's even hard for the person that has accessibility to go to these classes to stay up to date. With me, I'm getting further

> and further behind. As we are speaking right now, I'm just getting further and further behind.

In a study of stressors on vocational teachers, Adams (1999) reported a significant source of stress due to feelings of lack of occupational confidence in the instructional work environment. Randy Dennard was exhibiting this type of stress when he repeated, "I'm getting further and further behind."

One indicator of the affects on Randy's morale was depicted in the way he responded to his students during his coursework. He described situations where he was short-tempered and had little patience as he interacted with students in the course of a typical day. "I haven't directly received any reaction from them although I would say that my temperament is real short now. I don't have much patience anymore, and maybe I snap at them too much." The additional stress on Dennard manifested itself in his classroom. While the stress was of a manageable nature, the realization to Randy that he was letting it affect his relationships with his students became a further detriment to his morale.

The most poignant of the affects on Randy Dennard's morale involved his family life. The personal affects on the family of an employee under an education mandate had the potential to offer the most devastating results to morale (Alejandro, 2001; Cutz, 1997; Tight, 1999). Randy relayed how his wife had commented on his spending less time with her.

> My wife and I were talking about that the other night. I've been in school now, going on, well, I guess a year or so, and my wife was talking about, that it seemed to her that Sunday afternoon was when I started doing my studying so I'm pretty much gone then even though I'm at the house. From Sunday until Friday night, its like I'm not even there. I'm physically there, yes, but mentally, I'm in the books, studying, or doing my homework.

As Alejandro (2001) reported, the success of a mandatory educational endeavor can hinge largely on the perceived support of family members. Randy's description of the discussion with

his wife did not infer opposition on her part, but simply implied that she missed time with him and that the education was an interference on their family. Though passive in nature, Dennard could only interpret this as a lack of familial support.

When asked to summarize his personal thoughts on his morale since the mandate, Randy gave the following response:

> I think I'd like to say a little more about my personal life. It [the education experience] has very much affected it. I think I told you that my wife never sees me. Even though we don't have kids, we do have nieces and nephews that are like my own children and it seems like I'm away from them a lot more. They say they miss me a lot. It's like everything centers now around going back to college. We had pretty much had our life settled and had our routine down and now, bam, all this is here. It very much upset our routine here at home.

Being uprooted from a settled lifestyle and an established routine seemed to be the core of Randy's decline in morale. He noted that he had come to a level of acceptance about the mandate and the work he was expected to do on the degree, but he could not get over the feelings of resentment concerning the negative impact on his family life.

*Randy Dennard: View of Self*

The affects on Randy Dennard's self-image were not as prominent as the indicators of his concern for how others viewed him. When discussing this aspect of his experience of returning to higher education, Randy delineated several areas where he was made to feel awkward and question how others evaluated his qualifications as a teacherl. Dennard concluded, however, by saying that he had a strengthened self-image after receiving his grades.

Randy's personal evaluation of his qualifications as a vocational teacher demonstrated a resolute confidence. He expressed disappointment that the administration of Alpha Technical College did not share his viewpoint concerning his experience and education.

> Personally, I think we have already proven ourselves with our experience and our background and track record. We should have been grand fathered into the system

> somehow or another. Maybe the new people that are coming on board, yeah, they ought to have to take it, you know, get the college credits and so forth. But I don't think that those of us who have proven ourselves should have been made to do it.

As before, Randy used plural terms such as "ourselves," " our experience," and "our background" when discussing his value as a veteran instructor. He refused to be alone in the endeavor and seemed to feel more secure in grouping himself with the others on his campus that had been issued the same mandate.

When examining how the mandate had affected his self-image, Dennard expressed some degree of regret at having not earned a degree immediately following high school graduation. "I'll have to admit that I was pretty much prepared to go off to college after I finished high school even though I chose to come here [Alpha Technical College] as a student and get a trade profession." He explained that he "made a major mistake" in his high school curriculum by not taking more than one Algebra class. He concluded that the decision to take a shop class in Automotive Maintenance in lieu of Algebra II was the catalyst that steered him toward the vocational career. Surprisingly, Dennard regretted his decision. "That's the one big mistake I think I made there. Of course, back then I couldn't see into the future about what I'm having to do these days." He explained, however, that the regret was not in the career path he had taken, but in not including the college experience as part of that preparation.

The discussion of high school caused Randy to digress to another area that affected the way he saw himself. He talked of feeling "awkward" as a student in classes with others who were 20 to 30 years his junior. He shared a story of the first class that he took and the relief he felt when he saw two "older ladies" in the room:

> It was all very awkward. Like I said, I can remember the first day, right now, walking into the classroom. Fortunately, there were two other older ladies in there that made me feel a little better. Now, by 'older,' I'd say one was mid 40s, about my age, and the other a little older…50ish. We kind of sat as a little group, that is until both ladies wound up

> dropping out of the class, for what reason, I don't know. I held in there because I was being required to do it. I felt very awkward. Just the fact of being in there with younger students was very awkward.

He concluded the experience, however, by describing how his professor recognized Randy's uneasiness and helped him.

> One thing that did make me feel better was that the relationship that I had with the instructor. He was about my same age. We had the same kind of extra-curricular activities such as music choices and so forth. We enjoyed the same sports and he kind of made me feel real easy about it. I think he knew what I was up against and worked at making me feel comfortable. He really helped.

When explaining the various attitudes and thoughts about his view of self during the required education experience, Dennard reached a point where he acknowledged that, given the option, he would not choose to earn a degree. He stated, "I would not even go back to school at all. With my background and my credentials. I could probably find a job just as good as what I've got, maybe making a little better than what I'm doing now." Randy was reassuring himself that his skills and abilities were still in tact and, regardless of how his administration viewed him, he was well prepared to do his job.

Dennard asserted that his view of self was not diminished regardless of the numerous negative, uncomfortable, and awkward experiences associated with going back to school. There were, indeed, moments where he was made to feel good about himself through the sense of achievement brought about by successfully completing courses. He stated proudly, "So far, I'll have to say, I've made all A's except for one B in one class." He struggled with the Algebra class but stated that he knew that was because he was poorly prepared at the secondary level. He also attributed his weakness in the math class to the length of time that had passed since he had used algebra in a classroom setting.

*Randy Dennard: Career and Job Affects*

Randy began the discussion of the Career and job affects of the mandatory education by discussing the broader implications to technical education. He referenced the various courses he had taken and described the inability to transfer the skills acquired in them to his classroom at Alpha Technical College. The time that the Associate Degree work took him away from his job evoked Randy's most negative reactions. Because of the overwhelming occupation of his time, Randy often felt unprepared for class lectures that he taught. The time constraints also eliminated Dennard's attendance at any of the industry update training sessions that he felt he needed to sustain his occupational skills.

The practicality of taking the Associate Degree courses was suspect in the mind of Randy Dennard. Randy explained a dichotomy between a degreed teacher and one that possesses the experience and skills to teach vocational classes like this:

> We are in a highly technical field. It does require reading and writing, but I do not think that it requires a college level person to do it. And I think also, that it does not require a college level person to teach it. Maybe some college courses would be helpful but not as far as having to go and get a degree. If we are going to take college courses then we need to be taking college courses that are directly going to help us in our field.

In his reference to the Associate Degree, he listed the core classes that were required and identified how each held very little relevance to the teaching of heavy equipment mechanics. He conceded that one of the two English classes that he took helped with his writing. "The couple of English courses that I've taken…well, I was kind of lax in English in high school, and it has made me a better writer…which we do have to do a bit of that in this field." Randy also acknowledged that a Bachelor Degree in education may be helpful to someone who was serious about entering the field and wanted to learn about teaching. He reiterated, "But me knowing

what I know and having been here so long and all, I can see that it [the Associate Degree] is not really going to help at all."

With such a dim view of a positive career impact, Randy further complained about the negative aspects of the extra work he was being required to do for the Associate of Applied Science Degree. The primary concern that Dennard expressed was the inability to maintain current with technological and procedural changes in the heavy equipment industry due to the time consumed by the degree work. "Ever since I've been here teaching, I've constantly been going back to industry and getting updates. I don't feel that I've had enough of that since all of this [Associate Degree work] started." The business partnership that Alpha Technical College had established with the heavy equipment manufacturer facilitated many, otherwise impossible, opportunities for Randy to learn. He felt that these opportunities were being wasted, as he could not break away from his college classes long enough for the travel time that would be required in getting the industry training. Randy was genuine in his tone:

> Our technology is changing so rapidly that it's even hard for the person that has accessibility to go to these classes to stay up to date. With me, I'm getting further and further behind. As we are speaking right now, I'm just getting further and further behind.

Randy's feelings of frustration due to the time that was taken away from his class planning time as a teacher had an impact on his career in addition to the impact on morale previously discussed.

Randy Dennard feared that the time spent on the degree work was having a major negative impact on his job. There were times when Dennard felt like he was "winging it" in a lecture or demonstration because he was unprepared. This type of feeling caused him to be frequently agitated and "snap at" his students. Randy admitted to becoming more short-tempered with his students since beginning the coursework required to complete the degree. "I

just want all of this to be over for everyone's sake," he stated in a fury of futility. He sounded apologetic when he talked about the nature of the situation and his teacher-student relationships:

> I have to say that the students are good about it. They understand what we are having to go through. None of them have said anything directly to me that it's affecting them but, I feel that it's there. I've been in this business long enough that I know that it's there.

Randy's genuine concern for the affects of his education on his students indicates his belief that the Associate Degree requirement is "doing more damage than good."

Randy concluded that the degree work was interfering with the performance of his teaching. The time that courses and studying took away from his planning and the fact that he was prevented from receiving industry update training during his college enrollment were the two major areas of distraction. Dennard was quick to point out, however, that he was still a good teacher and would give the students what he thought was "their money's worth" from his instruction. As he was over 75% finished with the Associate Degree work, he felt the "crisis" would be over soon enough, and he could resume to the benchmark of quality in the classroom that he demanded of himself.

*Randy Dennard: Support Needed*

Randy Dennard identified five specific areas of support where his educational process could have been better facilitated. He discussed the application of better planning on the part of the mandating administration, the formation of a cohort group, more financial assistance, scheduling considerations, and the availability of tutors to help with areas of fundamental weakness. Dennard added that the moral support of a "periodic, 'How's it going?'" from the school's administration would have "done wonders for morale."

Dennard said that there were 12 to 15 different instructors who lacked the Associate Degree who would be required to enroll in higher education to stay at Alpha Technical College.

In Randy's reasoning, the school hired the non-degreed faculty with their credentials "as is" and should have shared in the responsibility for "upgrading" to the new minimum standard. By developing an organized plan, Dennard argued that everyone would have felt like they were part of the same team working toward a common goal. Progress could have been monitored by the administration of Alpha Technical College to offer assistance when needed. Randy explained:

> The main thing that I think is that, they knew that each one of us would have to go through this, and we had different people needing the same thing. So they could have organized and gotten us all together and said, "Ok, you need A course and you need B course so we will put all the A courses together and have you all take it at the same time."

Dennard felt like a cohort group could offer mutual support in a variety of ways.

> I believe that the school [Alpha Technical College] could have made the process a lot easier by putting all of us instructors together in one course…either in one course at the university or have the university instructor come out here to teach us as a group. We could all take the two English courses first, together, then the Algebra course, then the Computer course or whatever. I really believe it would have been a lot easier on everybody.

The group concept was a recurring theme with Randy Dennard's experience with mandatory education. He indicated a heightened comfort level when describing situations where he worked with others that were in the same situation. The support that Randy needed, therefore, might have been more adequately described as peer support that was orchestrated and arranged by the administration.

One area of support that Dennard received dealt with scheduling. He was appreciative to the administration of Alpha Technical College for allowing him to adjust his teaching schedule to accommodate his course schedule at the university. Not only did he identify this as critical to a timely completion of the coursework, but he also pointed out that it was a "good faith effort" on the part of Alpha Technical College.

> There were times when I switched my teaching schedule for an hour a day, sometimes two hours, to accommodate classes or time I needed to go to a lab [at the university].

> There were several times when I was allowed to leave work early because of my schooling, studying for a test or whatever. And that was kind of common you know, not just a once in a while thing.

Randy was quick to give credit to the administration for allowing him the time that he needed. He was critical, however, that allowing him to adjust his schedule took "no effort on their part" and, thus, was more of a passive, as opposed to an active type of support.

The discussion of needed support shifted to the algebra course. Jerry said, he "really needed extra help." He described frustration at not having access to the tutoring offered by the university because he was not considered to be a full-time student and had not paid the fees to cover this cost. Dennard finally had no choice but to enroll in a remedial course to better prepare himself for algebra. He explained the situation:

> On the remedial part…in my case in algebra…I was very weak in there because I hadn't taken it in so long. It's been 25 years since I'd been in high school. So I had to take the remedial for that. I think its something that should have been set up here at our school since we have Math teachers that could have brought us up to speed. Now don't get me wrong, I did get some help from our Math instructors here. I initiated that on my own and they did it out of friendship to me.

Jerry received support from Alpha Technical College, but it was support that he had to seek out and arrange on his own. He believed if the administration had taken a more active role in planning and organizing the remediation, then he, and others could have more quickly and efficiently taken advantage of the help.

Finances were of a moderate concern to Randy Dennard. He explained that he understood that Alpha Technical College could not quantify some of the costs, but believed that they could "do a little better" than a simple reimbursement for tuition. He stressed that tuition was reimbursed only for credit courses successfully completed. When he had to drop the algebra class and enroll in the remedial course, he had to absorb the cost of both the dropped course and

the remedial course since it was non-credit. Dennard also believed the costs of books could have been covered by Alpha Technical College.

Randy Dennard received some support from the Alpha Technical College administration for which he was grateful. The reimbursement of tuition and flexibility of schedule were the primary areas of support provided. Dennard sought out help with a remedial class and felt that organization of a cohort and tutoring could have better facilitated his educational process as well as that of others in the same situation.

*Randy Dennard: Case Summary*

The experience of returning to higher education under administrative mandate described by Randy Dennard was one of mixed feelings and emotions. His initial reaction was one of disbelief and indignation as he felt that he was already well qualified to teach Heavy Equipment Technology. Lack of consideration for his teaching and occupational experience heightened Randy's resentment about the situation. Never having any time to prepare for the classes he taught, combined with the frustration of being "robbed of time" with his wife and family, served to foster uncharacteristic bitterness that Dennard reported affecting his interactions with his students.

Randy never lost the personal sense of value of his qualifications to teach, but he expressed feelings of concern and hurt that others, particularly his school's administration, apparently did question his credentials. He reflected on negative feelings about previous educational experiences in high school but did not allow this to diminish how he viewed himself. Feelings of awkwardness when taking courses with younger students were temporary and overcome by understanding faculty at the university. The pride he expressed in the grades he earned was evidence of some positive effect on the way he viewed his capabilities.

Affects of Randy's return to the university were largely negative on job and career. The courses that he had taken were not relevant to his job, with the exception of one English course that improved his writing ability. The most profound impact that the experience had on Randy as a teacher involved his inability to keep current with the heavy equipment industry due to the time-consuming nature of the degree work. Rather than expressing feelings of accomplishment and progress while getting the degree, he stated that he was "just getting further and further behind." The time used by Dennard in the past to prepare for classes that he taught had been replaced by study and course attendance. He regretted that the affect on his students was costly and expressed eagerness to see the completion of the "crisis."

Randy Dennard discussed fallacies in the way that Alpha Technical College handled the dissemination of the mandate. In so doing, he identified areas where administrative support could have greatly improved the required educational process for himself and the other instructors involved. Planning and organization on the part of the administration could have eliminated many trivial, yet aggravating, details and tasks. Development of a cohort group that could share resources and offer mutual support would also have been of great benefit. While Alpha Technical College did offer some tuition reimbursement, Randy believed more could have been done financially to help the instructors, and he also believed that Alpha Technical College should have offered remedial courses or private tutors to those who needed such help. Dennard was appreciative of the support that Alpha Technical College offered in the form of accommodating his teaching schedule so that he could take the courses needed for the degree.

## Case 4

*Bobbi Johnson, Printing and Graphics Technology Instructor – Beta Technical College*

Bobbi Johnson, a female Printing and Graphics instructor with Beta Technical College, proclaimed a "love for the printing industry" since the first day she went to work for a small printing shop 33 years earlier. A 51 year-old high school graduate with no higher education experiences, Bobbi reflected that she gained her knowledge of printing and graphics through "on the job training." She credited her first employer as being the mentor that taught her all of the basics of the industry. "He would take time out to explain how things worked and the history behind why things were done one way or the other. He knew a lot and shared a lot with me." Bobbi owned and operated her own printing business for 15 years before entering teaching as a full-time instructor. Natural disaster, in the form of a flood, ended Johnson's private business and was the catalyst for her decision to make a career change to education.

Bobbi Johnson, a married mother with adult children, explained that she had been teaching in various contexts all of her working life. As a private business owner, she had embraced new technologies and software for the printing industry and would be called on to train others in the skills she had acquired. Bobbi's positive experience with "on-the-job" training was reflected in the way she set up her classroom at Beta Technical College.

> I got my experience through on the job training. And I feel like, in my field, in the printing and graphics field, I feel like that is the best kind of training. I have virtually changed this department that I have here [Beta Technical College] into a little print shop. We take on projects that we call 'live work,' and that's how we learn because I feel like that you learn better that way.

The characteristics of a good Printing and Graphics instructor, according to Johnson, were defined by "a genuine love for the industry." "People tell me, all the time, that they can tell that I enjoy what I do. This is art to me."

The Printing and Graphics Lab at Beta Technical College reflected Bobbi's concept of the "live print shop environment" for training. Special graphics-oriented computers lined three of the four walls in the lab with large color-capable printers and a color copier in the corner near her office. The 20 foot by 30 foot room was neatly arranged. An industrial time clock was positioned on the bright white cinder-block wall adjacent to the door that exited into the hall. The time clock made a noticeably loud tick every minute. Johnson explained that students were required to clock in and clock out as they would in a live shop. Certificates and awards were proudly displayed in the window of the instructor's office that faced the classroom. Class schedules and professional reference texts littered the worktable that was positioned in the center of the lab. Posters and documents that exhibited student performance in printing and graphics were strategically and neatly hung on the white walls. The printing and graphics lab was located in a wing of the main administrative building for Beta Technical College's main campus. In addition to administrative offices, other business-oriented technical programs shared the building.

Bobbi described her thoughts about entering vocational teaching after losing her business.

> It was then that I realized that this is what I wanted to do. But I knew also that, of all the technical colleges in the state, there weren't many that had Printing and Graphics Departments. So I had already decided at that time that I was going to go back to school and get that degree and I was going to do some mentoring. I felt that my children were grown and they were gone and I kind of missed being with young adults and being able to share my life experiences and stuff like that.

Bobbi answered an advertisement for the vocational teaching position before she had taken any action toward going to college. She said that the qualifications of the job stated "degree preferred" but that she was well liked in the interview and received the job offer with a high school diploma as her only education credential. As soon as she was hired, Bobbi was made aware that she would, eventually, be expected to earn an associate degree. No written or

concrete deadlines were given, however. She stated that she had no problem with the requirement.

> And so I felt like I was going to do that anyway and I felt like that was part of my appointment here [Beta Technical College] was to say that I would go back. 'Back'… heck, I'd never been to college. [laughs] I just felt like that was the thing I needed…the thing I had said I would do.

As Beta Technical College approached the decision to apply for the COC accreditation, Bobbi was told that her continued employment would be contingent on her successful progress toward an Associate Degree. Bobbi accepted the requirement with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn.

*Bobbi Johnson: Affects on Morale*

While Bobbi Johnson presented a strong positive attitude and eagerness to learn, her experience of attending the university under mandate was described with both positive and negative perspectives. There were no overt indications of a low morale when she discussed the various thoughts and inconveniences associated with working on her degree at her late career stage. Additional stress, periodic feelings of frustration, and fear of the unknown all contributed, however, to heighten the intensity of Bobbi's experience.

Grimminck (1993) and Tight (1999) reported that fear is the most common emotion described among adults required by their employer to attend college. "Scary" was the word that Bobbi Johnson chose to describe her first experience in a college course. "It was very scary to me. I'll tell you that I'm 51, so it'd been 30 years since I'd been to High School." Bobbi was asked to explain the fear that she had:

> I was scared of the unknown, not knowing what quite to expect. Since I had never gone to college, of course, I had nothing to compare it to…nothing but high school. You know, but college is a lot different from High School. Its easier not to communicate to students [at the university]…it's a lot different than my classroom [at Beta Technical College].

Johnson explained the phrase "easier not to communicate" by sharing that high school students are very social. Their world is centered on their friends and their high school events. She, and the other students in her college courses, however, had "separate lives" and the environment was not nearly as "social" as high school. The support mechanisms among the students were, therefore, not very strong as those she remembered in her secondary experience.

According to Bobbi, her personal fears were eventually quieted as she became familiar with the process of education at the collegiate level. The emotion of fear was overtaken by the enthusiasm for the challenge that the new coursework presented.

> Well the first class I took was English Composition. Of course for me…well, I'd never had to write anything, so for me it was a very big challenge. And, so I think I got pretty comfortable shortly after I got into the class. But, at first, I was scared. I'll be honest with you. I was scared going into it. But I think I was fortunate to get a small class and, in this small class, that made me more comfortable.

Johnson reiterated the fear that she experienced with first attending a college course. While this anxiety could present a potential decline in morale, Bobbi showed no evidence of a long-term negative affect caused by returning to school.

The forced nature of Bobbi's experience in college did not develop resentment that evolved into a decline in morale; nevertheless, she admitted that she did not like this aspect of the situation.

> I hate that it's required, because like I said earlier, I had already anticipated going back to school. Not 'back'…going to school to get a degree. It has forced me to do it. Sometimes, if people don't force you to do things, you will just continue to put it off and put it off. It does present a hardship sometimes.

Johnson reflected on her use of the term "hate." She enjoyed attending classes, but she "hated" the idea that she had to be forced to do it rather than enrolling by her own choice. While she was grateful that the school made provision for her to achieve an Associate Degree, Bobbi felt that it

would have meant more to her, personally, had she taken the initiative and started her degree program before the mandate.

Bobbi Johnson explained that she enjoyed the college degree work, and she did not fault Beta Technical College's administration for the mandate. Johnson felt that society had developed the idea that everyone, regardless of trade or skills, needed some type of college degree. However, she described this situation as being "frustrating," and Bobbi shared:

> I think it's frustrating. I think that experience is worth more than that piece of paper. Out here, at the technical school, we teach them the actual job. So I think that they [college degrees] are important because society makes that degree important. But if you go to the university and get a degree, then that could possibly help you to get a job in the printing and graphics industry. Then you go to the workplace, and they will begin to train you to do what they want you to do. [As a graduate from] my department, you could go into that same place of business and sit down and perform day one. We train someone off the street and do the training for that employer so that a person from this department could actually go into a place of business and be performing day one.

The cause of the mandate was demoralizing, and Beta Technical College's pursuit of the additional SACS/COC accreditation was "pointless," according to Bobbi. "It's not going to mean one thing to my department. What good is it going to do us? Nothing." After further thought, Bobbi concluded that the accreditation could possibly help a student who wished to go to a university in a different field and transfer his or her core classes from Beta Technical College. "That's the only way I can see where it will help our students." She reiterated, however, that this was an added "perk" for the students but did very little to forward the mission of Beta Technical College.

Bobbi Johnson indicated an increased level of stress when she discussed the inability to continue a "side-business" that she had enjoyed for many years prior to enrolling in college. Prior to enrolling in college, Bobbi had spent two weekends a month printing and publishing a magazine. She explained that working on the magazine not only provided a means of much

needed additional income, but also kept her publishing skills sharp for teaching her courses at Beta Technical College. She regretted not being able to work on the magazine.

> I was doing some additional work on the side and I've had to stop that to accommodate my schooling. It's also affected my income tremendously. And…probably …well, it's affected other personal things as well. Probably next quarter, I'll have to cut back on my schooling at night.

The "other personal things" that were affected involved Bobbi's family life.

Bobbi had taken two courses the previous semester, and she realized that any personal time not spent in class was occupied with completing assignments or studying. The stress of budgeting time for her schooling in contrast with the time demands of her job was taxing. She described feelings of guilt because of the time spent away from her husband:

> My husband was sick last year and everyday he wanted to know, 'Ok, is this the night you stay late?' It makes it hard on you, you know. I feel guilty. Sometimes I have a hard time working everything I have on my plate. I balance it a lot...an awful lot. We're not just talking about time for class, for school, but we're talking about an enormous time spent studying as well. I find that, and my husband complains about this too, that if I'm not at school then I'm studying, and if I'm not studying then I'm asleep because I'm so tired from the hectic schedule. It's all I can do. So that's his complaint.

The researcher's fieldnotes indicated that there was a visual change in countenance and demeanor as she relayed the situation with her husband. Dropped shoulders and no eye contact accentuated the deep concern over the affect that her education was having on her marriage and her ability to care for her husband. Tight (1999) reported of this type of gender-related antithesis whereby a working class man who returns to school is honored and respected, while a woman strives and struggles to cope with the many and conflicting demands of family, work, and learning.

Bobbi Johnson concluded her discussion of her morale during the experience by focusing on the most positive aspect, and the "greater good," of the situation. "Well, in my case, I welcomed the opportunity to expand my knowledge." All of the negative experiences, thoughts,

feelings, and situations that Bobbi had discussed were overshadowed by her genuine enthusiasm for the challenge of earning a college degree. The mandate had forced her to do something she had always intended but had never initiated on her own. The guilt brought on by her attention away from family was the only indication of a genuinely negative response.

*Bobbi Johnson: View of Self*

The experience of working toward an Associate Degree under administrative mandate caused Bobbi Johnson to take an evaluative view of self. Bobbi's qualifications to teach were brought into contrast with her knowledge of the printing and graphics industry. When asked if the experience affected her self-confidence or self-esteem, Bobbi responded resolutely, "No, it really didn't. I just knew what I was going to have to do. I guess I just didn't think about it in a negative way." Bobbi later revealed, however, that, while there was no lasting effect, she spent some time thinking about her qualifications to perform her job. Bobbi explained that she reflected on her experience and lack of education:

> When I lived and worked in [another town], I wanted to go to work in a position in a company that needed a graphics artist. I had the experience and I knew I could do the job. I was smart enough. But I'll tell you that I was not considered because I did not have that degree. It did not matter that I had nearly 20 years of industry experience. *It did not matter.* I didn't have the degree. Although they had been my customers, they knew my work and knew what I could do. They would not give me that opportunity because I lacked that piece of paper.

Bobbi shared the job search experience with her students, encouraging them to pursue a degree after their technical education if they intended to work for a large company. She found that advising her students toward the degree was empowering. She received encouragement from her students when they discovered that she, too, was a student. Bobbi elaborated:

> They think that it's wonderful. Because, I think that they think that I can relate to them better. They say, 'Ok, you're a student too. You know how I feel when I have to study for a test.' I don't think that any of them have had any negative comments about it. I think that we all approach it as being positive.

Her students and their encouragement of her college work may have improved Johnson's view of self. She proudly affirmed, "I don't think that you are ever too old to go back to school and learn." Research on older adults confirms Bobbi's statement as no significant reductions in intelligence are evident well into an individual's 80s or 90s, and even the reductions are limited (Merriam & Cafferella, 1999).

The environment at Beta Technical College among Bobbi's students was one of encouragement to her, but the situation on the campus of the university was quite different. Bobbi explained that there were rare times when she may have momentarily doubted herself, particularly when taking examinations.

> I get upset if I don't know the answer. And I've learned that through life experience that I need to prepare because I know that if I get in there unprepared, that I'll get anxious about it and may even forget the things that I do know. So I try to always be prepared.

Bobbi cited no other instances where her own capacity for success was in question. She was emphatic that the doubts and questions that she had with test taking were more related to an intrinsic persistence to always be prepared.

Bobbi Johnson's view of self was not weakened by the mandatory education experience. She used the occasion to reflect on the value of her lifetime experience, and she recalled situations where her lack of education was a hindrance. Earning the degree, however, provided the opportunity for Johnson to pursue a life-long goal that may actually serve to strengthen her view of self.

*Bobbi Johnson: Career and Job Affects*

Johnson used the college experience to improve herself for teaching in several ways. She did not, however, describe a direct translation of skills learned in coursework. Classes such as Political Science, Algebra, or Composition where helpful in a peripheral sense, but the primary

advantage to Bobbi lay in the ability to apply the "student experience" to her own skill development as a teacher. This new perspective aided her own understanding and her ability to better help her students. Bobbi explained that she would lose concentration on the subject matter in class due to one of her professors. She explained:.

> I found myself having trouble concentrating on what the instructor was teaching me because I was actually watching her methods and delivery…thinking, 'Oh, I think I could do that…or…that's a great idea…or…I don't think I'd get by with that.' And I even found myself jotting notes about how that professor did things. Some of her techniques and how she would teach certain concepts and I've done that more, to open up ideas for myself.

Johnson further explained how she was able to immediately apply the "new ideas" that she had learned as a result of returning to college for the Associate Degree. Bobbi related incorporating new teaching approaches "the very next day" after she had observed these teaching techniques at the university. She cited an example. "I have applied those things. And I think it helps me. For instance, in how I do tests. Having to take a test and having to give a test…being on the other side, the issues. It really helps." She explained, further, that she has "tightened up" on her subjective grading. Before the college experience, Bobbi used the term "generous" when she described grading work that required imagination. "If they could do the work, I'd give them an 'A.'" Having been in the student's seat, however, Johnson realized the need for serious critique of work and the need for a more objective plan to evaluate student work. Bobbi further explained:

> [Printing and Graphics] is very detail-oriented. I have discovered the difference between "A" students and "B" students since I've been on the receiving end of a grade. But in this particular program, because it's an art, there are probably five different ways to accomplish the same thing. That makes it hard to grade. It's very subjective. It's hard to break that down.

On a more practical level, Johnson claimed that she gained a deeper appreciation for the value of quality in applying basic educational skills. The study of Printing and Graphics is

"thick with the use of core knowledge," math and English particularly. A person "in the trade" must be able to accurately proof their work for grammatical errors as well as readability. Measurements in layouts, numerical conversions, and countless other mathematical computations are the norm in the printing industry. Johnson explained:

> [The college experience] made me understand or realize how important math and English are to this field. Now when I do my grading, I make them…well, when I first was grading, they could get credit if they answered the question no matter how it was. Now, I say, 'You need to write a full sentence.' Or if I can't read it, I will give it back to them and say, 'You need to redo this.' Then I make sure that Math is incorporated into everything we do and that I check it every single time. Of course the curriculum allows for that anyway. I think how important it is, and I have incorporated some things I've learned in my math class into what we do here.

Bobbi's newfound enthusiasm for math and English was translated to her students in her teaching. She later admitted, however, that the material she learned at the university did not "sharpen her skills as a printing and graphics professional."

Still, another aspect where college attendance had strengthened her career and job life was in the area of advisement. One of Bobbi's responsibilities as a teacher at Beta Technical College was to advise students. Guiding students through the appropriate core classes, pre-requisites, and co-requisites to accomplish the minimum requirements of the Printing and Graphics Diploma was only part of the advisor's role. Bobbi described how "each student's situation was unique." The educational background, experience, job situation, and personal goals of each individual would require the advisor to prescribe a "best course of action." For most of her advisees, Bobbi Johnson had developed the belief that the attainment of a degree should be part of that prescription.

> I think [attendance at the university] helps me to tell them what's going on. I know for a fact that when you go to the university that this is what you should expect. Whereas, if I were not going over there, I'm not really sure that I'd be able to help them out. I'm able, I think, to pass some information on to them that I may not be able to pass otherwise. Actually, I've had a couple of students to change their minds about going to the

> university simply because they see that I'm going over there so they think that they can handle it too. I've told them that they need to do it now, don't do like I did and wait this long. Go ahead and get that.

Bobbi added that she felt that the training the students received at Beta Technical College would prepare them not only to do the work on the job, but also that the degree would open doors for getting the job. "I advise them to go over there, do your core, come here and let me teach you the practical work for a year and a half, then go back over there, and earn your degree."

*Bobbi Johnson: Support Needed*

Beta Technical College had provided all of the support that Bobbi Johnson felt was necessary for earning the Associate Degree under mandate. She stated that they were very open about their expectations of her taking the classes and getting the AAS. "I think communication is key and they were completely honest with me about the requirement." She gave an example of the administrative support she received. Bobbi explained that her loss of the extra income from the magazine that she had previously published was beginning to have a negative impact on her personal finances. To help supplement her income, Beta Technical College gave her the option of teaching a night class for extra pay when the school became aware of this financial hardship.

Another aspect of support that Johnson enjoyed from her administration was in the area of financial assistance. Bobbi not only received a scholarship from the state, but also Beta Technical College reimbursed her for all expenses that the scholarship did not cover. Between Beta Technical College and the state scholarship, all tuition, fees, and books were covered. She did discuss, however, a change in policy on the part of Beta Technical College that would complicate the reimbursement process and possibly cause some hardship for her. She explained:

> Now they came across with something that…well, this may pose a hardship for me. I have not approached the administration about it but I will. They have come out now that

> we should have been doing this all along. In the past if we put in for the money within 3 or 4 weeks we get our money back, but now they are telling us that we have to wait a whole semester to prove that we successfully completed the course before receiving any reimbursements. I understand their thinking on that and there's another instructor out here in the same boat and he and I have talked about it. If we'd had known this all along then we could have had that money ready or could have prepared to have that money from the get-go. So now they are paying us this time for last semester where we would have normally gotten the money as soon as the expense was incurred. That may present a hardship. If I lose the scholarship, then it's really going to be difficult. And, like, the guy down the road, [a Welding Instructor], he doesn't have the scholarship so it's really going to be tough on him.

Regardless of the change in Beta Technical College's reimbursement policy, Bobbi stated that she could not be critical of her school's administration in any way. According to Bobbi, Beta Technical College had provided all the support that she had needed. "Our administration is just top notch. I would just say that they would accommodate me as best they could. Now the situation that has come up about the reimbursement, I totally understand where they are coming from."

Johnson's experience with higher education under mandate was largely positive, in part, because she perceived strong support from her administration. All financial costs were reimbursed and the communication was open between Bobbi and her administrators allowing for moral support and encouragement. Johnson was genuinely grateful for the support she received under the mandate. She seemed to be grateful for the mandate, itself, because it made possible a lifelong goal of pursuing a college degree.

*Bobbi Johnson: Case Summary*

Bobbi Johnson had an overall positive approach to the administrative mandate that she earn an Associate Degree. While Bobbi described her initial experience as a student to be frightening, she quickly replaced fear with enthusiasm for the challenge. Bobbi did not like the

forced nature of the mandate but only because she did not take the initiative earlier to pursue the degree on her own. She "welcomed the opportunity" to expand her knowledge.

Johnson expressed frustration at the societal view of vocational training and experience over a college education, but quickly reiterated that she did not blame Beta Technical College for this perspective. Stress and guilt were two negative emotions that Bobbi described. The stress was the result of a reduction in income due to her inability to continue a side business where she printed a magazine on the weekends. The feelings of guilt arose from comments made by her husband, during a time of his illness, that Bobbi was not able to give him attention or time because of classes, work, and studying. She asserted that these negative emotions had no lasting negative affect on her morale.

Earlier in Bobbi's career, before teaching full-time, she had dealt with feelings of frustration, and possible insecurities, over having no education beyond high school. She reflected on an experience when she could not attain a job because she lacked a degree. Because of past experiences, Bobbi's self-confidence was actually strengthened by the act of earning an AAS. Her students were consistent in giving encouragement for her degree work and this added to her improved view of self. She was accomplishing a life-long goal.

There were several positive affects on Johnson as an educator resulting from her degree work. Bobbi would use time in her classes at the university as an opportunity to observe teaching behaviors, methods, and characteristics that she could apply in her own classroom. She claimed a deeper appreciation for the value of math and English in the Printing and Graphics curriculum that resulted in an increased emphasis in these areas in her teaching. Her role as academic advisor at Beta Technical College was augmented by her ability to convey first-hand the university experience and to encourage students to earn the degree when "sooner than later."

Bobbi praised the administration of Beta Technical College for providing all of the support that she could expect. All of her financial expenses were reimbursed. She discussed a procedural aspect at Beta Technical College that delayed the reimbursement monies and had potential to cause her temporary financial hardship.

## Case 5

*Roy Muldin, Industrial Electrical Technology Instructor – Gamma Technical College*

Roy Muldin, a 42-year-old male with 11 years of experience teaching at the postsecondary technical level, was a product of the system where he worked as a technical instructor. Roy earned a Technical Diploma in Electrical Construction and Maintenance from Gamma Technical College. This 18-month program was a concentrated curriculum with no basic skills or core classes. The focus was entirely on the vocation of electrical construction. Although Roy registered for classes at a community college within a year of receiving his Technical Diploma, he quickly became discouraged with trying to balance work and school, and he dropped the course. The Technical Diploma was Muldin's highest level of education prior to the mandate given by his employer, Gamma Technical College.

After graduating with the Electrical Construction and Maintenance Diploma, Roy Muldin was hired by Omega Electric. Omega Electric specialized in commercial industrial wiring contracting with offices throughout the state, enjoying a dominant presence in the industry. Roy worked for Omega Electric for eight years, "moving up the ranks" and acquiring all of the necessary add-on certifications to earn the title of "Master Electrician." When Omega Electric formed a partnership with one of the state technical colleges, (not participating in this study), that was geographically central to all of their offices, they insisted that Roy be hired as the teacher for the program that would train their employees. Roy Muldin was hired as Industrial Electrical

Technology Instructor for this college and taught there for eight years before returning to Gamma Technical College in the same capacity as instructor. Roy left the other technical college because he lived closer to Gamma Technical College and the commute would be easier.

Roy developed a "love for teaching" because he enjoyed sharing his knowledge with others and having a part in their lives. His mastery of the skills in electricity gave him a confidence with the subject matter that provided a major component of the necessary qualifications to teach in the vocational setting. Muldin described his idea of the two most important qualifications of a technical instructor:

> The biggest thing is that [the teacher] has to be confident in the material that they teach and they have to be able to communicate it well. You can't be a good communicator and not be technically proficient, and you can't be just technically proficient if you're not a good communicator.

To be a good communicator, Muldin explained that you have to know the people with whom you are sharing information. A relationship must be established. Roy explained that his program was set up on an individualized format that made possible a unique relationship with each of his students. "My students in Industrial Electrical Technology are *my* students. I know where they are. I don't even have to pull their transcripts. I basically know where they are and who they are." That relationship, according to Roy, was critical to being able to communicate effectively enough to facilitate the learning process. "We have a mutual trust, and they respect me for what I know. I believe you have to have that if you are going to get anywhere with teaching adult students."

Roy Muldin's Industrial Electrical Technology Lab at Gamma Technical College was situated in the rear of a facility designed solely for the purpose of technical industrial training. The 8000 square foot lab was neatly arranged with large worktables lining the battleship-gray walls. Thick yellow lines on the floor marked a distinct path clearly indicating safe passage

through the maze of tables, large generators, and portable wiring workstations. A poster on electrical safety, along with large warning signs of "High Voltage," made the desired impression of the danger that existed in the lab. Spools of different colored insulated copper wire labeled for various gauges sat in the corner of the lab. A large plate glass window opened up the instructor's office to the entire training area. The single-occupant office appeared somewhat large and bare. No pictures or wall hangings were visible. A single bookshelf was filled with three-inch, three-ring binders that displayed hand-written course names and numbers on them. Roy Muldin identified these as his lesson plans and syllabi. His desk contained a large calendar, a legal pad, a telephone, and various writing instruments but was otherwise bare. The bright fluorescent lighting on the vacant white cinder block walls completed the feel of the industrial environment.

Because of his strong career with Omega Electric, Muldin enjoyed a reputation and valuable connections in the industry and as a result, his students lacked difficulty in finding employment after their graduation. Roy had reached a stage in teaching where he was confident, not only in his mastery of the subject material, but also in his ability to get the information across to his students. His industry ties enabled him to remain part of the changing technologies of electricity through on-site visits and "back-to-industry staff development activities." Roy explained that he felt like his career "had come full circle," and he was "content to continue teaching industrial electricity until retirement." The "inconvenience" of the educational mandate by his administration was described as an intrusion on this contentment.

*Roy Muldin: Affects on Morale*

The morale of Roy Muldin was affected by the experience of returning to college under mandate. He described feelings of anger and resentment that stemmed from the attitudes presented to him by his supervisors and his co-workers alike. He talked of being frustrated at the

inability of others to see the situation from his perspective. Roy described feelings of indignation at the insult he received toward the value of his education and experience combined with his record of quality teaching.

On initially describing his morale, Muldin reflected on how he was informed that the degree would be required of him. Roy explained, when he was first hired, the president of Gamma Technical College suggested that he consider getting the Associate Degree. "At that time, I didn't have a problem with it." He admitted, however, that the "request" made by the president was not heeded and 10 years passed before the mandate was given by one of the school's vice-presidents. Muldin described his feelings at the initial experience:

> Man, that…we've had so many mixed signals about it. At first, it was told that this was the direction that we were going to take. Then, it was expressed that, man, I forgot how it went…It went from, 'this is the direction that we are going to take' to 'this is going to be necessary for you to continue as an instructor.' I don't have a problem with authority and someone telling me that this is what you must do. But there was no leadership in it. You know, we had a meeting, and we put down where everyone was at and what classes each person needed to take. And it was left up to us when to get them.

Roy explained that, had the presentation of the mandate been "better tempered and planned," it would have been received in a much different, more positive light. Roy expressed, "You know, how you tell somebody something has a lot to do with how they take it." He used an analogy of a doctor telling someone that "a family member had died" to illustrate the degree of tact and diplomacy that he felt was necessary in such a situation. While death and a mandate to attend college do not carry equal levels of severity, Muldin chose the analogy in an effort to impress his perspective of the gravity of the affects on his life.

Roy Muldin choice of analogies demonstrated deeply negative emotions about the required education. When asked about the worth of the degree, he expressed a strong personal opinion concerning the value of the Associate Degree that he was being required to earn in

relation to his teaching career. His response was definitive when asked to share his perspectives about the helpful nature of the degree courses. Roy shared:

> I think they are about as useless as tits on a boar hog. Electricians have been teaching electricians how to be electricians for years. This is perfectly logical to administration. [Sarcasm] Find out what people are doing wrong and you repeat it. You know they tell us that 60 % of the people that come out of the university can't get jobs. So what do we do? We want to be 'a college.' And technical schools have been doing it right for years where you bring people in, you find out people who've made a living and can do a job, and you let them put their hands on this material and work with their hands. So I feel like it is purely political and eventually I feel like it…it's a shame that you're taking something that has worked so well and begin to mess with it. That's how I feel.

Terms and phrases such as "useless," "purely political," "it's a shame," and "mess with it" within Muldin's statement indicated pessimistic overtones toward his approach to the Associate Degree he was being forced to obtain to keep his job. His objection centered on the trend that the technical schools were taking toward more academic core courses and increased transferability of the courses. Roy's holistic view of the "wrong direction" for technical education, however, seemed to be taken as a personal insult.

The most prominent manifestation of Muldin's decline in morale dealt with his impression of how the administration had seen him as an educator. His frustration at their lack of understanding of how he perceived the situation was evident:

> And one of the things that really made me mad, and I've been trying to keep a level head about this, but there was a statement made to me when we were talking about this and I brought this issue up. And the statement was made to me, 'Well, this is going to make you better. This is going to help you in the long run.' And I sat back when that statement was made and I said, 'So, so let me understand this. I plan on retiring from the state. You have told me that there is going to be no compensation. So who is going to appreciate this, my next employer?' That was insulting to me. They were trying to make me feel like they were doing me a favor. So who is going to appreciate it, my next employer? In other words, if you are not going to appreciate it, who is?

Roy felt slighted because he was not promised any salary increase when the degree was completed. He thought it was unfair that employees who were hired with degrees were offered a

salary that was negotiated with that degree included. Muldin argued, because the administration would not offer a pay increase on degree completion, they placed no value on the degree to his credentials. The insistence that he earn the degree was contradictory to the value that was placed on it, evidenced by no promised compensation for having earned it.

Roy continued with his argument on the unfair nature of the degree requirement related to compensation in comparison with his co-workers who were hired with the degree already completed:

> It's divisive. It's divisive. Those who have their degrees already, they don't understand the frustration of those who haven't and are having to go back. They don't …they … they…they don't understand when you say, 'I'm having to back. I'm having to go to school two nights a week out of my schedule and I'm not being paid for it.' And part of that is that they can't understand that. They say, 'Well, I had to go to school.' And I say, 'Well, you went to school and you are getting paid for going to school starting from day one.' 'So the time that you took to go to school, you were compensated for that from day one, but, now from day one, I've worked here for 11 years, and I'm going be told that for going to school for two nights a week for two years that I won't be compensated more.' And they can't understand that.

Muldin had such strong feelings about his beliefs on the issue of degree compensation that he said that some of the relationships that he had once enjoyed with fellow teachers had been severed. He described going to the state Internet website that listed the salaries of all state employees. Comparisons of his salary with that of others who had the college degree but less occupational experience and fewer or no certifications than he held, infuriated him. Roy's bitterness at having to take courses toward an Associate Degree festered in light of the salary information. Gould and Hawkins (1978), in a study of late career stage employees, reported that veteran employees became more concerned with pay as they identified compensation with worth to the organization.

Muldin described feeling isolated because of his perception of the unfairness of the pay situation. "They don't get it because it don't affect them. They never will get it. It just insulted

me that they made it like they were doing me favor for making me spend time away from my family." Roy personalized the requirement by administration to the point that he allowed it to be "divisive." He admitted that the feelings of unfair compensation were already existent before the Associate Degree mandate, and that the new expectation on him, without promising a salary increase, was the "proverbial straw that broke the camel's back."

When first asked about the personal affects, Roy stated that he refused to let the degree work affect his home life. His initial position was one of resolve that bordered on defiance. An avid hunter all of his life, Muldin reflected on the first year working on the degree:

> I made up my mind that I was not going to let this schoolwork interfere with my life and what I enjoyed. No, actually I put the degree on hold. I found that I, well I tried algebra twice and I made the mistake of trying it during hunting season, which is my favorite sport/hobby. I ended up having to drop one and then the other. I failed…so no more algebra, or no more college during hunting season.

He later explained, however, that he could not always elect not to attend class. Roy regretted the time that was taken from his family and personal life with class attendance and study. "I'm away from my family at school and then I have to study at home so I can't talk to them tonight or do anything because I have to study. So that's double the work, double the inconvenience." As Muldin continued explaining how his personal life was affected, he shifted into a mode of contradiction. He expressed that he would not let the schoolwork affect his personal life; yet, as he mused about the reality of the situation, he concluded that the affects were already present:

> It hasn't affected me at home, because I won't let it. I should be taking more classes than I am. I will take a couple of classes then I will skip a semester. But any time you are pulled away from your family for two nights, and if you are on a flexible teaching schedule and you are already teaching two nights, how can it not? I mean to say the least it's an inconvenience. Now, my children are grown, but if I had small children, this would be a serious issue with me…a very serious issue.

The tone of Roy's description indicated that the college attendance was already "a very serious issue." When asked to elaborate on the phrase, "if I had small children, this would be a serious

issue with me," Muldin stated that he would have to find other employment if the mandate was issued when he had children that needed attention.

Roy Muldin's discussion projected a low morale in context with the mandated education. Though he appeared to enjoy his teaching position, he described serious personal issues with the administration that required him to return to higher education. Feelings of isolation and unfair treatment in relation to others who had degrees were prominent in Roy's conversation. He resented the aspect of giving up personal time with his family and his hobbies for the degree work. Most dominant of his objections, however, was the perceived lack of value that the administration placed on the degree he was to earn. He interpreted no promised compensation for the earned degree as an insult to his hard work.

*Roy Muldin: View of Self*

Roy Muldin expressed that his self-image was not affected by the experience of going to college under mandate. He explained that, as a teacher of age 42, he was confident in his abilities to the degree that external situations had no major or lasting affect.

> Well, I'm 42 years old. It does not affect my self-esteem but it is insulting. It goes back to the question, what am I taking? If you were giving me something to help with my students, that'd be one thing. But giving me nothing that will make me better, is another thing. So its not so much affected my self-esteem as it has insulted me. Maybe that's a strong word but that's the feeling that you get. It's a direct insult.

Statements of being "insulted" consistently followed Roy's insistence that his self-esteem was unaffected. He refused to allow the conversation to shift to his personal view, yet he dwelled on the perceived negative view of him held by his administrators.

In the discussion of his self-image, Muldin further revealed that he had voluntarily attempted to get the degree 13 years earlier but became discouraged when his low score on the acceptance test indicated a need for remedial algebra. He dropped out a few weeks into the

developmental class. "I always wanted to go back and pick it up but just never did." The experience of re-enrolling 13 years later gave Roy mixed impressions of the community college where he attended, and the work that lay before him. He described how his advisor treated him as a number rather than an individual. "Nobody had a handle on me as a student. The advisor was pretty much disinterested me as a student…as his student. I don't feel like he saw me as his student. I was just a student, not *his* student." The fact that Muldin relayed this experience when discussing his self-image implied that there was some affect on his view of self when he was in the position of student.

Muldin's first semester of classes, however, were largely positive in nature. He explained that he did not "get friendly" with his fellow students and that neither they, nor his instructor, knew that he was a teacher at Gamma Technical College. He described his experience with the classes:

> I'd have to say that the people at the community college, with the exception of one person who couldn't speak English, have made it a good experience for me. The teachers have seemed to really do a good job, especially my English teacher. This professor seemed to be a really good guy, always positive. I can't say that I've had a bad experience or felt like the instructors were arrogant. On the whole it's been a good experience, except for, like I said, I had one guy who couldn't speak English and that was in an algebra class. But other than that, it's been a good experience.

The optimistic view with which Muldin describes his class attendance seemed contradictory to all of the negative feelings he had expressed surrounding the mandate. His frustration lay, not in his experience at the community college as a student, but with his employer and the circumstances of the mandated education.

Roy had no choice but to take the remedial algebra course, but he never indicated any negative effects on his view of self as a result. He had typical trivial complaints that would be common among most students when given enough opportunity to be critical. He stated that he

was “really shocked at how impersonal the whole process was.” The impersonal nature of his education experience was in contrast to the individualized training with which Roy was so familiar in his own classroom at Gamma Technical College. Muldin repeatedly compared his experiences with advisors and teachers at the community college with the way he perceived his own actions toward his students Gamma Technical College. Overall, however, Roy insisted that his view of self was neither improved nor diminished as an outcome of his college attendance under administrative mandate.

*Roy Muldin: Career and Job Affects*

When asked to discuss the organizational affects of the mandate to earn an Associate Degree, Roy Muldin first took a holistic approach. He described how the requirement that he earn an Associate Degree for new accreditation credentialing, in his view, was watering-down technical education. He began explaining by using an example:

> For instance, I took electrical construction and maintenance. At that time, that was a two-year program. It excluded any non-technical class except for one. I think it was a basic class where they teach you how to balance a checkbook…personal finance type of stuff. So actually, we had two years with no core classes. Nor did we have [Programmable Logic Controllers] and variable speed drives. So we have gone from a two-year [curriculum] to an 18-month [curriculum] and we have added almost 7 more classes. And it’s not justifiable to add classes and reduce the class time. But the biggest thing is that, when I was at [Gamma Technical College] as a student, the schools were basically in competition with each other and, at that time, if you wanted to learn to be an electrician, you came to [Gamma Technical College]. You didn’t consider any of the other local technical schools in the area. So I think I like the old way of technical education better. It gave you a much broader flexibility in catering to the needs of [employers in] that immediate area.

Roy explained how the shift toward more core classes had a negative affect on him as a teacher in Industrial Electrical Technology. He asserted that he was being required to “teach twice as much material in three-fourths of the time.” Roy reiterated that Gamma Technical College, like other technical colleges in the state, were trying to “look like a college” and, therefore, diluting

the value of hands-on training for the sake of a more liberal arts type of curriculum that was "useless" to his students. Muldin presented his argument:

> Why, if you are leading, why do you want to be like everybody else? That's exactly what we've done…or are doing. Its just…it just seems like we are shooting ourselves in the foot. You cannot wire up a switch on a computer. You cannot install a motor on a computer. All of this requires hands-on education. All of this [new accreditation] is important only because it's made to be important. My student doesn't have to know how to turn on a computer. He is going to be drilling holes and snatching wire. What does he need the computer training and all of those other core classes for?

"We are shooting ourselves in the foot" was the phrase that Roy, the avid hunter, chose to describe the trend toward more academic core and more universally accepted transferability of courses. His decision to discuss the broad philosophies of technical education when asked about his career development implied feelings of helplessness at the direction his field seemed to be taking. Muldin places emphasis on the practical value of the curriculum that he teaches and contrasts that with the "uselessness" of math, English, and computer courses.

Turning from the broader view of technical education and the changes in his curriculum, Roy Muldin discussed the affects, or lack of, on his teaching in the classroom at Gamma Technical College. He stated that there were neither positive nor negative affects resulting from the Associate Degree coursework. "The classes that we're taking prepare me zero on a day to day basis for what I'm doing. That is one of the things that is so frustrating about doing this." Roy described each course that he had taken in his degree work. Some of them he enjoyed and found interesting but he reiterated that they "brought nothing to the table" in relation to his role as instructor at Gamma Technical College.

> So, as far as taking the algebra, the classes that I teach only require general math skills. There are no essays and no technical writing in any of my classes. I found Political Science interesting but nothing to transfer to my classes. History…I like history, but then again, nothing that transfers to my day-to-day operations. But as far as being any benefit to me or to my students on a day-to-day basis, no. That's one of the frustrating parts of it.

On further reflection, Roy admitted the Introduction to Computers Course was helpful in doing the administrative and clerical parts of his job. He, once again, asserted that the computer knowledge did not transfer directly into the classroom but only helped him do parts of his job that did not involve teaching.

Muldin explained that career and job relationships with his students were not affected by his schoolwork because, once again, he "wouldn't let it." He stated that only a few of his students knew that he was enrolled at the community college and he established a personal policy that he would not discuss returning to school with them. Roy's attempt at keeping his college attendance "quiet" inferred that he may perceive negative affects if his students discovered that he was a student. As far as professional interactions with co-workers, he described strained and broken relationships with both administrators and other instructors. "Divisive" is the term Roy used when explaining the difference in opinions over the value of the Associate Degree and the salary differentials involved. "Those who have their degrees already, they don't understand the frustration of those who haven't and are having to go back." Muldin's feelings on the unfairness of the situation and the policies surrounding it ran deep. He expressed his opinion with sincerity:

> I would just say that I seriously question what the end game is going to be and how long this will last…how long? Is this just a fad? Is this just a way for somebody to prove…or to justify their salary? And I question the wisdom in why are we turning a technical program into academia. I question the wisdom in that we've had a good system for so long…I question the wisdom in trying to bring them together. I think they need to be separate. I don't like the idea of a technical 'college.'

Muldin diverted the conversation on career and job affects, once again, to the more universal view of the new trend of technical education. His interpretation of the new direction toward more academics is that his position as a vocational instructor is becoming obsolete, given his existing credentials.

Still, another area where Roy felt a strong negative career affect was in his relationships with those in the industry. The industrial electricians that served on the Advisory Council for Muldin had shared their own opinions about the value of the education that the students were receiving from Gamma Technical College. Roy explained:

> You know every time that we've had a meeting with industry leaders, they've always said that the technical schools in this state, before we ever started this COC accreditation thing, was the leader in the nation. So I mean this is a classic thing. Why, if you are leading, why do you want to be like everybody else?

Muldin expressed concern that the new accreditation would damage the reputation of Gamma Technical College with the industry leaders that hired the graduates of his program. He described frustration at having to justify, to those in the industry, the new direction of his program and technical education in the state when he, himself, did not support the change.

The career and job affects of the mandated degree that Roy Muldin described were based on the broader view of trends in technical education. Roy delineated the courses he had taken and explained that the only one that improved his job performance was the computer course. He quickly added, however, that this course only enhanced his abilities with his administrative duties but had no value to him as a vocational teacher. Muldin also explained that his relationships with industry and the quality of graduates that he would be able to provide may be damaged indirectly by the new accreditation that caused the mandate.

*Roy Muldin: Support Needed*

Roy Muldin expressed the need for a concerted effort by his administration to support the degree work expected of him. Support was provided to Muldin's satisfaction in some areas but was lacking in others. The major areas of support that Roy discussed included an organized cohort of fellow employees seeking the same degree, more financial assistance, and the availability of Gamma Technical College core faculty for core remediation where needed. Roy

also discussed the helpfulness of a prescribed degree designed specifically for vocational instructors in industrial programs.

Roy Muldin felt strongly that the administration of Gamma Technical College could have facilitated a much more convenient situation for those instructors, like himself, that were required to earn an AAS. With relatively little effort on the administrators' part, an organized cohort could have been formed that would minimize the inconvenience of those under the educational mandate and demonstrate a willingness on behalf of the administration to help in the process.

> I don't like that fact that I'm having to go off campus. I really feel like that classes should be brought on campus and made available to me for say from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm, and done it in an organized fashion, rather than sending people out to get this when you can and get it after school. I'm having to do it in my off time. I think there would be less friction if they would say, 'Ok, here is where everybody is at. This semester, we will have an English professor teaching English from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm, and everyone who needs English, you will be taking English from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm.' So it doesn't interfere with anything else I may be doing.

Roy explained that, if there were not enough instructors on the Gamma Technical College campus to justify a dedicated class, other similar arrangements could be made. He described a scenario where the Gamma Technical College administrators could meet with those of the community college and arrange to reserve the number of seats needed in a particular class. The class could be offered during the day where the Gamma Technical College instructors would be attending during normal school hours as opposed to taking their personal time in the evenings. "Reserving seats for us to go there at a particular time during school hours, would help. That way, I could take classes during my planning time, and do homework at the house and not be away from my family."

The financial support that Roy needed was largely lacking. He already felt slighted because he would not be receiving a salary increase on completion of the degree. Further, the

expense of earning the degree was not being offset by the "minimal assistance" that Gamma Technical College was offering him. "I appreciate the fact that they are paying for the class, but this is a big investment of my time, and its not going to increase my salary." Roy clarified that Gamma Technical College was covering the cost of tuition for classes completed but no other fees or expenses. "The classes were paid for but the books were not and I've never understood that." Muldin expressed anger at having to pay for the books. He remembered a discussion with one of his administrators on the subject of book costs:

> One class I took, the books were $150. For the math class, you had to have a $125 calculator plus a $90 book. If you tried to take two classes to hurry this thing along, you'd have $386 worth of classes and over $200 worth of books. And I asked about that and they basically said, 'Well, the reason why we are not paying for books is that people on campus [at Gamma Technical College] can share books. Or, if you take a math class this quarter, then you can sell that book back.' And I'm thinking, 'You know they are going to give me $20 for the book. That is crazy.'

Roy finished the discussion on financial support by stating that he was not eligible for any state aid, federal financial aid, grants, or scholarships.

When Muldin discussed his need for remedial algebra after taking the placement test, he said that he wished that some organized effort on the part of Gamma Technical College's administration had been made to "bring him up to speed on campus and during daytime hours." He gave a look of disgust when he conveyed that all of the resources for this non-credit developmental assistance were on the campus where he worked. "But [the administration] didn't lift a finger to help. It was like they didn't care." He admitted that he did use the resources on his campus, however. "Well, it wasn't the administration that facilitated that. I availed myself …on my own. And they were more than glad to help. It was coworker to coworker…they agreed to help me out when I called on them."

While Roy Muldin had discussed a need for classes to be arranged during his daytime hours, he later recanted and praised his administration for helping him with his schedule when the help was needed. Although administration did not facilitate the offering of classes during day hours, Roy's supervisor did allow him to take time off for additional help in certain subjects.

> I took the initiative to arrange my schedule so that on Fridays after lunchtime I had some free time so that if I needed to go to a math lab or a computer lab I could go. And I ran that by my supervisor. So yes, there were some accommodations made for that. And that was positive and very helpful. There were two classes, the computer class, and the English class. Well, I'd have never made it without that.

The final area of support that Roy described would have involved an integrated effort on the part of the state technical colleges and the university system. He expressed the desire that a prescribed Associate Degree be created specifically for technical instructors. The classes would be designed to benefit the teachers on the instructional side of their profession. Muldin stated that "classes in learning styles, developing syllabi, lesson plans, and how to track students," would be of direct benefit to him. "This whole degree experience would have some meaning to me if it was something that I could use in my job." Naylor (1997) reported a need for reform in vocational teacher education that was tempered with the caveat that increased preparation requirements could worsen the problem of declining enrollments in vocational teacher preparation programs. Roy Muldin's desire for a custom-made Associate Degree specifically for veteran vocational educators is congruent with Naylor's prediction.

*Roy Muldin: Case Summary*

Roy Muldin's experience with returning to college under administrative mandate was marked with a decline in morale. The initial "telling of the mandate" instigated feelings of resentment on Roy's part. The negative feelings were exacerbated by Muldin's disagreement with the direction that technical training was taking toward more academic core classes in the

curricula. His most prominent display of a declining morale dealt with his perspective of the inequities of salary between those who were hired with the degree and those, like himself, who would earn the degree but who would not receive salary compensation in return. Roy had originally made the decision that he would not allow the degree to interfere with his personal life, but later, he acknowledged that there was no way that going back to school could not have an impact due to the enormous investment of time and energy.

Roy's view of self was not affected by the college experience. He expressed feelings of confidence in himself and his abilities as demonstrated by his years of occupational experience combined with teaching experience. He praised the teachers at the community college where he was attending for making the experience " a very positive one." However, Roy was critical of his advisor who had treated him "more like a number" and had not taken a personal interest in him. Roy stated that this did not have any impact on how he viewed himself, however, he compared himself as teacher and advisor with those teachers and advisors with which he came in contact at the community college.

The negative career and job affects that Roy described were centered on, not just his earning the degree, but the underlying cause for the mandate. He denounced the migration of the postsecondary technical system toward including more academic courses. The addition of the core classes was accompanied with a reduction in the number of hours for instructing the Industrial Electrical students, which, in turn, diminished the value of their vocational education. Roy explained that the courses he was taking added no value to his abilities as a teacher. The computer class he was required to take helped with his clerical duties but, still, had no lasting classroom benefit. Muldin did not discuss his degree work with his students but found it to be very divisive with other faculty members because of the inequities in salaries.

Roy Muldin was grateful to his administration for the support that was provided in the form of tuition reimbursement and a flexible schedule for needed study and lab time. He felt like more could be done, however, in the area of support. The cost of books and other fees seemed to be a trivial cost that Roy felt Gamma Technical College could easily absorb. The organization of a cohort where classes were arranged in advance, possibly on the campus of Gamma Technical College, would minimize the inconvenience of those instructors under the administrative mandate. Ideally, Muldin wanted a prescribed Associate Degree that would have practical application for technical instructors to assist with enhancing their classroom instruction.

## Chapter Summary

The Southeastern Technical College System (STCS) is in flux with the evolving mission of postsecondary technical education. To broaden the acceptability of transferring course credits and to improve the credibility of the technical schools as colleges, STCS has challenged all of the system schools to become SACS/COC accredited within 10 years. Five instructors at three of the schools, Alpha Technical College, Beta Technical College, and Gamma Technical College, participated in three interviews each to describe their experiences of being required to return to school to satisfy new accreditation credentials.

The five participants in this study divulged the varied and, often intimate, details of their experiences of attending college under an administrative mandate. The instructors' work environment, style of vocational program, and individual dialogue provided insight into the characteristics of each of these individuals. Specific description, in the unique language of the participants, offered valuable data on the experiences of these veteran vocational teachers. The interviews of each of the five teachers were structured uniformly giving a description of the participant, affects on morale, affects on view of self, career affects, and support needed.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, provides a cross case analysis to further delineate the findings presented in this chapter. Themes derived from the findings are presented as a means to further analyze data.

# CHAPTER 5

# CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements has affected the personal and career development of postsecondary vocational teachers. More specifically, this study sought to examine the affects on morale and view of self in addition to the career affects and support needed from the school administration for faculty members returning to school under mandate. The overall research questions that guided this study included:

1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty?
2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self?
3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants on an organizational level?
4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school?

Five ($N$=5) participants from three different postsecondary technical colleges were interviewed over a three-month period. Each participant was interviewed on three occasions approximately one month apart with the interview questions increasing in their probative nature with each successive interview. The participants met the qualifying requirements of being veteran teachers who were actively pursuing an associate degree due to a mandate by their

school's administration. The participant's range of experience in technical education spanned from 11 years to 25 years.

According to Burke (2001), Lynn (2002), and McInnis (2000), the late career stage is characterized by relative tranquility, acceptance of the realities and politics of bureaucratic life, and stronger commitments to family and community. The participants in this study are all in their late career stages (Burke 2001; Cohen; 1991; McInnis, 2000). This chapter provides a cross case analysis of the data gathered from the interviews and fieldnotes by presenting and overview of the findings and followed by the emerging themes.

## Overview of Findings

The findings presented in Chapter 4, based on the interviews and fieldnotes, were divided into categories for further analysis. These categories were derived from the research questions that guided the study and assigned the headings: affects on morale, view of self, career and job affects, and support needed. Each participant expressed personal opinions and feelings using a choice of wording completely unique to the individual. A brief overview is presented summarizing the illustrative descriptors through the lens of the participants for each of the four categories of the research questions.

The first research question that guided this study dealt with the affects on morale of the mandatory education on the participants. The findings revealed that, among all five of the participants, descriptors were used that gave a personal depth to the state of morale. Even with Bobbi Johnson, the one participant with an optimistic approach to the mandated education, several descriptors emerged that indicated, at the least, the opportunity for negative feelings surrounding the experience. An overview of illustrative descriptors provided by each participant for the affects on their morale of the required education is displayed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

*Illustrative Descriptors for Affects on Morale*

| Participant | Illustrative Descriptors for Affects on Morale |
|---|---|
| Jerry Tyson | I felt trapped<br>They had me over a barrel<br>Bam, they throw this in your face<br>I always feel like I'm under the gun |
| Mark Roberson | Oh God, at my age?<br>Why in the heck am I doing this?<br>If you, don't get the degree, you're not fit to teach<br>Its like the dog that bites his own tail off |
| Randy Dennard | Falling further and further behind<br>They threw me into the category of unqualified to teach<br>It was frustrating, it was very insulting<br>I'm pretty much gone even when I'm at the house |
| Bobbi Johnson | It was very scary to me<br>I hate that its required<br>I feel guilty |
| Roy Muldin | I feel like its purely political<br>They don't get it because it don't affect them<br>That was insulting to me<br>Its divisive |

The second overall research question inquired as to how the return to higher education affected the participants' view of self. The choice of descriptors that emerged from the participants largely reflected their perceptions of how others viewed them. Their self-confidence and resiliency was demonstrated in the steadfast positive view of self in light of perceived negative views from their administration and society at large. Regardless of how the participants saw attacks on their career preparation, they did not internalize the negativism. Table 5.2 provides a brief overview of the illustrative descriptors for the second research question category of view of self.

Table 5.2

*Illustrative Descriptors for View of Self*

| Participant | Illustrative Descriptors for View of Self |
|---|---|
| Jerry Tyson | I felt like the odd man out<br>It makes me feel like they are not satisfied<br>I feel like they are ashamed of people that work with their hands<br>It's terrible. I ain't never quit nothing in my life |
| Mark Roberson | Unfit to teach<br>Stigma attached to vocational teaching<br>Learned to live with it<br>If I took to heart everything they told us, I'd be a basket case |
| Randy Dennard | We have already proven ourselves<br>Made a major mistake<br>It was all very awkward |
| Bobbi Johnson | I was smart enough<br>I had the experience but did not have the degree<br>They would not give me the opportunity because I lacked that piece of paper<br>We all approach it as being positive |
| Roy Muldin | It has insulted me<br>Nobody had a handle on me as a student<br>Really shocked at how impersonal the whole process was |

The third research question that guided this study was concerned with the career and job affects that the mandated education had on the participants. Commonalities presented themselves when the career affects were described in the instructors' own language. Once again, with the exception of the uniquely positive, albeit peripheral approach by Bobbi Johnson, the participants were less than optimistic about the value of the degree for which they were working. The feeling of "being interrupted" while trying to do their job of teaching was predominant among the participants. A brief overview of the descriptors used by the participants to describe the career and job affects of the mandated degree is presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

*Illustrative Descriptors for Career and Job Affects*

| Participant | Illustrative Descriptors for Career and Job Affects |
|---|---|
| Jerry Tyson | It looks like the world is changing<br>It shouldn't be forced on you<br>'Can this boy write a ten page thesis on exhaust emissions?'<br>Interrupted all of this<br>Its not like most educators think<br>I'm just getting behind in the industry<br>I needed the English classes for my vocabulary and writing skills |
| Mark Roberson | It hinders the job you are presently doing now<br>It takes the concentration level away<br>We get distracted with stupid things like this COC<br>We just don't need to be there<br>End up running a lot of good instructors out of the business<br>I don't see a return on investment |
| Randy Dennard | We are in a highly technical field<br>We need courses that will directly help us in our field<br>I'm getting further and further behind<br>Students have been good about it |
| Bobbi Johnson | Found myself jotting notes about how the professor did things<br>I have applied those things<br>Did not sharpen skills as a printing and graphics professional<br>It helps me to tell them what's going on |
| Roy Muldin | Teach twice as much material in three-fourths of the time<br>We are shooting ourselves in the foot<br>Uselessness<br>Nothing to transfer to my classes<br>Is this just a fad?<br>I seriously question the end game |

The final research question guiding this study dealt with the support needed by the participants from their administration. This category manifested the most pronounced difference between Bobbi Johnson's experience with the administration of Beta Technical College and that of the other four participants. The definitive contrast between Johnson's satisfaction with the

support she received from her administration relative to the experiences of the other participants is evident through the descriptions of the experience of returning to college. The overview of the words used by the participants to describe the support they needed from their administration in the required degree earning process is presented in Table 5.4

Table 5.4

*Illustrative Descriptors for Support Needed*

| Participant | Illustrative Descriptors for Support Needed |
|---|---|
| Jerry Tyson | Not handle very well from the get-go<br>The state should have figured out some things to do<br>Thrown to the lions<br>We all figured, "well, they'll help us."<br>They could have made easier if they wanted to |
| Mark Roberson | Hands-on, hands-off approach<br>Whole thing could have been planned differently<br>Brought their instructors out here for our convenience<br>'Ya'll got to go to college'<br>'What are your concerns?'<br>'What are your fears?'<br>'What are you thinking?'<br>I didn't want to go ask and have them turn me down |
| Randy Dennard | 'How's it going,' would have done wonders for morale<br>They could have organized us<br>The school could have made the process a lot easier<br>I was allowed to leave work early<br>I initiated that on my own |
| Bobbi Johnson | I think communication is key<br>They were completely honest about the requirement<br>I totally understand where they are coming from<br>Our administration is just top notch |
| Roy Muldin | Should have done it in an organized fashion<br>Its not going to increase my salary<br>You know they are going to give me $20 for the book. That is crazy<br>I availed myself…on my own<br>I took the initiative |

## Themes

Transcripts from the interviews were analyzed and broad categories were identified to provide the direction for more in-depth analysis. Through the repetitive process of analysis, these broad categories were refined to the degree that individual themes emerged from the original data. The following five common themes were the result of the analysis:

1. Morale among technical instructors under an education mandate is directly proportional to the perceived support of their school administration.
2. Technical instructors under mandate expect immediate practical application of the education that they are required to obtain.
3. Teachers of vocationally oriented programs are resistant to the trend of postsecondary technical education to include courses that are more academic.
4. Veteran teachers in their late career stage see mandated degree earning as a major interruption in an, otherwise, settled and content lifestyle.

Each theme is presented with discussion.

Theme1: *Morale among instructors under an education mandate is directly proportional to the perceived support of their school administration.*

As the participants in this study discussed their feelings about the experience of earning a degree under administrative mandate, there emerged a direct connection between the amount of support that they received and their level of morale. Lynn (2002), when reporting findings of staff development needs of late career stage teachers, stated "…teachers must be motivated to seek continual growth through professional development that advocates personalized and individualized support systems" (p.182). Four of the five participants in this study expressed disappointment in the limited support from their administration while one, Bobbi Johnson, was

satisfied with the level of administrative support that she had received. The four teachers that felt that their administration could do more in the area of support also expressed negative feelings and extreme pessimism that were indicative of a decline in their morale. Johnson, on the other hand, was largely positive and reflected a stronger sense of morale as result of the experience of attending college under mandate.

Fluctuations in the, otherwise, consistent morale of the late career stage postsecondary teachers were contingent on the presence or absence of specific areas of support. The interviews with the five participants revealed three main categories of support. Financial support was the monetary investment that instructors perceived the administration to be making in their educational endeavor. Support in the form of monitoring and supervision dealt with admissions details, cooperation with the college or university of attendance, and the offer of technical college campus resources to the instructors returning to college. Moral support from the administration was often elusive and intangible; however, moral support emerged as a critical expectation among the instructors.

*Jerry Tyson*

The decline in Jerry Tyson's morale emerged as a direct result of his disappointment in the level of support that he received from the Alpha Technical College administration. Feelings of isolation, caused by the lack of support, evolved into resentment and were evident in phrases such as, "they have me over a barrel," "I've been thrown to the lions," and "I'm odd man out." Tyson's consistent use of the terms "they" and "them" in reference to the administration were in contrast to the "we," "our," and "us" that Tyson used to describe himself and his coworkers under the mandate. The dichotomy between faculty and administration was evident because of the separation that Jerry felt in not receiving the support that he and others needed and expected.

Jerry's statement clearly presents the frustration rising from no support and the "we" versus "they" approach:

> So that was one of the things that I was disappointed about and several other people, too, were disappointed about that. We all figured, 'Well, they'll help us' you know? Well, the only help you'll get is whatever help you can find for yourself.

Tyson cited planning and organization as the primary areas where his administration could have made the experience more palatable. "Odds and ends and little things" were Jerry's words to describe the many ways that his administration "could have made it easier if they wanted to." Jerry explained that "no thought whatsoever" was put into making the experience easier. "I know for a fact that there'd have been enough people to make any course that we took out there, [the university], to have the instructor come out here, [Alpha Technical College's main campus], and offer the class."

Tyson expressed exasperation when he described approaching a supervisor "just to ask for a little help" with book costs. Fieldnotes indicate that Tyson gave a sarcastic laugh and shook his head when he recalled that the supervisor "merely suggested" he sell his books back to the bookstore. Tyson elaborated, "They want me to buy a book for $80.00 and sell it back for $8.00. I might not be the best at algebra, but even I know that's a losing proposition." The detached feeling that Tyson described in reference to his school's administration developed into bitterness and resentment. Jerry resolved into his bitterness, "I don't guess I should depend on them [administration] for anything like that. I mean it's all up to us anyway."

Jerry concluded describing his frustration with the lack of support by making the statement, "But, I get over it." This is consistent with Raelin's (1984) description of employees in their late career or "entrenching" stage: "Since they are still very involved in their jobs, they

are somewhat ambivalent or conflicted about their loss of professionalism, but they have begun to accept the realities and politics of bureaucratic life" (p. 62).

*Mark Roberson*

For Mark Roberson, the absence of moral support in the form of that extra "pat on the back" was the primary cause for feelings of resentment and frustration leading to diminished morale. He stated that he wished his supervisor had, "sat [the faculty requiring the new degree] down and talked this thing over." Roberson identified three questions that he would like to have heard from his administration: "What are your concerns? What are you thinking? What are your fears?" Rather than the administration probing for ways to offer support, Mark described "the poorest thing" as "the way it [the issuing of the mandate] was handled." Open communication was neglected as Mark stated, when discussing the initial issuing of the mandate, "…we were hinted around at." Roberson expressed the result was that "the initial reaction was resentment." He recalled asking himself, "Why in the heck am I doing this?"

In addition to the need for moral support, Roberson became discouraged with the perceived lack of organization and planning on the part of the administration. "They just left me alone," was his response when asked what accommodations his supervisors had made for returning to school. "I had to find out what I needed, and from that point on, well, I really got no help." Mark felt that the "whole thing could have been planned differently." He offered a suggestion that the faculty under mandate were "all in the same boat" and could have been organized into a cohort group. "A lot of concessions could have been made saving the school a lot of time as well as the faculty members that were involved."

When Mark Roberson was asked if he had approached the school administration concerning additional financial help, he responded, "No, the situation was such that I didn't want

to go ask and have them turn me down." Mark's discouragement was evidence of his awareness that his administration was simply going to leave him "to do whatever." His feeling of isolation from supervisors in the process of the education mandate was negatively reflected in his overall morale.

*Randy Dennard*

Indications of a lowered morale on the part of Randy Dennard at Alpha Technical College were revealed through his confessions, "I don't have much patience anymore," and "My temperament is real short now." Dennard also admitted, in interactions with his students in the shop area, "I snap at them too much." He stated that these negative outbursts and the shortened temperament were due, in part, to the fact that his experiences as an educator under mandate "could have been made easier."

Dennard was highly critical of his administration for their "handling of the process" of requiring him to earn an Associate's Degree. He questioned the wisdom when they "brought each one in one at the time." He stated, "I don't know what they figured…if there was going to be an outrage or a riot or what." Field notes indicated that Randy laughed to himself as he found humor in the thought that his administration might be fearful of the instructors "rioting" on being told of the required education.

Randy Dennard expressed that Alpha Technical College could have offered the remedial help the instructors needed at no cost to the school that would have resulted in financial savings for all involved.

> I believe that the school [Alpha Technical College] could have made the process a lot easier by putting all of us instructors together in one course…either in one course at the university or have the university instructor come out here to teach us as a group. We could all take the two English courses first, together, then the algebra course, then the computer course or whatever. I really believe it would have been a lot easier on everybody.

Dennard was quick to say that he did receive some help from the Math instructors on Alpha Technical College's campus. "But I initiated that," he noted.

Randy Dennard added that the moral support of a "periodic, "How's it going?"" from the Alpha Technical College administration "would have done wonders for morale." He condemned his supervisors because "they knew that each one would have to go through this" yet they "laid no groundwork" in preparing the faculty members for the new requirement. "The whole aspect of it was the way it was done. It was forced down our throats."

*Bobbi Johnson*

Bobbi Johnson, the Printing and Graphics instructor who reflected the strongest sense of positive morale of the participants, did not have any financial burdens that were not reimbursed by either her school or the state scholarship that she received. Clues about Johnson's strong morale were revealed through her tone when discussing the financial matter, "Our administration is just top notch. I would just say that they would accommodate me as best they could."

Bobbi believed her administration was providing all of the support necessary. She commented that the Beta Technical College administration had always "been completely honest about the requirement," keeping communication open and "that was key" to getting the support she needed. Bobbi was resolutely positive: "We have a great administration here."

Bobbi Johnson cited a situation where she perceived a type of moral support that only served to boost her morale and "increase faith" in her administration. Due to the time consuming nature of her Associate Degree coursework, Bobbi could no longer run a weekend business from which she had previously received substantial personal income. When learning of this, the Beta Technical College administration offered to allow Johnson to teach extra classes in the evening for additional pay to supplement the lost income. The "understanding nature of the

administration" exemplified the moral support that Bobbi described as critical to her comfort in pursuing the degree.

*Roy Muldin*

In contrast to the positive demeanor of Bobbi Johnson, the bitterness and resentment of Roy Muldin was manifested in his description of the lack of financial support that he received. While he admitted that he "appreciated the tuition reimbursement," he resented having to pay for his books, a cost that he described as "overwhelming." Most detrimental to Roy's morale, however, was his perception of the lack of financial reimbursement through a salary increase on degree completion of the degree. Muldin made a direct connection between his earning the degree and his salary. He argued that the strongest evidence that the school did not hold the required degree in any high regard was that Gamma Technical College placed "no more monetary value" on him as a "degreed instructor" than they did as a "non-degreed instructor." He relayed the heated discussion with his supervisor: "And I sat back when that statement was made and I said, 'You have told me that there is going to be no compensation so who is going to appreciate this, my next employer?' That was insulting to me."

Roy reflected that there would be less "friction" if the school's administration had "taken the initiative to organize classes for [those under mandate]." Roy expressed that a "better solution" would have been for the administration to say, "Ok, here is where everybody is at. This semester, we will have an English professor teaching English from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm and everyone who needs English, you will be taking English from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm." Roy expressed that he was certain that Gamma Technical College "had the resources to make this happen," but simply did not do so "because they didn't care."

Roy Muldin also expressed a need for moral support from his administration. He traced negative feelings back to the situation of being issued the mandate. Roy described the "frustration and anger" he felt when his administrators first told him that he would be required to earn the degree. It was "not the mandate, itself, that angered [him], rather, the presentation of the requirement." Roy explained, "You know, how you tell somebody something has a lot to do with how they take it."

The experiences of the participants in this study indicated that diminished morale among veteran teachers required to earn a college degree is linked to perceptions of a lack of administrative support. Four of the five participants gave indications of a decline in morale and the same four teachers described feelings of resentment and bitterness toward their administration. The fifth participant did not demonstrate a diminished morale and praised her administration for complete cooperation, openness in communication, and support for her education. The main categories where additional support was needed were organization and planning, financial, and moral support.

Theme 2: *Technical instructors under mandate expect immediate practical application of the education that they are required to obtain.*

Each of the participants in this study expressed a genuine concern for the lack of applicability of the courses that were required of them to earn the associate degree. Harrison (1987) described four areas of responsibility for vocational educators: 1) knowledge of the specific skills of the trade, 2) instructional planning, implementation, and evaluation; 3) classroom and laboratory management; and 4) occupational experience. The curricula for the Associate Degree courses involved primarily core classes such as Composition and Rhetoric, Algebra, Political Science, and History. While some of the teachers in this study found these

courses interesting, all of them expressed disappointment at the inability to apply the new knowledge in their teaching profession.

*Jerry Tyson*

Jerry Tyson expressed strong feelings about the weakness of the Associate Degree curriculum in relation to his profession. He stated, "If the course is not used in what you teach, I won't say that you shouldn't know anything about it, but it shouldn't be forced on you." Tyson compared his experience working on the Associate Degree to the update training that he received periodically to maintain current with changes in the diesel industry. Jerry described the update training as "critical" and stated that he "really enjoyed" going back into the industry "to learn new methods and equipment." He described how the degree work was actually "putting him behind" in his practical knowledge of diesel technology. "I can't leave and be gone for a week because I'd miss two days of my class at the university and that'd be bad…so I'm just getting behind with the industry."

When describing his idea of the futility of the Associate Degree work, Tyson presented a hypothetical dialogue with a potential employer of his graduates:

> I have not had anyone come up to me of the industry that hires our students, and these industries are from all over the world, but no one has come to me and said, 'Do these boys know algebra? Can this boy write a 10 page thesis on exhaust emissions?' No, they don't do that. That's not the business. And that's pretty much the consensus of everyone I talk to in the industry.

Jerry was convinced that the information he was receiving from his Associate Degree classes was "useless as far as being transferable" to his students and making them "more employable."

While Jerry admitted, "some good came of" the English course he had taken, he quickly added that it still "did not justify the time and expense" and was only transferable to his students in a peripheral manner. The increase in his vocabulary and sharpening of grammar skills were

applied to helping his students when writing reports for warranty work. This was the only positive affect that Jerry related about his coursework and how any of his "new learning" related to his students.

*Mark Roberson*

Mark Roberson described the degree coursework as an "aggravation" that "hindered" his job. He drew a conclusion of irony in the fact that the "only good" that had come of his degree work was the "sharpening" of writing skills that only enabled him to better prepare the reports that were required because of the new accreditation. This "vicious cycle did nothing" to enhance his teaching. Mark used a circular phrase to describe the futile process, "It seems like they are training me to do the work that justifies requiring me to get the training."

When discussing the direct applicability of the Associate Degree, Mark explained that the information and skills he was acquiring through the coursework were "not critical" to his job. "There's a lot of things [education and training] I need. I don't personally feel that I need that degree to be successful at this point." He stressed the fact that he would have pursued a college degree "in [his] younger years had [he] known that it would be required" of him to teach. Mark emphasized, however, that the value of the degree in his profession was "more a statement of legitimacy" and not "a set of skills to be directly applied to vocational education." The degree would be only to "open doors."

> I think I would do, what I recommend that students do, and that is to get your technical education first. Then get at least the AAS degree and see what doors that opens for you. You can easily go on to college after you become employed. That's what I see a lot of my graduates do and that's what seems to work for most in this field.

*Randy Dennard*

When discussing the professional affects of his mandatory degree work, Randy Dennard immediately proposed the question of practical application. Randy expressed a belief in the need

to maintain a "high level of skills and knowledge" but that there was a dichotomy between a degreed teacher and one that possesses critical vocational competencies. He was clear in his statement: "If we are going to take college courses then we need to be taking college courses that are directly going to help us in our field." Dennard then listed all of the courses he had taken in the Associate Degree curricula and identified "little or no relevance" to his field of heavy equipment mechanics. He stressed the point that the degree held "no useful value" to an experienced instructor. Dennard stressed, "But me knowing what I know and having been here [Alpha Technical College] so long and all, I can see that it [the associate degree] is not really going to help at all."

Dennard reflected the same opinion as Jerry Tyson concerning the "back-to-industry" training that was considered vital to sustained competency in the field. Randy Dennard stated, "Ever since I've been here [Alpha Technical College] teaching, I've constantly been going back to industry and getting updates. I don't feel that I've had enough of that since all of this [associate degree work] started." The feeling of futility toward the Associate Degree courses was made poignantly in Dennard's expression of desperation at the thought of falling behind in his industry skills:

> Our technology is changing so rapidly that it's even hard for the person that has accessibility to go to these classes to stay up to date. With me, I'm getting further and further behind. As we are speaking right now, I'm just getting further and further behind.

Dennard concluded his discussion of the "uselessness" of the required courses by referring to his time working on the degree as a "crisis." He stated that his teaching could "resume to the benchmark of quality" that he demanded of himself only when he could prescribe, for himself, the staff development training that would directly benefit him professionally.

*Bobbi Johnson*

While she presented a much more positive approach and attitude concerning the mandated Associate Degree curriculum, Bobbi Johnson expressed the same basic opinion as the other four participants concerning practical application of what she was learning. She did not describe a situation where she could translate the material learned in the associate work to her teaching profession. Johnson stated that specific courses such as Political Science, Algebra, and Composition were helpful only in a "peripheral sense." By this, she meant that she would observe methods of teaching used by the college professors, analyze them, and apply what she found to be useful in her own classroom. She described her approach:

> I found myself having trouble concentrating on what the instructor was teaching me because I was actually watching her methods and delivery…thinking, 'Oh, I think I could do that…or…that's a great idea…or…I don't think I'd get by with that.' And I even found myself jotting notes about how that professor did things. Some of her techniques and how she would teach certain concepts and I've done that more, to open up ideas for myself.

Although admitting to "gaining a deeper appreciation for the value of the basic skills," Bobbi had to stretch beyond the material being taught to find direct application of the material in her coursework. Bobbi described being able to "see things from the students' perspective" and to use this information in "advising and understanding" her students. "I think [attendance at the university] helps me to tell them what's going on. I know for a fact that when you go to the university that this is what you should expect." All of these "peripheral" applications of her newfound perspective, however, were not direct practical application of her Associate Degree curriculum. Johnson compared the value of experience and the technical education to that of liberal arts degree work: "I think that experience is worth more than that piece of paper. Out here, at the technical school, we teach them the actual job. So I think that they [college degrees] are important because society makes that degree important."

*Roy Muldin*

The most outspoken of all of the participants concerning practical application of the associate coursework was Roy Muldin. When asked to evaluate the helpful nature of the degree courses, he responded, with words like "useless," "waste of time," and "worthless." The discussion that ensued was filled with bitterness and sarcasm about the "uselessness" of the college classes. Muldin claimed that, even though his administration was requiring the degree, "they saw no real value in it because they would not increase his salary on graduation." Roy described a conversation with his supervisor where he was told, "Well, this is going to make you better. This is going to help you in the long run." Muldin claimed that this "insulted" him to the "point of anger." Roy responded to his supervisor that, "if the degree was going to make me a better teacher, then he should be duly compensated on completing it."

Roy Muldin, like Randy Dennard and Bobbi Johnson, delineated the courses that he had already taken in his degree work. He discussed the "absence" of practical value of courses such as Political Science, Algebra, and History. "History … I like History, but, then again, nothing that transfers to my day-to-day operations. But as far as being any benefit to me or to my students on a day-to-day basis, no, [it is not applicable]." On further reflection, Roy admitted that he had taken one Introduction to Computers course that he found "helpful in doing the administrative and clerical" parts of his job. He, once again, asserted that the computer knowledge did not transfer directly into the classroom but only helped him do parts of his job that did not involve teaching.

Muldin offered a solution to the problem of not being able to apply the Associate Degree work as a vocational teacher. Roy suggested that collaboration between the state technical college system and the state university system could have resulted in a "prescribed Associate

Degree" specifically for vocational educators needing the credential. He expressed that "classes in learning styles, developing syllabi, lesson plans, and how to track students," would be of direct benefit to him as an instructor. "This whole degree experience would have some meaning to me if it was something that I could use in my job."

Theme 3: *Teachers of vocationally oriented programs are resistant to the trend of postsecondary technical education to include more courses that are academic.*

The requirement that forced the participants to enroll in higher education was an outcome of the trend of technical education to become more universal in diploma and degree offerings and more accepted by academia. In response to dynamic global changes, the missions of postsecondary schools must adapt.

> As the concept of terminal education becomes increasingly anachronistic, as the world becomes increasingly small, as the postindustrial economy requires an increasingly flexible workforce, as the demands of the community become increasingly profound, the need for the two-year colleges to reevaluate their historical missions becomes increasingly great. (Reitano, 1998, p. 125)

Reitano implores two-year colleges, including those offering technical training, to broaden their mission to incorporate the expectations of both a local and global community. The "anachronistic" nature of terminal education directly implies that there is a new presumed expectation of transferability of two-year college credits. This trend is the primary reason that the colleges in this study elected to seek the SACS/COC accreditation. The participants in this study, however, presented a definite resistance to the trend that their colleges were taking toward the inclusion of an academic core into the curriculum. In their discussion of the affects on their morale and view of self, each of the participants voluntarily introduced their negative opinions on the new trend of postsecondary technical education to integrate with higher education for more universally accepted and transferable education.

*Jerry Tyson*

Jerry Tyson explained his interpretation of the "rationale behind the education mandate." "If you are going to offer the degree then you have to hold the degree." The perceptions that Jerry described of his feelings toward the new trend were less than positive. "In my opinion, we are getting away from our mission." The frustration emerged as Jerry described feeling "trapped" and being "over a barrel" because of his age and nearness to retirement. "I'll tell you what it makes me feel like: It makes me feel like they are not satisfied, like they are ashamed of people that work with their hands. That's what I feel." Jerry's personal dilemma with the new trend culminated in his belief that his administration was "not satisfied" and "ashamed" of him for doing his job.

The phrase "our mission" was one that recurred in the interviews with Jerry during each of the interviews. The fear that the trend would "work [him] out of a job" was evidenced when he said, "I want to keep teaching this, but I don't know what is going to happen." Jerry expressed uncertainty about the future of his job, even though he was complying with the mandate to obtain the degree. Tyson's feelings were typical of the late-career stage characteristic where the desire to stay with the same employer to retirement overrides any loss of morale or commitment (Cohen, 1991).

Jerry's resistance to the trend toward academics in technical education resurfaced as he discussed the futility of the Diesel Program offering an Associate Degree. Tyson stated, "None of my students ever ask me about an Associate's Degree." He added that the employers of his graduates "don't want a degreed student" because "they can't get people like that to do the work." Jerry's pessimism began to capitulate, "It looks like the world is changing and our mission is changing to move more toward the academics."

*Mark Roberson*

Mark Roberson divulged his resentment at having "the rules changed." He described a "fear" that liberal arts education was going to "invade" the traditional shop of the vocational school.

> That's the fear that I'm trying to express that I hear other people saying that you are going to bring that kind of situation into this environment. It's going to wind up being nothing but academics. And what's going to happen in the end is it's going to be like the dog that bites his own tail off.

Roberson's resistance to the new trend continued to be manifested as he attempted to transfer his "fear." Aircraft Structural graduates repair structural flaws in aircrafts, and Roberson reiterated the dangers involved with a poorly trained technician in this field. "If you are going to judge [a graduate] solely by the degree that they have, and not necessarily the experience that they have, then that could get dangerous to this business, …real dangerous."

Mark referred to the trend toward more universally accepted credits as a "distraction." He expressed a desire to maintain the dichotomy that has historically existed between academic education and technical training. Roberson was straightforward in his opinion: "I mean, my gut feeling is, we just don't need to be there. We really need to leave that for someone else to do and we need to do what we are commissioned to do." Mark relayed similar thoughts from his students who would periodically enter into conversation on the trends of technical education when they became aware of the reason for Roberson's return to higher education. He explained that the aircraft structural students were equally resistant to the trends. They would make such comments as, "Why are we being called a 'college' now instead of a 'technical institute'?" and "If I wanted to go to a college, I would have gone to [the university.]" Mark's students reflected his negative opinion on the trend of technical education to include more academic courses.

*Randy Dennard*

Randy Dennard expressed concern that "the traditional technical school" was "getting away" from what it was "designed to do." He argued that, although his field of heavy equipment training was "not strictly hands-on" and that it was "highly technical as well," "a college level person" was "not required to teach it or to do it." Even with the advent of "computers for diagnostics," Dennard affirmed that he still had "to teach basic technician practices" because "a lot of the older equipment still in use is built around the older technology." At the heart of the issue, according to Randy, was the fact that increased complexity in heavy equipment technology was "difficult enough to learn without adding the burden of academic core" that would be "useless to the student in the workplace."

Dennard described the convergence of academic classes with hands-on training to be "conflicting." He used his personal preparation for a career teaching vocational education as an example when he recalled that he took college courses to "improve the things essential to [his] teaching." Randy purposefully "avoided the basic academic core," because he saw "no value" to his profession and refused to seek the degree for this reason.

*Bobbi Johnson*

Bobbi Johnson, the most optimistic of all the participants in this study, also exhibited the tendency to resist the trend of technical education to include more academic core classes. While she embraced the opportunity to earn an Associate Degree, Bobbi referred to the degree as "that piece of paper" in contrast to her "invaluable experience in the industry." She explained "frustration" with society because the degree is important to employers only because "they [society] make that degree important."

Johnson illustrated her position by stating that university graduates "still had to be trained" after they found employment, whereas graduates from the technical school "could actually go into a place of business and be performing [on] day one." She explained, "The new accreditation will not mean anything to my field. It's not going to mean one thing to my department." Bobbi's level of passion on the subject heightened as she rhetorically questioned, "What good is it going to do for us?" She, then, emphatically answered, "Nothing."

Bobbi stressed that she was "convinced" that the most effective method of teaching printing and graphics was to "emulate the actual work environment." The time clock and time cards on her wall was evidence of this belief. She implored her students to "view [her] class as an apprenticeship," and that they would be graded on their "work ethic along with how well they performed." Johnson contrasted this type of active learning with the traditional didactic lecture common to traditional college core courses. She explained that the math and English pertinent to the program are "incorporated into the [printing and graphics] curriculum." Rather than offering the degree at Beta Technical College, Bobbi stated her ideal approach:

> I would advise them to go over there, [the university], do your core, come here, [technical college], and let me teach you the practical work for a year and a half, then go back over there and earn your degree.

Johnson explained that this would give the student "the piece of paper" to get the job while providing the "real world practical training" to do the job without diluting the value of the technical school diploma.

*Roy Muldin*

Roy Muldin was vocal in his opinion on the trends of technical education. His crude simile, "they are about as useless as tits on a boar hog," demonstrated the value Roy placed on the academic core credits for his graduates. "Electricians have been teaching electricians how to

be electricians for years." Muldin expressed that he thought the trend toward more academics and course transferability was "purely political." He used sarcasm when questioning the logic of the trend: "This is perfectly logical to administrators. Find out what you are doing wrong then repeat it." The "doing wrong" to which Roy referred was in his statistical quote that "60% of the people that come out of the university can't get jobs." His sarcasm continued, "So what do we do? We want to be a 'college'."

"Shooting ourselves in the foot," is the phrase that Roy Muldin used to describe his perception of the "mistake" in the new direction of technical education. He explained that the state had a reputation of being "the leader in the nation" in technical training. "Why, if you are leading, do you want to be like everybody else?" His rhetorical question was one of many in objection to the influx of academic courses into the technical curriculum. Roy used the phrase, "I question the wisdom," four different times when discussing the changes.

Muldin's fervor for making his point on the fallacy of the influx of academic curricula developed into antagonism: "Is this just a fad? Is this just a way for somebody to prove, or to justify their salary?" His expression of resistance to the technical trend, however, culminated in the simple statement, "I question the wisdom in trying to bring [technical and academic education] together. I think they need to be separate. I don't like the idea of a 'technical college.'" Roy's strong feelings are typical of the little reverence for academic traditions that Levin (2000) predicted would be held by technical education as a whole in the 21st Century.

Theme 4: V*eteran teachers in their late career stage see mandated degree earning as a major interruption in an, otherwise, settled and content lifestyle.*

Teachers in the late stage of their career are in a state of relative tranquility and are characteristically more settled than in any other stage of their profession (Cohen, 1991; Burke

2001; McInnis, 2000). This fact was most acutely manifested in the interviews with the participants in this study when they described their perspectives of the requirement to attend college to earn an Associate Degree as a major interruption in their lives. Time and attention to family, hobbies, and external business opportunities were all affected by the mandate.

*Jerry Tyson*

Jerry Tyson described the "interruption of this degree thing" as an "extra load" that constantly made him feel like he was "under the gun." He described being "aggravated" at not being able to play his guitar in the band he had "played with for years." Jerry described the interruption on his lifestyle:

> I live in the country and you have animals you know, you have to feed and all, and that's your lifestyle until, bam, they throw this in your face and say, 'Here, this is what you've go to do if you want to keep this job.'

Tyson conveyed that he had a diesel shop in an adjacent town that he operated in the evenings and on the weekends, "until these classes got in the way." He stated that he "made good money doing that" and that, even though he had quit taking on work in the shop, he was "still having to keep the shop up, paying the lease, the light bill, and insurance." In reference to not being able to work in his own shop, Jerry responded, "I guess I do what I have to do."

Jerry explained that his family life has also been "unnecessarily affected" by his return to college under mandate. He explained that the "extra stress placed on [him] by the school work" would result in a short-temper. Jerry cited the situation with math and how his heightened level of frustration would manifest itself in his demeanor. His wife would "make [him] go out on the porch" when he was working on math and "becoming aggravated." "She don't want to hear it," explained Jerry. He then added, "I don't blame her. She shouldn't have to deal with that along with everything else."

*Mark Roberson*

"I guess the toughest thing is where I'm at now," was Mark Roberson's statement about the dilemma of having to enroll at a university in his late career stage. His phrase, "where I'm at now" referred to his lifestyle. As the coach of his sons' baseball team, he planned to "spend a lot of time with them." Roberson confirmed that working on the degree "affected [his] family life" to the degree that he felt, "at the least, inconvenienced to the point of resentment."

Mark's contentment in his career was evident in his response to a question concerning his future goals. "I would like to see myself still here doing what I love and enjoy doing. I really have no desire to move up the ranks or move to a higher level as far as administration goes." He said that he could never see himself taking "other forks in the road." Roberson even declared that if he could not complete the mandated degree, that he would "offer to resign" but would ask administration to allow him to "stay until [they] found somebody with the degree they were looking for."

*Randy Dennard*

Randy Dennard, the only participant in this study without children, emphasized the "interruption on family" as his "number one beef" against the mandate. He described a conversation with his wife where they both agreed that the schoolwork had "taken [him] away from her." Randy stated, "It seemed to her that Sunday afternoon was when I started doing my studying so I'm pretty much gone then, even though I'm at the house." He expressed exasperation at being there "physically but not there mentally."

"We pretty much had our life settled and had our routine down and now, *bam,* all this is here." Randy depicted the intrusion that the Associate Degree work made on his personal life. He elaborated more on his family life, saying, "My wife never sees me." Dennard explained

that, although they had no children, that he was very close to his nieces and nephews. "They are like my own children and it seems like I'm away from them a lot more." He relayed that they "missed [him] a lot, too," and "Its like everything centers now around going back to college." The "dramatic change in lifestyle" had an overwhelming affect on Dennard's personal life.

Dennard's level of contentment was demonstrated when he explained that, if he lost his job with Alpha Technical College, he "could probably find a job as good as what [he has] maybe making a little less or even a little better than what [he's] doing now." Randy asserted, "I love my job. I love what I do. I'm not physically able to get out and twist wrenches anymore." This is consistent with Cohen's (1991) findings that late career stage employees have a low rate of turnover not because of their commitment to the organization, but because of their contentment in life and career.

*Bobbi Johnson*

Bobbi Johnson "embraced the idea" of going to college to earn a degree but suggested that it was an interruption on an, otherwise, content lifestyle. While she "welcomed the opportunity to expand her knowledge," Bobbi admitted that she probably never would have gone to school had she not been "forced to do it." She explained that she had not enrolled earlier because she had "put it off and put it off" and the reason was that it was "a hardship."

Like Jerry Tyson, Bobbi had a small business "on the side" from which she gathered, "needed extra income." Two weekends out of a month, she spent printing a magazine. In reference to the side job and the mandate to earn an Associate Degree, Johnson admitted that she "couldn't do both" and "had to give up the magazine." She added a night class to her schedule to account for some of the lost income: "So I will have to teach two nights and go to school two nights. That's hard. That's hard."

Bobbi expressed a measure of guilt over the negative impact that her education was having on her family life. She explained that her husband had been sick and, each day, would ask, "OK, is this the night you have to stay late?" Physical expressions of disappointment were evident when Johnson expressed, "It makes it hard on you, you know. I feel guilty." She agonized over "balancing everything [she] had on [her] plate." Bobbi's "hectic schedule" was "more than [she] could take" sometimes. She explained, "If I'm not at school, then I'm studying and if I'm not studying, then I'm asleep because I'm so tired." Johnson reiterated that her husband complains about the interruption on their "normal life."

*Roy Muldin*

Roy Muldin took a defiant stance against letting the work toward the Associate Degree interfere with his lifestyle. When initially asked if the degree had directly affected his personal life, Muldin responded, "It hasn't because I won't let it." Upon further probing, however, Muldin admitted that "any time you are pulled away from your family for two nights a week, and if you are on a flexible schedule and teaching two nights also, how can it not?" Muldin's resistance to allow his personal life to become affected had failed.

"I mean, to say the least, its an inconvenience." Roy spoke of "missing out" on his favorite hobby, which was hunting. When asked how he balanced the sport of hunting with school, he stated, "I put the degree on hold. I tried Algebra twice and I made the mistake of trying it during hunting season, which is my favorite sport." Muldin explained further that he failed the Algebra course so, "no more college during hunting season." In a later interview, however, Roy admitted that he could not always elect not to attend class.

Muldin felt "robbed" of the time that he had previously enjoyed with his family. He explained, "I'm away from my family at school and then I have to study at home so I can't talk

to them tonight or do anything because I have to study." His children were older but still lived at home. The priority that Muldin placed on his family life was such that, "if [he] had small children, this would be a serious issue, a very serious issue." When asked to elaborate on this statement, Roy explained that he would have "sought other employment" if given the mandate while his boys were still young.

## Chapter Summary

A cross case analysis of the data was conducted to delineate the findings of the experiences of veteran vocational faculty returning to college under administrative mandate. Broad categories emerging during the data analysis were refined and further analyzed until specific themes were defined. These themes included:

1) Morale among technical instructors under an education mandate is directly proportional to the perceived support of their school administration,

2) Technical instructors under mandate expect immediate practical application of the education that they are required to obtain,

3) Teachers of vocationally oriented programs are resistant to the trend of postsecondary technical education to include more academic courses, and

4) Veteran teachers in their late career stage see mandated degree earning as a major interruption in an, otherwise, settled and content lifestyle. Each theme was presented with discussion.

Commonalities in the themes, related to the primary research questions, were identified among all of the participants. The relationship between teacher morale and the perceived help from administration was evident among those with low morale and the one participant with a high morale.

The value of the required degree was brought into question by all of the participants. The participants were in unison with strong opinions against the trend of technical education toward more academic core and the transferability of credit. Primary reasons cited for their resistance to the changes included the diluting of the curriculum in their highly specialized fields, the "uselessness" of the academic core to technical workers, and the disapproval of the trend from students and the employers who hire them. The participants who were taking the core classes, themselves, saw no relevance and could see no future relevance for their students.

The late career stage of veteran vocational instructors placed them in a relatively tranquil lifestyle until the requirement to attend college upset their contentment and caused a major interruption in the tranquility they had, once, enjoyed. Non-working time once spent with family, hobbies, and private businesses was occupied by study and class attendance. Some spouses complained about the absence of their partner because of the education and others admitted to being short-tempered due to the stress caused by the degree work.

# CHAPTER 6

# SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

The results of this study provided a deeper understanding of the experiences of postsecondary technical faculty returning to higher education under an administrative mandate. The following research questions provided framework for this study:

1. How have the mandated educational requirements affected the morale of veteran vocational-technical faculty?
2. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants' view of self?
3. How has the experience of returning to higher education affected the participants on an organizational level?
4. What support do the veteran teachers indicate as needed while attending school?

This chapter presents an overview of the research design, a comparison to previous studies, a presentation of the emerging themes, and a discussion of the findings. Implications of the results of the study are then presented followed by recommendations for further research and conclusions.

## Research Design

This research used a qualitative case study approach that included three sets of interviews each with five veteran postsecondary instructors. The five participants were employed at three different technical colleges, all under the same state technical college system, in one of the

southeastern United States. Each participant signed an informed consent form, and 3 interviews were conducted with each of the instructors for a total of 15 interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and conversational in nature. Purposeful sampling was the method used to choose the participants.

The researcher sought to gain an in-depth understanding, as a result of the interviews, to the experiences of technical faculty returning to college under mandate. Immediately following each taped interview, the researcher transcribed the data. To ensure validity of the transcripts, the participants were offered the opportunity to review and to make changes to clarify or to correct the details of the interviews. The analysis of the data that followed incorporated the constant comparative method to identify categories and produce codes for further analysis. As a result of this analysis, common themes emerged from the findings.

Qualitative researchers seek to understand what specific interpretations an individual has at a particular time within a particular context (Merriam, 2002). Each veteran teacher within this study had his or her own constructions and interpretations of reality that could most effectively be explored through the techniques offered by qualitative methods. This study was interpretive as the researcher sought to understand how the participants made meaning of returning to school and then described, in great detail, the interpretation gleaned from the meanings of the data. Qualitative research of this type incorporates a holistic approach whereby the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its individual parts (Patton, 1990).

The qualitative approach used to guide this study was symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969) coined the term “symbolic interactionism” to describe situations involving the study of human groups and human contact. Blumer based his work on that of Mead (1934) who originally conceived the idea of social behavior based on interaction between individuals and the

meanings that they attached to symbols. Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism was different in that he believed that humans act on the meanings that are intrinsically held by the individual as a result of interactions with others. Blumer believed that, because of social interactions, individuals tended to attach meanings to things that were otherwise devoid of meaning. Within the qualitative approach of symbolic interactionism, individuals may be seen as actors performing with scripted roles, improvising, or creating new roles (Goffman, 1958).

Within this study of veteran vocational teachers, symbolic interactionism provided an optimal structure for understanding the experiences of the participants in the context of their mandated education. The meanings that these teachers constructed based on interactions with others allowed for the development of deeper understanding from their perspectives. Administrative support, personal affects, and career and job application of the degree were among the symbols for which each individual participant constructed a personal perspective.

## Previous Studies

While various studies exist on postsecondary staff development, mandatory education, and teacher career stages, no study was found that specifically dealt with postsecondary technical faculty attending college under an administrative mandate. Researchers who produced studies providing pertinent and relevant information for mandatory adult education included Cutz (1997) and Kerka (1995). Research conducted by Anderson, Barrick, and Hughes (1992), Gray and Walter (2001), and Tomblin and Haring (1999) dealt with the issue of reform in vocational teacher development. Burke (2001), Fugate and Amey (2000), and McInnis (2000), were among the researchers adding to the literature on the staff development needs of late career stage teachers.

Cutz (1997) conducted a study to examine the reasons given by adults who refused to participate in a mandated literacy program. Cutz found that negative emotions, resentment, and fear were the primary reactions of the participants and that nonparticipation was supported at four levels: individual, family, community, and national. In a similar study involving prisoners mandated to take literacy courses, Kerka (1995) identified lack of confidence as the primary factor in inmates' reluctance to attend mandatory classes. Kerka found, however, the mandatory nature of the experience was largely irrelevant to the outcome as there were only slightly significant differences in achievement between mandatory and voluntary education. Professionals will commit themselves to the learning process and achieve the goals of the education experience whether under mandate or by choice.

Tomblin and Haring (1999) studied alternative certification programs at secondary schools where traditional certification and credentialing of vocational teachers created difficulty in finding qualified applicants. They reported that vocational teachers who received special certification through alternative programs did not perform as well, based on evaluations and test scores, as those prepared through the traditional teacher education process. Gray and Walter (2001) identified seven areas of needed reform for vocational teacher preparation including increased requirements in training in: the teaching of academic subjects including math, science, and communications; educating special needs students and diverse student groups; and increased supervision of school-sponsored, work-based learning opportunities provided to vocational students. Anderson, Barrick, and Hughes (1992) cited that the absence of clarity in vocational teacher education programs was due to the diversity of mission among the 50 states. According to Anderson et al. (1992), "state level policies affecting teacher education appear to reflect the current educational climate in each state" (p. 43).

McInnis (2000) conducted a national survey of academics in Australian Universities and found that mature teachers, those that were in their late career stages, were chiefly concerned with the quality of their teaching. These same late-career educators became frustrated with detractors to quality. Most notable to this research was in one of the conclusions reached by McInnis:

> What is needed is a rethinking of recruitment, accreditation, induction and deployment of teaching staff rather than persisting with the belief that all academics should be cast in the same mold and that they ought to be able to do more and perform better on all fronts for their entire careers. (p. 151)

Burke (2001) studied the patterns of teachers' attitudes at different stages of their careers. His findings determined that factors influencing behaviors could be divided into two categories: personal environment and organizational environment. Fugate and Amey (2000) conducted a qualitative study of community college faculty career paths, roles, and development in context with teacher's career stages. Their findings determined a direct link between a teacher's perceived ability to teach and the faculty development activities with which they were involved.

While substantial research exists in the areas of postsecondary vocational teacher development, mandatory education, and teacher career stages, there was a noticeable gap in the literature on postsecondary vocational teachers under education mandate in their late career stage.

## Summary of the Findings

As a result of the findings and a cross case analysis, the following common themes emerged:

1. Morale among technical instructors under an education mandate is directly proportional to the perceived support of their school administration.

2. Technical instructors under mandate expect immediate practical application of the education that they are required to obtain.
3. Teachers of vocationally oriented programs are resistant to the trend of postsecondary technical education to include more academic courses.
4. Veteran teachers in their late career stage see mandated degree earning as a major interruption in an, otherwise, settled and content lifestyle.

A discussion of these themes provided the analysis and implications for further study.

## Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the major findings of this study in context with the relevant literature as reviewed in Chapter 2. The reader is reminded that the nature of qualitative research is that reliability of the study is limited to the context of the three schools in which this research was conducted. Generalizability to other contexts is, therefore, not appropriate and broad assumptions should not be made apart from the populations studied. Each section presents a common theme followed by a discussion of the theme and its connection to the literature.

Theme1: *Morale among instructors under an education mandate is directly proportional to the perceived support of their school administration.*

For the participants in this study there was a direct link between low morale and the mandated education relative to the amount of support that they received from their administration. In developing an instrument for analyzing teacher attitudes in relation to career stages, Burke (2001) identified the major categories as personal environment and organizational environment. The findings of this study suggest, however, that a distinct dichotomy between personal and organizational environment is not clearly defined for individuals in the late career stage. Morale, a personal characteristic, is contingent on the perceived support from

administration, an organizational factor. While Burke did not explicitly define the two environments as mutually exclusive, the implication of the findings was that attitudes at the personal level could be evaluated apart from those at the organizational level. The findings resulting from the data in this study, however, suggest that the two environments are interrelated and must be viewed holistically.

Four of the five participants expressed feelings of frustration, anger, resentment, and disappointment all related to the circumstances surrounding the mandate to earn an advanced degree. Such feelings are indicators of a low morale as specified by research identifying policy and administration, working conditions, status, and personal life as significant in affecting teacher dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Maslow, 1954; Wright, 1998). The one participant who expressed positive feelings and "welcomed the opportunity to expand [her] knowledge" also projected a high level of morale. Achievement, recognition, interpersonal relations, work itself, and responsibility were identified as having significant positive influence on job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959; Maslow, 1954; Wright, 1998). In a study examining the job satisfaction of 81 teachers from 5 school districts in Pennsylvania, the most dissatisfying factor was identified as lack of administrative support (Clarke & Keating, 1995). The information emerging from the data presented by the participants in this study tended to support these findings.

One participant used phrases such as "they have me over a barrel," and "I've been thrown to the lions" to express disappointment with the lack of administrative support. Another participant stated, "I had to find out what I needed, and from that point on, well, I really got no help." Another participant referred to the "friction" that was created by the school administration by issuing the mandate "without any offering of help." This lack of

administrative support had a detriment greater than that caused by the mere absence of administrative help. The technical faculty saw their administrators as placing them "in isolation" and they believed the administrators "washed their hands" of any responsibility to assist after tell the participants of the mandate. Consistent use of the terms "they" and "them" to refer to the school administration were common among all four of the participants with low morale. Conversely, the one participant who "embraced the opportunity" of higher education used the phrase, "our administration" prior to using pronouns such as "they" and "them."

Kerka (1994) observed that forced education violates adult learning principles such as individual learning styles, voluntary participation, and self-direction and, therefore, promotes stress and strong feelings of resentment. Increased levels of understanding and support are necessary to cope with the instructors' stress and to attempt to alleviate resentment. Resentment was a primary reaction, however, among four of the participants in this study. One of these participants suggested that the administration feared a "riot" from the "outrage" at the mandate. Negative emotions, resentment, and fear are among the first reactions to required education (Cutz, 1997).

While the participants complained because of a lack of administrative support, they asserted that they were able to seek out the things that they needed to be successful, however. As all of the participants were in need of remediation for algebra, they all sought additional help in the subject. Three of the participants expressed frustration with their administration for not coordinating the remediation effort yet all three admitted to "initiating" the relationship with their campus' core faculty for help. Two participants described forming a study group on the campus. This self-motivation is evidence of an intrinsic desire to achieve regardless of the absence of positive external motivators such as the support of their administration. Raelin

(1984) described this characteristic of employees in the late career stage: "Since they are still very involved in their jobs, they are somewhat ambivalent or conflicted about their loss of professionalism, but they have begun to accept the realities and politics of bureaucratic life" (p. 62).

Two of the participants made a direct statement of a need for moral support from their administration. One expressed the desire for an occasional "pat on the back," and that he would have liked for them to "sit us down and talk this thing over." The other participant succinctly stated that a "periodic, 'How's it going?'" from the administration "would have done wonders for morale." The optimistic instructor stated that the "key" to getting the support she needed lay in the "open communication" that she enjoyed from her administration. When compared to the other participants, open communication emerges as the variable that is clearly missing among the four participants who self-reported their morale as being low. The instructor who was "happy" with the support of her administration, did not describe cohorts or a master plan as described as needed by the other four participants. The critical factor, however, lay in the open communication between instructor and administrator.

For all five of the participants in the study, the support that they received from their administration was critical to their feelings about being required to attend college. It was perceived by four of the participants that their administration had used the negative extrinsic motivators of fear and punishment in the form of threatening their job (Herzberg et al., 1954). The result of these negative extrinsic motivators was resentment, frustration, and anger.

Theme 2: *Technical instructors under mandate expect immediate practical application of the education that they are required to obtain.*

The nature of the Associate Degree that the instructors under mandate were required to earn was such that there existed little or no opportunity to take courses that were directly related to the industry in which they taught. The result of this inapplicability of the curriculum was disappointment and feelings of futility on the part of the participants. One participant stated, "If the course is not used in what you teach, I won't say you shouldn't know anything about it, but it shouldn't be forced on you." Another participant expressed, "If we are going to take college courses then we need to be taking college courses that are directly going to help us in our field." "I can see that it [the associate degree] is not really going to help at all," was a third instructor's response to the inapplicability of the degree.

The instructors in this study were reflecting the long history of vocational teacher preparation and staff development. Gray and Walter (2001) stated that the beginning of vocational education as an entity in America in the early 1900s was due to industrialists who were unhappy with the ruination of manual arts by educators and wanted nothing to do with teachers prepared in colleges. McCaslin and Parks (2002) reported that Charles Prosser, the first Administrator of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, emphasized that "teachers should be knowledgeable of the skills needed by crafts or trades if they are to be successful teachers, and college and university courses contribute little or nothing to the training of secondary vocational teachers." (p. 13)

Participants in the study expressed annoyance at not being able to pursue needed industry training because of the heavy workload required in the courses for the Associate Degree. "I'm just getting behind with the industry," was the comment from one participant. Another participant used an almost identical phrase, "I'm just getting further and further behind." Still, another participant commented, "There's a lot of things [education and training] I need. I don't

personally feel that I need that degree to be successful at this point." Cervero (2001) stressed, for a program of required continued education to be successful, the individual must be able to put into practice the new competency, values, and skills to the degree that he or she performs better. The participants, therefore, were not resistant to mandatory education itself, but were reluctant to "waste time" on a degree for which they saw no direct benefit to their profession.

Similarly, Alejandro (2001) thought that, to be of value to the participants, mandatory education for the professional should help to keep them "current in their fields, maximize their competence, advance in their careers, and enjoy greater job security" (p. 15). Job security is the only one of the four goals of mandatory education that could be claimed by the participants in this study. In the words of one of the participants, "This whole degree experience would have some meaning to me if it was something that I could use in my job."

The literature on needed reform in vocational teacher education and staff development does not agree with the study participants' opinions of inapplicability. Gray and Walter (2001) identified one of the seven areas of needed reform for vocational teacher preparation to be increased requirements in training in the teaching of academic subjects including math, science, and communications. The primary core to which the five participants in the study found objection as being impractical was identified as necessary to good teaching. Boesel, Hudson, Deich, and Masten (1994), in a report to Congress, recommended in-service preparation for vocational teachers that involved more rigorous courses in the liberal arts with a greater emphasis on math and technology.

One of the participants stated that the degree would be of direct benefit to him if it contained "classes in learning styles, developing syllabi, lesson plans, and how to track students." Another participant approached the mandated education by observing the teaching

methods and practices of her professors, taking notes, and immediately applying what she learned in her own classroom. In support of the need for more pedagogical skills among technical educators, Gray and Walter (2001) reported that training for teaching effectiveness was necessary regardless of the mission of the school or program. "The old adage that people from the workplace are always natural teachers is hogwash" (Gray & Walter, 2001, p. 37).

While it is clear from the interviews that the instructors in this study believed the curriculum within their required degree was "useless," the literature suggests otherwise. The late career stage of the participants is a major factor in the frustration with inapplicability. When considering staff development for teachers, it is imperative to be cognizant of the individual's career stage:

> Teacher development theory is predicated on the assumption that the needs of the beginning or novice teacher in the induction phase differ from that of an experienced teacher who has reached the enthusiasm and growth stage or has entered the stable phase. As a result, teachers must be motivated to seek continual growth through professional development that advocates personalized and individualized support systems. (Lynn, 2002, p. 182)

The "personalized and individualized support systems" to which Lynn refers are integral to the needs expressed by the participants in this study. With ages ranging from 42 to 53 and the lowest tenure of service being 11 years, all of the instructors fall into the late career stage or stable phase (Burke, 2001; McInnis, 2000; Raelin, 1990). Lynn's (2002) caveat that teachers need to be motivated to seek professional development according to their level of career stage supports the participants' expressions of annoyance with having to take courses they perceive as "inapplicable."

Theme 3: *Teachers of vocationally oriented programs are resistant to the trend of postsecondary technical education to include more academic courses.*

While not part of the initial set of interview questions, the participants in this study each felt compelled to express dissatisfaction with the trend of technical education to include more academic core in the vocational curricula. This trend was the primary reason that the technical colleges within this southeastern state elected to pursue new accreditation standards that would facilitate the transferability of core credits. The pursuit of this new accreditation resulted in the mandate requiring all technical instructors to have the Associate Degree as a minimum credential. "The rationale behind the mandate," as one participant explained, "is if you are going to offer the degree then you have to hold the degree." The underlying disagreement among the participants, however, was described as "we are getting away from our mission."

Prentice (2001) explained that a divide existed between occupational and academic education whereby academic faculty were unwilling to collaborate with occupational faculty. Prentice further explained that many baccalaureate institutions were unwilling to accept transfer credit for courses coming from primarily occupational schools. The participants in this study were satisfied with the historical dichotomy and wished to perpetuate the division. One participant stated, "We just don't need to be there. We really need to leave that for someone else to do, and we need to do what we are commissioned to do." Another stated, "I question the wisdom in trying to bring [technical and academic education] together. I think they need to be separate. I don't like the idea of a 'technical college.'"

The trend to which the instructors participating in this study took objection is the change in mission for all postsecondary two-year schools in the state in which the study was conducted. Levin (2000) reported three reasons for this change: diminished public sector funding, increased and improved relationships with the private sector, and increased state intervention into the operations and governance of the institutions. Two of these three reasons are evidenced within

the context of this study. The first example is the participant who taught in a program that catered exclusively to a specific private industry. The Heavy Equipment Dealers Training Program was developed as a partnership with a private industry for the purpose of providing highly specialized training to students who were recruited specifically for their company. The intervention of the state by requiring all of the technical colleges within the system to add the more universally accepted accreditation is the second example of evidence of Levin's (2000) explanation. "The rules have changed," as observed by one of the participants. Another participant stated a similar thought: "It looks like the world is changing and our mission is changing to move more toward the academics."

One of the instructors in the study referred to the change in offering more academic core courses as "purely political." The literature supported his statement. The Carl Perkins Act of 1984, which was later revised in 1998, introduced legislation in an attempt to place a more rigorous emphasis on academic standards and power granted at the state level to impose sanctions on institutions not conforming to accountability performance measures (McCaslin & Parks, 2002). Prentice (2001) reported, however, that there was no quantitative evidence that courses that blended academic and occupational content were superior in achieving the goals of producing a more employable graduate.

Reitano (1988) described the diversification of mission by the two-year colleges to be bordering on chaos. "Shooting ourselves in the foot," is the phrase one instructor used to describe incorporating more academic core into the curriculum. "Is this just a fad? Is this just a way for somebody to prove, or to justify their salary?" were the rhetorical questions posed that exemplified feelings of futility at integrating academic and occupational curricula.

At the heart of the trend toward more academic courses in the occupational curriculum is a move toward the constructivist approach, as opposed to the behaviorist approach, of technical education (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). The behaviorist approach in technical education, where students were taught hand and motor skills such as "how to hammer a nail" has become obsolete. The predominant approach of constructivism now places the student in the role of problem-solver, troubleshooter, and critical thinker. One of the instructors in the study explained that his program required much more than "just hands-on training." While his program was described as "highly technical," he was quick to add, "…a college level person is not required to teach it or to do it."

The participants felt that the increasing complexity of teaching the critical thinking skills necessary with modern technology would only be complicated by adding courses such as math, English, and social sciences to the mix. Kerka (1997) reported, however, that although there were numerous examples of constructivists' approaches in areas such as science, mathematics, and English, there were very few references to constructivism in the vocational education literature.

The instructors in this study presented several arguments against integrating the academic core into their technical curricula. Two of the participants cited members of their program advisory committees expressing disapproval of the trend. Two other instructors described conversations with students that were in objection to more academics and the offering of degrees at the technical postsecondary institutions. Because the faculty members, themselves, had objection to taking academic classes that they felt were irrelevant to their profession, they translated this to the trend toward offering their students the same type of core courses. As one instructor stated, "I can see things from the perspective of the student since I am a student, too."

Theme 4: *Veteran teachers in their late career stage see mandated degree earning as a major interruption in an, otherwise, settled and content lifestyle.*

The late career stage, otherwise referred to as the entrenching stage, is characterized by a state of tranquility whereby the adult is settled and focused on spending time with family and community (Burke 2001; Cohen, 1991; McInnis, 2000). All five of the participants in this study recalled a content lifestyle that was "interrupted" by the work required of the Associate Degree. Time normally spent with family, hobbies, and a second business was consumed by the demands of the required college education. In developing an instrument to measure needs of teachers at various career stages, Burke (2001) defined the category of 'personal environment' to include family and hobbies, public attitudes and pressures, relationships, preparation, and external influences.

Noe, Steffy, and Barber (1988) described the late career stage as the maintenance phase where the employee decreases work involvement while increasing commitments to family and community. The data presented in this study supports this view of the late career stage employee as each of the participants discussed the stress and guilt associated with time lost with family. One of the instructors expressed regret, as he was not able to spend as much time with his son's baseball team. Another stated that his "number one beef" with the mandated degree was the "interruption on his family." This participant gave the typical picture of a late career stage employee: "We pretty much had our life settled and had our routine down and now, *bam*, all this is here." The plural pronouns used in this instructor's statement indicate that he saw the "interruption" as affecting both him and his family.

Late career stage teachers, such as the ones in this study, are less competitive and more focused on relationships than they are their careers (Gould & Hawkins, 1978). One area where a

focus on relationships was manifested dealt with an expressed desire for cohort groups. Four of the five participants described, what they considered the "ideal" situation, a group of similar instructors who were all "in the same boat," and who could matriculate through the degree process together. While two of the participants cited convenience as a primary reason to form a cohort, all four commented that, as a cohort, they could help each other, and they would "be around people [their] own age." The desire by the participants to have been part of a cohort supported Gould and Hawkins' statement in two areas: a need for sustained relationships with other members of the desired cohort and a less competitive nature among the late career stage teachers. The willingness to submit to the group-defined schedule of a cohort indicates a greater emphasis on relationships and working together than on competition.

Three of the five participants described approaching the math instructors at their school for remedial help and tutoring. While they blamed the administration for not orchestrating the remedial help, these instructors were not inhibited or uncomfortable with requesting the help and expressed a strengthened relationship and greater appreciation for their co-workers who gave time and effort to assist them when needed. Once again, the late career stage characteristic of greater emphasis on relationships and a less competitive nature is supported in the findings of this study.

Another area where an increased focus on relationships was evident dealt with family. One of the instructors went to the extent of stating that he would have looked for another job if given the mandate while his children were still small. He stated that he never spent quality time with his family: "I'm away from my family at school and then I have to study at home so I can't talk to them tonight or do anything because I have to study."

Three of the five participants cited specific conversations where their spouses had complained about the amount of time consumed by the schooling. One of the instructors had a sick husband who would ask her everyday, "OK, is this the night you have to stay late?" She described guilt at being apart from him. Another of the instructors explained that his wife "would make [him] go out on the porch" while he was working on algebra homework because "she don't want to hear it." His tone was apologetic when he added, "I don't blame her. She shouldn't have to deal with that along with everything else." Tight (1999) reported that adult learning has led to family break-ups due to the stress, financial strain, and time away from home.

As late career stage employees, the instructors participating in this study considered themselves "as established" in their respective fields. The requirement to enter higher education as "freshmen" was degrading and embarrassing. Tight (1999) referenced the stress of adults in mandatory education caused by fear of failure and embarrassment before peers. Three of the participants made reference to "feeling awkward" in classes with "kids fresh out of high school." Another source of shame was in the fact that all of the participants tested remedial for algebra. While all five participants readily admitted that their self-esteem was not affected, they did express concern over the opinions of others. The desire for a cohort group that would meet on the technical college campus was an effort, at least in part, to minimize the embarrassment that was exacerbated by having to go to the university classes with the other students of various ages.

In a study of participants who refused to become involved with mandatory education, Cutz (1997) identified one of the top 10 reasons given as money lost due to inability to continue second jobs after hours. Two of the five participants in this study had private businesses on which they depended for extra income. In both situations, the private business had to be put on hold, with income lost, for the duration of time needed to complete the Associate Degree. One

of the participants stated that he still had to pay a lease, utilities, and insurance on his business and was, thus, losing money. One participant did not have a second job but expressed harsh resentment at what he considered to be financial inequities among the faculty at his school. In comparing his salary with that of others at his location, he became infuriated with the fact that he would not be compensated for the Associate Degree, yet others were hired at a higher salary due to their degree credentials.

While all five of the participants had hobbies, two of the five were involved with their hobbies to a great degree. One of the instructors was an integral part of a bluegrass band that he had to "give up." He commented that the band "hadn't practiced in months because of all this [degree work]." He admitted that he would try to play his guitar to relieve stress caused by the schoolwork, only to become more stressed at realizing that he was getting out of practice. Another of the participants was an avid hunter and, at one point, claimed, "I put the degree on hold. I tried algebra twice and I made the mistake of trying it during hunting season, which is my favorite sport." He later admitted, however, that he would not have the option to "put the degree on hold" every hunting season, and he was frustrated with not being able to fully pursue the hobby he enjoyed.

The enjoyment of family, hobbies, and other pursuits are integral components to the lifestyle of a late career stage teacher (Burke, 2001). While voluntary adult education would also prompt many of the interruptions cited with the participants in the study, the mandatory nature of their circumstance escalates the severity of the inconvenience and the perceived intrusion on their lifestyles. Affects on family, obligations to other community members, and the discontinuance of private businesses tended to exacerbate feelings of guilt, frustration, and

"being robbed" of the relative tranquility previously enjoyed before being forced to return to school.

## Implications

The veteran instructors in this study described a myriad of emotions that resulted both from being told that their job was dependent on the earning of a degree and from the process of matriculation toward that degree. The personal lives of the participants were, largely, negatively affected because time with family, hobbies, and other pursuits was reduced. Feelings of dissatisfaction with the trend of technical education to include a more academic core were combined with frustration and fear of obsolescence. The participants perceived no major positive professional affects of the mandated degree. The experiences described by the veteran postsecondary teachers participating in this study have implications for administrators of this unique type of faculty.

### *Implications for Administrators in Postsecondary Technical Education*

The primary reason for low morale among participants in the study related to lack of perceived support from the administration requiring the mandated education. The instructors indicated that they had to "seek out on [their] own" tutorial and remedial help in areas where they were deficient. Recognizing that these resources were available at their home campuses, resentment developed toward administration because no effort was made to facilitate the use of these resources. The veteran teachers perceived a lack of planning and organization on the part of their administration at the onset of the mandate. It was also noted that the advantages of forming an organized cohort of instructors that were "in the same boat" would have softened the experience for those involved.

Moral support in the form of understanding, recognition, and open communication was cited as lacking from the administration of all but one of the study participants. The instructors described a need to maintain contact with the administration in the context of their degree work. The occasional "pat on the back" was an inexpensive, needed, yet neglected form of administrative support as the participants felt they were in a "crisis mode" until they finished the required degree.

All of the participants were consistently critical of the trend of postsecondary technical education to include more academic core courses. Expressions of fear of personal obsolescence, concern over the lack of applicability of college core, and the diluting of highly technical curricula were among the reasons cited for criticism of the trend. While impossible to alter trends caused by global economic changes, administrators responsible for staff development training should be conscious of universal developments and educate and prepare their faculty accordingly.

Another criticism that was made by all five of the participants involved the curriculum of the Associate of Applied Science Degree. The courses within the degree curriculum held little or no direct value to the profession of the veteran technical teacher (see Appendix C). The suggestion was made that collaboration at the state level between the university system and the technical college system could result in the creation of an Associate Degree pertinent to experienced technical educators. Education courses in areas such as adult learning and materials and methods would be valuable to the educators while allowing them to maintain the dignity of their profession and honoring their experience. More availability of electives in the chosen field would facilitate the continuing industry training that the faculty expressed as needed while they were working toward the degree.

As supported by the literature and revealed by the participants in the study, veteran teachers in their late career stage have unique characteristics that should not be ignored by their school administration. Tendencies to be more committed to remaining with an organization until retirement, regardless of job satisfaction, should not be viewed as an advantage that administration has over the teacher. Increased commitment to family and community and decreased interest in career advancement was evident among all five participants. Recognition of this late career stage characteristic could present unique opportunities for administrators to build employee morale while promoting the school.

## Recommendations

The evolving field of technical education has provided fertile ground for relevant research. Studies on faculty development of postsecondary educators exist. However, few, if any studies, have examined the specific needs of experienced faculty required to earn a degree in their late career stage. As the mission of postsecondary education continues to develop to satisfy a more global economy, a better understanding of the slowly dissolving dichotomy between academics and occupational studies would be of value. The faculty members within the evolving technical institutions are in fluctuation that is parallel to the changes on a global scale around them. The need to understand the unique needs and of these professionals will become more imperative as the traditional view of the vocational shop teacher reaches obsolescence. Therefore, the following recommendations are offered as a result of the findings of this study.

1) Based on the perspectives of the participants in this study, researchers in vocational education should examine the divide that exists between academically prepared administrators and the occupationally prepared faculty under their supervision.

2) Specific suggestions of the participants in this study delineate a need for planned and organized support of faculty under an extensive education mandate. Organization of cohort groups, development of available resources, and establishment of specific policy on the logistics of supporting degree-earning faculty, such as financial reimbursement, are among the suggestions from the participants.
3) Based on the statements of the participants, the development of a two-year degree designed exclusively for experienced postsecondary vocational teachers should be developed. The degree should be valuable to the profession with opportunities for growth in teaching skills as well as occupational skills.
4) From the findings of this study emerged the realization that the only optimistic participant was female. Given the relative recent nature of advances in gender equality, veteran vocational faculty are still dominated by males. It is recommended, however, that further research in this area include a cross-section of gender.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand how returning to higher education to satisfy employer requirements has affected the personal and career development of postsecondary vocational teachers. The researcher wanted to examine affects on the morale and view of self in the personal environment in addition to career affects and support needed in the organizational environment. Through a qualitative case study design, the researcher presented the experiences of five veteran postsecondary teachers as they involuntarily pursued a required Associate Degree. The thoughts, feelings, problems, and successes encountered by the participants were

described as experienced through the eyes of the teachers under the mandate. Given the limited research on veteran postsecondary technical faculty, it is hoped that this study provides insight on the need for awareness and understanding of the experienced teachers of occupational programs that train for the highly specialized and highly technical jobs of the modern workforce.

The findings in this study suggested that veteran postsecondary vocational teachers are acutely focused on the specific training they are expected to provide and tend to resist the introduction of any perceived distractions to the technical curriculum. They viewed their ability to teach their highly specialized fields as unique and valuable yet unappreciated and misunderstood by the majority of educators, particularly by the administration of their schools. Postsecondary technical training has been proven to be vital to the global economy. Understanding the unique needs of educators in this field is imperative to sustaining the progressive edge that technical education has enjoyed in past decades.

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# APPENDIX A

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____ , agree to participate in a research study titled "The Experiences of Required Degree Attainment Among Experience Technical College Faculty", which is being conducted by John Watford a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Georgia, 706-542-3343. The study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda of the Department of Educational Leadership, The University of Georgia, 706-542-0408. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of experienced technical faculty who are required to earn an additional degree due to new accreditation requirements. I can expect to have the opportunity to discuss my educational and teaching experiences.
2. The benefit that I may expect is the opportunity to reflect on my educational experiences and their contribution to my effectiveness as a technical educator. This research will contribute to the knowledge regarding experienced faculty required to earn additional credits or degrees well into their teaching career.
3. The procedures are as follows: I will be expected to meet the researcher at a mutually agreed upon time and location and discuss semi-structured questions pertaining to the above stated research for approximately one hour. Interviews will be taped. Tapes will be stored securely and only identified by pseudonyms. A list of participants and their pseudonyms will be stored in a separate secure location. Tapes will be held until December 31, 2005. Peer debriefing will occur throughout the research process. A post-study debriefing will be available to answer any lingering questions and to present findings.
4. The discomforts or stresses that may be faced during this research are recalling unpleasant experiences with school administration and unpleasant educational experiences.
5. No risks are foreseen. I will be assigned a pseudonym for my protection.
6. The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law.
7. The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 404-555-7717.

I understand the procedures listed above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study. I have been given a copy of this form.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Signature of the Researcher | Date | Signature of the Participant |
| Date | | |

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia, 30602-7411; Telephone 706-542-6514; Email Address IRB@uga.edu.

# APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Participant Profile

### Interview #1

Participant's Pseudonym

School Pseudonym

Program of Instruction

Participant's Age

Number of years in postsecondary technical education

Number of years of occupational experience

What did you do before your technical education career?

Highest level of education prior to new mandate

What is your progress toward the degree to be earned under the mandate?

Do you have another job other than your teaching?

Tell me how you have seen technical education evolve throughout your career.

What makes a "good" technical / occupational / vocational instructor?

What were you first thoughts/impressions when told that you may have to return to school for additional education as a requirement for continued employment?

What feelings do you have about accreditation requirements that place minimum education levels on existing faculty with considerable experience?

**Interview Questions**
**Interview #2**

1. Describe your initial experience of going back to school as a student.

2. In what way(s) did returning to school affect your teaching?

3. In what way(s) did returning to school affect your home life and personal life?

4. What affect has returning to school to earn a degree had on your self-esteem?

5. In what ways have your students reacted to your attending school?

6. Explain how you have been able to put the material you have learned to use.

7. Do you think you would have pursued this degree earlier in life knowing what you know now?

8. How would you prepare yourself for your job if you could start back over at the secondary level?

**Interview Questions**
**Interview #3**

9. In what ways has your returning to school affected personal relationships with coworkers?

10. Explain how you were told that you will have to earn a degree to keep your position.

11. What accommodations have been made on the part of your school's administration to assist you in the process?

12. What types of help did you seek that were not readily available?

13. What actions might have your school's administration taken to better facilitate this process?

14. What is the most positive aspect of your experience to this point?

15. What is the most negative aspect?

16. Where do you see yourself in five years? 10 years?

# APPENDIX C

## ASSOCIATE DEGREE CURRICULUM

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ASSOCIATE IN APPLIED SCIENCE

1. Completion of an approved technical college requirements for the appropriate program
2. Twenty-one semester hours of general education courses at [the university]
3. At least one course in each of the following areas:
    a. Written Communication
    b. Natural Science
    c. Mathematics
    d. Computer Literacy
    e. Social Science
4. Completion of the U.S. and state history and Constitution legislative requirements
5. A cumulative/institutional grade point average of at least 2.00 on all work attempted
6. A maximum of 10 semester hours may be transferred from an accredited institution to meet these requirements.