

The Role of Career and Technical Education in Developing Rural Community Vitality

Introduction to the Study – The Why

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is considered to play a vital role in communities by giving students the opportunity to certify in fields of interest, creating job markets and boosting the local economy. This can be especially true for rural communities, as specialized skills that require a certification can increase economic diversity within those communities (Gordon, H.R., 2014). Career and Technical Education boasts the opportunity to educate students, leading them toward a certification and allowing them to advance their socio-economic status and start a career without having to participate in post-secondary education (Tillman, C. J., 2005). Although students from rural school are more likely to enroll in Career and Technical Education classes, 75% of students in those classes pursue higher education beyond high school (About CTE). These trends have prompted questions regarding the importance of concurrent enrollment in Career and Technical Education in high schools and their boasted positive impact on the strength of rural America. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of Career and Technical Education in spurring rural community vitality through youth development. The evidence from this sequential explanatory mixed methods study will allow Career and Technical Education to better serve its secondary rural students in the future. More and more people are leaving rural communities on the grounds of a better financial standing. Career and Technical Education should allow its students to become productive members of the community they call home, regardless of the population in the town they are located in. With that, a study of CTE's role in rural community vitality should be studied to increase effective strategies with rural youth and the communities they are in.

Research Methodology – The How

To study the importance and effectiveness of Career and Technical Education in rural communities, I will perform a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014) study utilizing a population of seniors enrolled in CTE in rural high schools within one hour of Stillwater, Oklahoma. Cluster sampling will identify schools within the population. A researcher developed questionnaire will be developed and piloted to establish internal consistency and validity. Using the Dillman (2000) total survey design method, students will be provided the research instrument and data will be collected. As outlined by Creswell (2013), qualitative cases will be identified based on the findings and semi-structured interviews of purposively selected students will be conducted to develop a more in-depth understanding of identified career and technical education paths.

Research Questions – The What

The study will be framed by the following research objectives:

1. Identify the percentage of students involved in CTE programs in the selected population.
2. Describe students in rural America that are choosing to engage in career and technical education.
3. Describe the type and extent of CTE participation in the selected population.
4. Identify motivating factors of rural secondary students in choosing to participate in CTE.
5. Identify rural students intended use of CTE training.
6. Identify rural students' intent to return to their rural community.

References

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