Chapter 8

Certification and Licensure Requirements for Career and Technical Educators

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ABSTRACT

Teacher certification/licensure requirements are in a constant state of change. This is true of both the traditional academic disciplines and vocational/career and technical education. The goal of this chapter is to provide the reader with a historical and current overview of vocational/career-technical teacher certification/licensure through both the traditional and alternative routes. Discussion of expectations of post-secondary institutions and variances in those expectations are shared. A detailed explanation of requirements for alternative certification is provided, specifically with reference to educator preparation requirements, including customized coursework, work experience, entrance requirements and induction programs. Testing for licensure is discussed, as well as details regarding licensure renewal. Issues facing career and technical education referenced in this chapter focus on the highly qualified teacher designation, the need for modifications of testing requirements, employment opportunities, teacher attrition, standards in teacher preparation programs, reform in career and technical teacher preparation, and the need to focus on preparing future CTE teacher educators.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Obtaining career and technical teacher certification/licensure (hereafter referred to as licensure) in the United States can be achieved through two different pathways. The first is the traditional education route, in which an individual obtains a baccalaureate or master's degree and meets all requirements mandated by the state to earn a teaching credential, very much like that of other teaching disciplines. The second route to becoming a career and technical teacher is what some would term "alternative licensure"[1] (although that term now has many interpretations), in which a license is granted primarily based on occupational work experience in the subject area to be taught. These types of alternative licensure programs give individuals opportunities to earn their teaching certificates in abbreviated periods of time, often teaching while completing program requirements (Education Week, Alternative Teacher Certification, 2007). In career and technical education this type of teacher training dates back to the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. Alternative licensure programs typically involve some period of intensive, condensed academic coursework or training, a period of supervised, on-the-job training, and candidates are typically expected to pass certification tests to become fully certified (Legler, 2002).

Legislative initiatives also impact teacher training in CTE. One focus of recent Carl D. Perkins legislation was on improving the transition from business and industry into teaching for CTE educators. This transition is most easily accomplished through the various "alternative" licensure pathways offered by the approaches employed by career and technical education. Alternative licensure programs "allow new teachers to learn in the 'real world'" (Legler, 2002). Citing Haberman (1991), Legler argued that alternative licensure programs are needed for those who want to change careers. Haberman stated that the availability of these highly skilled individu-als wanting to move to the classroom should be accommodated through alternative licensure. As we consider these traditional and alternative methods for teacher certification, a look at history, background and current issues facing career and technical teachers is relevant.

The main objective of this chapter is to discuss the licensure requirements of CTE teachers. However, it is important to note that the preparation of CTE teachers in many programs is markedly different than core academic and teachers in other content areas. In fact, McCaslin and Parks (2002) stated,

There has been a great deal of separatism in the way vocational education teachers and general education teachers have been prepared. For years, vocational education teacher requirements have mandated a number of years of experience in their craft or trade outside the classroom prior to their employment as a teacher. (p. 74)

8.2 BACKGROUND

8.2.1 Historical Overview of Career and Technical Teacher Education and Licensure

A teaching license is the conceptual equivalent of a license to practice. The purpose of licensure is to allow individuals to perform specific functions for which they have demonstrated specific skills, knowledge, and abilities. When speaking of educators (both teachers and administrators), requirements for teacher licensure are established and monitored by states (McNergney & Herbert, 1995).

The concept of educator licensure has been in existence for over 175 years. Licensure of teachers first began in 1825, as local counties set up agencies to examine and license candidates for teaching positions. As normal schools began to grow in the mid-1850s, states began to develop guidelines for

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