FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW PARTICIPATION

IN THE TUTORING PROGRAM FOR VETERANS

AT THE OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF TECHNICAL TRAINING

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

Many veterans are apprehensive about going back to school and
getting back into the classroom. Most have been out of school for a
relatively long time and have lost the feel of attending classes and
studying. According to Cannon (cited in Hulsey, 1973), Director of
Delaware's Veterans Upward Bound Program, they are bothered by having
gotten out of the academic flow.

In an effort to help the veterans who wish to return to school, the
Veterans Administration tries to make tutoring available to them. The
Veterans Administration will pay tutoring costs of up to 69 dollars
per month for most veterans and even more for disabled veterans.

Statement of the Problem

Even though tutoring is available to veterans attending Oklahoma
State Tech there has been relatively little participation. This lack
of participation is true not only in the number of students tutored,
but also in the number of instructors who have been willing to do
tutoring. Less than five percent of those veterans who are eligible
for tutoring take advantage of it. The percentage of instructors who
have tutored is not much higher. Perhaps some instructors have never

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had the opportunity, but some of those who have tutored have been un-willing to continue. Even though the Veterans Administration pays for the tutoring the method of payment does not always guarantee that the tutor will receive the money. After having not been paid it is possible that some tutors have decided not to continue.

The problem with which this study dealt was the lack of adequate knowledge about low participation in the tutoring program for veterans at the Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training at Okmulgee, Oklahoma (Oklahoma State Tech or OST).

Need for the Study

Some veterans' counselors have wondered why more veterans do not take advantage of the tutoring available to them. The tutoring program at Oklahoma State Tech does not seem to be as effective as it could be. There are veterans who are making unsatisfactory progress in courses that are not seeking or perhaps have been unable to find tutoring. This study was needed to identify causes of the low participation. The study results could be used to make the tutoring program at Oklahoma State Tech more effective.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which have contributed to low participation in the tutoring program for veterans at Oklahoma State Tech.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer these three questions:

1. Why do so few veterans at Oklahoma State Tech participate in the tutoring program?

2. Why do so few instructors at Oklahoma State Tech participate in the tutoring program?

3. What can be done to improve participation and thus make the program more effective?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Identification of the Need

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which have con-
tributed to low participation in the tutoring program for veterans at
Oklahoma State Tech. This chapter presents a brief literature review
relating to the problem outlined in the previous chapter. Since no
previous studies were found concerning participation in tutoring pro-
grams there were no results or methodology of previous research to be
reviewed. Therefore, this review deals with veterans returning to
school and past experiences in the tutoring program at Oklahoma State
Tech.

Although no study was found, concern has been expressed about low
participation in tutoring programs for veterans. Betts (1973)
expressed concern about the situation.

> The intent of the Veterans Tutoring Program is to provide
> a maximum of educational support to all veterans in
> academic trouble, especially the disadvantaged. But it
> is impossible to believe that in a school the size of the
> University of California at Los Angeles there are only 25
> disadvantaged veterans in need of tutoring. This is not
> to point an accusing finger at a school doing pioneer
> work in veterans' education, but merely to point out a
> difficulty that veterans education faces. All institutions
> of higher learning must set up veterans' tutoring programs;
> but, even if they do, they may not reach a large majority
> of those in need (p. 29).

There is a lack of adequate knowledge about low participation and there is a need to identify factors which contribute to low participation.

Veterans Returning to School

Veterans returning to school face certain situations and have feelings that non-veteran students do not.

Betts (1973) referred to a survey by the American Council on Education entitled The Vietnam-Era Veteran Enters College. Some of the findings were:

1. The veterans were older. The model age of the entering student veteran was 22 to 25, while the model age of non-veterans was 18.

2. The veterans were clearly from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

3. Veterans entering college were less likely to be white than non-veterans.

4. A clear indication that the veterans had assumed additional responsibility was indicated in the fact that 38 percent of the veterans were married, at the time of entry to college, compared with 1.2 percent of non-veterans.

5. Veterans generally had poorer academic records in high school than non-veterans. Likewise, they were less likely to have established various secondary school achievements.

Levitan and Zickler (1973) observed that returning to an interrupted education or embarking on a new program of education is not easy for a 23-year-old or older veteran. Finances seem to be a major factor in continuing an education or training.

Scholarships are often not as accessible to veterans as to the more recent high school graduate. Lack of money or poor performance in school or on a job could have been one of the major factors contributing to the initial induction or enlistment of the veteran into the military service. Even if some funds are available, each veteran must compete with other veterans and non-veterans for what are often inadequate scholarships or loans. Financial aid from parents, which may have been available earlier, may not be there for the veteran. Even if it is, it may not be accepted.

Cannon (cited in Hulsey, 1973), Director of Delaware Opportunities Industrialization Center's Veteran Upward Bound Program, is quoted as noting that many veterans feel apprehensive about getting back into the classroom and competing with "regular" students. Most have been out of school for a relatively long time and have lost the feel of attending classes and studying.

Hulsey (1973) also mentions that many college officials apparently are not aware that the Veterans Administration will pay tutorial fees for veterans. If some college officials are not aware of this, then it is probable that many veterans also are not aware that the Veterans Administration will pay for tutoring.

Hamilton (1972) reported that most veterans are filled with self doubt when they walk into a classroom. The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Extension devised a program called The Veterans Special Education Program which offered ex-servicemen, without proper high school grades or academic training, an accelerated program to qualify them for college entrance. The idea is credited to Carrol Parish, Associate Dean of Students at UCLA, who was himself educated

under the GI Bill. This program for returning veterans tried to increase their confidence in themselves as students, develop their academic skills to the level necessary for college success, and increase their awareness of the value in career and educational planning.

According to Betts (1973) veterans may believe themselves to be too old to go to college and feel out of place with younger students just out of high school. Developing good study habits may pose problems the veteran had not anticipated. The first time grades are given out may cause the veteran to feel unsuited for college. This disillusionment may be difficult to dispel. Perhaps all that is needed is some timely tutoring, which is available to the veteran at no personal cost. This could particularly benefit the veteran who is not living up to his or her own academic expectations.

Past Experience at Oklahoma State Tech

Past experience has shown relatively little participation in the tutoring program for veterans at Oklahoma State Tech. This is true not just for the veterans but also for instructors who provide the tutoring.

Coakley (1981) of the Office of Veterans Affairs at Oklahoma State Tech reported that only five veterans out of the 200 enrolled in the Fall trimester of 1981 had received tutoring. Ten is the most that have ever asked for tutoring during any single trimester. It is not completely understood why more veterans who are having trouble in a course do not take advantage of the tutoring available. To Coakley's knowledge, no study has been done to determine why so few veterans seek tutoring at Oklahoma State Tech.

The Veterans Administration will pay tutoring costs of up to 69 dollars per month for each veteran. Moreover, disabled veterans can receive up to five hours of tutoring per week. The pay for tutors at Oklahoma State Tech is currently five dollars per hour for instructors and four dollars per hour for qualified students. Consequently, veterans can receive more hours of help from a qualified student tutor than from an instructor. The amount of the payment or the method of payment are possible reasons for low participation by instructors, but it is not known with certainty why so few instructors have been willing to tutor.

Summary

Veterans returning to school do not often find it to be easy. They typically feel apprehensive, have self doubts, and feel that they are too old. Some have problems studying or developing good study habits and poor grades may cause serious disillusionment. While tutoring is certainly not the solution to all of these problems it could help with some of them.

Betts (1973) found it impossible to believe that only 25 veterans needed tutoring at the University of California at Los Angeles and the Office of Veterans Affairs at Oklahoma State Tech finds it equally hard to believe that only five of 200 veterans enrolled there need tutoring.

Past experience at Oklahoma State Tech have shown low participation not just by veterans in the tutoring program but also a reluctance on the part of instructors to do the tutoring.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which have contributed to low participation in the tutoring program for veterans at Oklahoma State Tech. A portion of this study used the Delphi Method.

The Delphi Method is a technique used for obtaining a group response of a panel. It attempts to take individual opinions and compile a meaningful response and to get an expert opinion without bringing the experts face-to-face. It is an orderly, planned program of sequential individual interrogations using questionnaires. The method was developed by the Rand Corporation mainly as a forecasting model, but many today see the technique as a way to encourage consensus or a convergence of opinion (Weaver, 1971).

Some experiments performed by the Rand Corporation have indicated that when opinions are involved, face-to-face discussion may result in a group opinion that is less accurate than the average of the individual opinions without discussion (Dalkey, 1968).

Weaver (1972) reports in his critique of the Delphi Methods that although Delphi was intended as a tool for scientific and technological forecasting it may aid in probing priorities.

The general Delphi procedure is to ask a selected group of knowledgeable participants to answer questions in statement form.

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These statements are collected and combined to eliminate redundancy or reworded for clarity. Statements from the first round results are given to the participants and they are asked to rank the statements. The mean responses are computed and the items are ranked and again returned to the participants for their agreement of the overall rankings. This process is continued until a group consensus is reached.

Selection of the Subjects

The subjects selected for this study were veterans enrolled at Oklahoma State Tech in the Fall trimester of 1981 and instructors in the departments in which veterans had received tutoring or had felt that tutoring would be helpful.

Development of the Instrument

The instruments used in this study were questionnaires. The questionnaires for the veterans were developed to determine whether veterans were aware that tutoring was available to them on the Oklahoma State Tech campus at no charge. It was also important to determine how many of the veterans had taken advantage of tutoring and in which courses did they receive tutoring. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to determine why veterans were not using the tutoring that was available to them more extensively.

The questionnaire for instructors was developed to try to determine three things. These were: (1) how many instructors had tutored before, (2) how many would be willing to tutor in the future, and (3) what reasons do instructors cite for not participating in the tutoring program for veterans.

Collection of the Data

The data for the veterans were collected with the help of the Office of Veterans Affairs. The questionnaire was distributed with the monthly progress forms that the veterans are required to have filled out by their instructors. The Office of Veterans Affairs felt that this method of distribution would be more successful, coming from their office, than it would be if an individual were to distribute them. Also, they felt that they could then also use the data for their own purposes.

The data for the instructors were collected by placing the questionnaires in their campus mail boxes and providing a deposit box or envelope near by for them to put the completed questionnaires in.

These methods were chosen because they were expected to be the easiest for the subjects which would hopefully result in a higher return rate. Moreover, they were expected to be the fastest available methods of data collection.

Analysis of the Data

One of the questions for the instructors asked them to give reasons why they were not participating in the tutoring program. This Delphi approach which was used with this question was to be carried out for only two or three cycles. It was believed that two or three Delphi cycles would be sufficient to either establish reasonable consensus or to at least establish the main reasons for non-participation. This method allowed the instructors to interact with each other without exerting initial influence on one another's opinions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which have contributed to low participation in the tutoring program for veterans at Oklahoma State Tech.

Return Rates

The data for the veterans were collected by distributing the questionnaires with the monthly progress forms that the veterans are required to have completed. The data for the instructors were collected by distributing the questionnaires in their campus mail boxes and providing an envelope for them to use to return the completed questionnaire.

The initial return rate of the questionnaires for the veterans was 109 out of 200. No follow-up steps were taken because it was not possible to determine who had or had not returned completed questionnaires. It was not felt that there would be an improvement on returns by redistributing additional questionnaires. Of the 109 questionnaires returned 23 could not be used because they were returned without being completed. Thus, the final return rate used was 86 out of 200 or 43 percent.

It should be noted that only the instructors in the General Education and Business Education departments were used in this study. All

of the courses mentioned by the veterans, except one, were in one of these two departments. The Office of Veterans Affairs initially suggested that the questionnaires be distributed to only these two departments.

The initial questionnaire was distributed to the 60 instructors in the two departments and 48 completed questionnaires were returned. No follow-up steps to recover the non-returns were taken and all of the initial returns were used. The return rate on the initial questionnaire was then 48 out of 60 or 80 percent.

The follow-up to the initial questionnaire was distributed to 57 instructors. Three of the instructors who returned the initial questionnaire indicated a willingness to tutor so they were not provided the follow-up questionnaire because it was given only to those not willing to tutor. There were 42 follow-up questionnaires returned, but one was not used. The one not used was returned incomplete. Thus, the final return rate used was 41 out of 57 or 72 percent.

Data Summary

Of the questionnaires for the veterans 30 or the 86 responding, or 35 percent, indicated that they were not aware that the Veterans Administration would pay for tutoring. Also, 83 of the 86, or 97 percent, indicated that they had never taken advantage of or received tutoring. Of the remaining three only one had actually received tutoring. Two reported that they had asked for it but had never received it. Finally 76, or 88 percent, reported that they would try to get tutoring if they were having trouble in a course. Of the remaining ten, five indicated they would not try to get tutoring even if they were having trouble

and the remaining six percent did not respond to the question.

On the initial questionnaire for the instructors ten of the 48, or 21 percent, indicated they had tutored veterans before. However, only two indicated a continuing willingness to tutor. One instructor who had not tutored before was willing. So, three instructors, or six percent, of those responding indicated a willingness to tutor at this time. Those responding that they were not willing to tutor were asked to give reasons. The reasons given could be readily combined into five main reasons.

The five main reasons were listed on the follow-up to the initial questionnaire. The instructors were then asked to rank these from one through five with one being the most important reason they would not be willing to tutor, two being the next most important reason they would not be willing to tutor, etc. The overall rankings were computed by giving five points to the reason marked number one, four points for reason number two, three points for reason number three, two points for reason number four, and one point for reason number five. After this was done for the 41 instructors who responded to the results were: inadequate pay-150 points, inadequate time available-142 points, not possible after teaching all day-134 points, unreliability of student being tutored-106 points, and poor system of payment-83 points. Not only were the top three reasons close in total points, but they were also close when comparing the number of times they were given as the most important reason. Inadequate pay was given as the most important reason 13 times, inadequate time available was also given 13 times, and not possible after teaching all day was given 12 times.

Results of Analysis

This section will deal with answering the first two research questions stated in Chapter I.

1. Why do so few veterans at Oklahoma State Tech participate in the tutoring program?

The questionnaire for the veterans showed that 35 percent of those responding were not aware that the Veterans Administration would pay for tutoring. Also, two had requested tutoring but not received it. Approximately six percent of the veterans said they would not ask for tutoring even if they were having trouble in a course, but 88 percent said they would try to get tutoring if they were having trouble. Many of the veterans though could not think of a specific course in which tutoring might be helpful.

2. Why do so few instructors at Oklahoma State Tech participate in the tutoring program?

The initial questionnaire indicated 21 percent of the instructors in the General Education and Business Education departments at Oklahoma State Tech tutored veterans at one time or another, but only six percent would be willing to tutor now. It was indicated there were five main reasons that instructors gave for not tutoring. The three most important reasons were ranked very close. Inadequate pay was the number one reason (150 points), followed closely by inadequate time available (142 points) and not possible after teaching all day (134 points). They were each listed as the most important reason 13 times, 13 times, and 12 times respectively. The other reasons instructors are not willing to tutor are unreliability of the students being tutored and an inadequate system of payment.

The Delphi Method was carried through two cycles since the rankings indicated that there were three dominant reasons. The purpose of the initial questionnaire and follow-up was to determine if there were several main reasons and if there was some consensus. Two cycles seemed to be sufficient to establish that there were several main reasons and that some considerable consensus did prevail.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which have contributed to low participation in the tutoring program for veterans at Oklahoma State Tech.

The tutoring program at Oklahoma State Tech does not seem to be as effective as it could be. There has been relatively little participation. This is true not only in the number of students tutored, but also in the number of instructors willing to participate in the tutoring. This study was needed to identify some of the factors which contribute to low participation. The study results could be useful in improving the effectiveness of the tutoring program.

This study attempted to answer these three questions:

1. Why do so few veterans at Oklahoma State Tech participate in the tutoring program?

2. Why do so few instructors at Oklahoma State Tech participate in the tutoring program?

3. What can be done to improve participation and thus make the program more effective?

The data used in an effort to answer these questions were collected using questionnaires. The subjects were veterans enrolled in

the Fall trimester of 1981 and instructors in the General Education and Business Education departments.

The Delphi Method was used with the question which asked instructors to give reasons as to why they would not be willing to tutor. The Delphi Method was only carried through two cycles when the rankings indicated that there were three dominant reasons.

The results of the questionnaire for veterans showed that 35 percent of those responding were not aware that the Veterans Administration would pay for tutoring. Some had requested tutoring but had not received it. Also, 88 percent of the veterans said they would seek tutoring if they were having trouble in a course.

The questionnaire for the instructors showed that 21 percent of those responding had tutored veterans before, but only six percent would be willing to tutor now. Of the five main reasons given for not tutoring, three were very dominant and were very close in the overall rankings. These reasons were inadequate pay, inadequate time available, and not possible after teaching all day. All three received about the same number of responses as the most important reason, also. The other two main reasons were unreliability of the students being tutored and an adequate system of payment.

Conclusions

The results of the questionnaire for the veterans indicated several reasons for veterans at Oklahoma State Tech not participating in the tutoring program. Some veterans have not participated in the tutoring program because they were not aware that the Veterans Administration would pay for tutoring. Some others have requested

tutoring and not received it.

Some veterans are not participating in the tutoring program because they can think of no courses in their program of study in which tutoring might be helpful. Most veterans said they would seek tutoring if they were having trouble, but some felt tutoring was not necessary.

The results of the questionnaire and follow-up for the instructors indicated reasons for some instructors not participating in the tutoring program. Three dominant reasons for non-participation emerged. They were: inadequate pay; inadequate time available; and not possible after teaching all day.

Although these three reasons were the most mentioned and highest ranked there were two other reasons which possible explain why some instructors who had tutored in the past are no longer interested. Unreliability of the student being tutored was a reason given by several instructors. Students do not always keep the appointments, so the instructor's time seems wasted. Other instructors cited an inadequate system of payment. Some felt it took too long to be paid while others said they had tutored and not been paid.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the veterans tutoring program at Oklahoma State Tech are offered:

1. There should be more publicity about the tutoring program. Efforts should be directed toward insuring that every veteran at Oklahoma State Tech knows that the Veterans Administration will pay for authorized tutoring.

2. Some effort should be directed at identifying reasons for veterans who are failing courses not seeking tutoring.

3. The rate of pay should be improved to attract instructors to tutoring.

4. An alternative to instructors doing the tutoring is having qualified student tutors. This could provide more tutors and could provide part-time work for some students.

5. Finally, some consideration should be given to improving the system of payment to tutors. It is important that tutors be paid fully and promptly.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Please answer the following questions:

1. Are you aware that the VA will pay for tutoring if you are having trouble in a course?

2. Have you ever taken advantage of this and received tutoring? If so, in what course(s) have you received tutoring?

3. In what courses (both those you have had and those you will take in later trimesters) do you believe tutoring might be helpful?

4. If you were having trouble in a course would you try to get tutoring? If not, why not?

Note: If you wish tutor assistance, obtain a brief statement from your instructor indicating that you could benefit from such assistance. Bring the statement to the Veterans Affairs Office. That office will help you find a qualified tutor and arrange for payment by the VA.

I am doing a study dealing with the tutoring program for veterans here at OST. Apparently not many instructors are willing to be tutors in this program. The main purposes of this questionnaire are to find out if this is true and to find out the main reasons instructors are unwilling to tutor.

Would you please answer the following questions. Your cooperation and prompt response is greatly appreciated. Please return this to my mailbox or place it in the envelope provided for those not in Building 312.
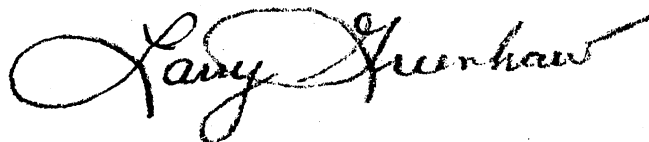
Thank You,

1. Have you ever tutored a veteran for the Veterans Affairs Office here at OST?

2. The pay is currently $5 per hour for faculty and the tutoring cannot be done during your conference hour. The VA check for payment is addressed in care of the Veterans Affairs Office for student signature and release to you. If you were asked by the Coordinator of Veterans Affairs would you be willing to tutor?

3. If you answerd the previous question "yes" would you sign your name so I can let the Veterans Affairs Office know who is available to tutor. If you answered the previous question "no", would you please give the reason(s) why you would not be willing to tutor.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and response to the questionnaire which asked for the reasons instructors would not be willing to tutor. I would appreciate your help one last time.

Listed below are the five main reasons given. Even though you may not have given that many reasons would you please rank these one through five. Put a one by the number one reason you would not be willing to tutor, a two by the number two reason you would not be willing, etc. Please return this to my mailbox or place it in the envelope provided.

Thank You,

Unreliability of student being tutored - don't always keep
    appointments thus wasting your time.

Poor system of payment - takes too long to get paid or have tutored
    and never been paid.

Pay is too low - $5 per hour is not enough.

No time available - would interfere with other activities or would
    interfere with personal life.

Not possible after teaching 5 classes - mentally exhausted, no
    remaining energy, not able to do justice to both teaching
    and tutoring.

APPENDIX B

RAW DATA - QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR VETERANS

Responses to Question 3:

    Algebra (4 times)

    Physics (4 times)

    Electronic Circuits and Devices (4 times)

    Algebra II-Trig (3 times)

    Shop Math (3 times)

    Technical Report Writing (3 times)

    Accounting (2 times)

    Geometry and Trig (2 times)

    Comm I (2 times)

    Business Principles (2 times)

    Math

    Government

    Oral Communications

Responses to Question 4:

    Graduate next trimester

    Help should be rendered to the sick, lame, or lazy

    If I were having trouble with a course, I'd ask more questions in class and study more on my own time. I believe I could pass any course this way.

    The instruction is adequate, if a person pays attention there would be no need for special tutoring, especially an ex-service person.

VITA

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