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Students' Attitudes Toward the Smithfield Vocational Department

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STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE
SMITHFIELD VOCATIONAL DEPARTMENT

A RESEARCH PAPER
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY


IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

BY
CYNTHIA J. FEAZELL

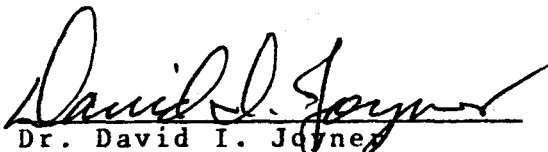
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This research paper was prepared by Cynthia J. Fezell under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in the VTE 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The decision to enter a vocational education curriculum - as opposed to either the general education or the college preparatory curriculum - is a major one to ask students to make by, say, age 15. When we couple that request with a demand that each individual choose, from the multiple vocational education programs, the one he or she wishes to enter, we make the decision much more difficult for those who are undecided (Hoyt, 1982, p. 20).

In today's society technology has become the wave of the future. It has been said that 80 percent of future job opportunities will be vocational oriented. If this was so, then why have vocational department enrollments decreased in many school divisions? Do we, as vocational educators, expect too much out of our students? Have they been making erroneous decisions about their chosen concentrations? Have parents and counselors influenced them to concentrate on non-vocational courses? These questions have been asked by many vocational educators in the last decade.

In this study the researcher has localized a study to the vocational education programs at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia. By conducting this survey the reseacher hoped that the findings would be helpful

in building the vocational education enrollment figures.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine student's views toward vocational education programs at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia.

RESEARCH GOALS

The basic objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To identify student views of vocational education at Smithfield High School by conducting a survey.
2. To analyze the differences in reasons why the academic students and vocational students selected to enroll in their specific concentrations.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout history legislation has been passed concerning vocational education strategies. There was the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the George-Deen Act of 1936, the George-Barden Act of 1946, the Vocational Act of 1963, and the Vocational Education Amendment of 1968. The Vocational Education Amendment of 1968 (Public Law 90-576) demanded community and lay participation in vocational education.

Since the Vocational Education Amendment of 1968, the demand for vocational skills has increased, however, the number of high school vocational enrollments has decreased.

It has not been difficult to find documentation of possible causes of declining enrollments in vocational education. Current articles were found in magazines and textbooks on vocational enrollment figures.

It has become common knowledge that in all areas of vocational education there were opportunities to be nurtured. Students needed to possess certain vocational skills to aid them in their chosen careers. Today's students, however, have been apathetic towards their future. They have become "present oriented" and mainly interested in today. "Teachers should have students literally beating down the doors to enroll in vocational courses . . . but most do not" (Harrington, 1978, p. 12).

A few years ago many educators were concerned with this question: Why can't Johnny read? Studies have been conducted to find the answer to that question. Answers to that question still have not all been given. Parents and counselors were recommending that Johnny and others like him should be placed in the vocational program of many school divisions. Therefore, many vocational programs were being labeled as the "dumping grounds" for slow learners. Vocational education had lost its status. Parents, counselors, and students were aware of the labeling. As students registered for classes, the "academic" or "college preparatory" students were being steered away from vocational education. The slow learner was advised to take vocational courses. "For the past fifty years

counselors have "dumped" into the vocational program students who had little interest, low scholastic ability, poor academic records, and poor attitudes" (Nanassy, 1977, p. 368).

In present day high schools, students were being forced to decide by their sophomore year what academic track they would study. They had two avenues to choose. They could choose academic courses or vocational courses. Administrators, counselors, and teachers were constantly pushing the students to make a decision. The administrators were interested in getting forms to the Department of Education by the deadline. Likewise, the counselor must aid in sending the forms to the state department. Teachers were given directives by the administrators to talk to the students about their concentrations. If the student was undecided then the decision was made for him. It would seem that what the students chose to enroll in was more by chance than by honest desires. Harrington suggested that, "the low vocational enrollments may have been a result of a lack of understanding of the value of vocational education" (Harrington, 1978, p. 13).

Why do vocational programs in the most technical society in the world find their numbers decreasing? Many answers have been offered for this question: apathy towards the future, status among vocational and academic programs, disinterest about vocational education and a lack of understanding of the value of vocational education.

The ultimate question has been: How can vocational enrollments increase? This research paper was an attempt to answer that question.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations were made in this research study:

1. The sample covered a population of one hundred students at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia.
2. The population that was sampled were twenty Thetamores, twenty Freshmen, twenty Sophomores, twenty Juniors, and twenty Seniors.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made in this research study:

1. The views of vocational and academic students could be determined regarding vocational programs.
2. The results of the survey would be beneficial to the vocational program at Smithfield High School.

PROCEDURES

Subjects for this study were students in grades 8-12. Fifty students were selected from the academic program and fifty students were selected from the vocational program at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia. The students came from upper-lower class, middle-class, and the upper-middle class families. The closed-ended surveys

were completed and analyzed by the researcher to determine the results.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were used in this study and were defined here for clarification:

1. vocation - preparation for a trade or occupation
2. vocational education - courses preparing for an occupation. For example: Business Education, Distributive Education, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Automotive, and Agriculture.
3. academic - courses preparing for college preparatory. For example: English, Math, History, Foreign Language and Science.
4. directive - a general instruction as to procedure or tactics, issued by a higher authority.
5. Thetamore - a student in the eighth grade

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Certainly the decrease in the enrollment of the vocational education programs was an important problem in schools and in society today. There has been much research done about the decrease in many vocational programs throughout the country. There have also been many statements made about why people were choosing paths other than the vocational programs. The goal of this study was to determine the student's views towards vocational education at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia. The research was of consequence because many of the students views were believed

to be related to the vocational program enrollment decrease.

The second chapter contained a review of similar studies and writings pertinent to the subject of declining enrollments. The third chapter was an explanation of how the study was done and the fourth chapter reported the findings of the study. The fifth chapter gave the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter was a review of other studies and writings related to this study. The literature related to this study was divided into two groups, the first pertained to social and psychological factors (the "Significant Other" influence) leading to vocational enrollment decreases and the second related this influence to the school guidance counselors and educators.

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Not very long ago in the nation's history, it made sense to assume that the son of a doctor, lawyer, or any professional would attain a similar position. It also was assumed that a daughter would become a homemaker like her mother. For example, there was not any question if the boy wanted to be like "Dad"; or the girl like "Mom." Parents were the key persons in the child's development of both personal attitudes and vocational attitudes.

The National Center For Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) published a monograph entitled "'Significant Other' Influence and Vocational Development," which supported the social and psychological factors. "Parents

have been referred to by researchers as "significant others" (Falk, 1980, p. 1). In the monograph, several findings were made; some of the more important ones were: (1) parents determine what will be and what will not be; (2) parents expose the child to "their" social beliefs; (3) parents influence their child's future whether it will be academic or vocational oriented; and (4) parents influence the child's conception of what is and is not within reach (Falk, 1980, p. 3).

Students were sub-consciously influenced by the "significant other" influence (their parents). Today if most high school students were asked why they were going to college - the results would be oriented towards their parents hopes, dreams, and desires. The parents had a biased attitude toward their influence of higher education, with little emphasis on relationship to vocational programs. The NCRVE officials were predicting that the "significant other" trend would continue. Vocational educators had to concentrate their efforts on dealing with this influence.

Case studies were researched by Rea Theo Alsup on welfare supported youth which supports the "significant other" influence. For example, Eddy lives with his mother and his seventeen siblings. He is still in high school and has worked to support his family. He has below average ability, but he believed that he had to go to college after high school. His mother dropped-out of school after the eighth grade and his father after the ninth. Therefore,

his mother has told him to take college preparatory courses. They do not have money for college tuition, and Eddy did not take any vocational courses. He will graduate without a marketable skill (Alsup, 1967, p. 59).

The "significant other" factor has a large influence over today's youth. The majority of the time it has been based on personal desires. All students should not pursue a college preparatory program when only about 20 percent of all high school graduates finish college (The Encyclopedia of Education, 1971, p. 501).

GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AND OTHER EDUCATORS

In our educational systems there were those who assumed the position of guidance counselors in order to help students make better decisions about their academic curriculum. Questions had arisen concerning the accuracy of counselors in evaluating individual students and their needs. The current trend had been to mainstream all students into a "college bound" curriculum without regarding other avenues that could be taken. These avenues were that of Vocational Education. "As much consideration and concern should be given to the student who will enter the labor market immediately as has traditionally been given to the college preparatory student" (Encyclopedia of Education, 1971, p. 501).

One reason Vocational Education was not chosen as an avenue for students was that counselors were usually not interested in the subject themselves. It was somewhat

difficult to instill enthusiasm and sell a student on vocational courses when the counselor himself was not interested. In an article entitled "The Vocational Education View of Guidance and Counseling" it was stated that many counselors were neither prepared nor interested in making vocational development a priority in their guidance programs (O'Toole, 1980, p. 668). Another article entitled "Preparing the School for Career Development: A Counselor's Role" stated that the purpose of career education was to smooth the transition from school to work. However, counselors needed to determine what their own attitudes towards work and industry might be and how their attitudes affected the students decisions (Holcomb, 1982, p. 32).

Most counselors were in favor of a more liberal arts education. They feel that the basics were necessary before other types of courses may be considered. Since counselors were college graduates themselves they would tend to be oriented in this area thus feel compelled to lean their students in these types of courses. The Executive Director of the Council for Basic Education believed that all courses other than basic education courses were like "junk food;" they should come after the main course, basic education courses (Down, 1981, p. A6).

Some counselors, however, should be given credit. These counselors did utilize the vocational education department. This becomes their relief for troublesome and

and slow learner students. Some referred to it as a "dumping ground." Students that did not have a curriculum were usually not wanted by the academic areas because they were below the normal curve; the vocational areas did not want them because they did not want to be the "dumping ground"; however, they usually got these students (Lessinger, 1979, p. 18).

Other educators had taken the negative attitude toward vocational education. They questioned its validity and whether the student actually benefitted from vocational programs. Some say that it was training and not an education. The President of St. Michael's College told a reporter in 1977, "Vocational Education has been oversold to this country . . . job training is just that - training, not really education in the full sense of the word (Slayton, 1977, p. c12).

SUMMARY

The review of literature revealed that despite tremendous amounts of research on the subject of vocational education enrollment decreases, the research community had reached a few limited conclusions that were universally held. The complex problem of vocational education decreases could not be predicted by one or two variables but required the application of several variables.

On the basis of the literature reviewed, it was the view of the researcher that the most likely possibilities

for the causes of vocational department decreases was one or more of the three main areas: (1) parental influence, (2) guidance counselors influence, (3) other educators influence. These areas were not defined well enough to be the basis of further research themselves, but were a beginning point for consideration in relation to possible preventions of decreasing enrollments.

The next chapter contained information on the methods and procedures utilized in this study. The methods and procedures will be used to evaluate the decreasing vocational enrollments.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

It was the hope of the researcher that by investigating student's attitudes toward the Vocational Education Programs at Smithfield High School that the effectiveness of the same program might not only be proven but the resulting data might suggest ways of improving the program and increase enrollment figures. The purpose of this chapter was to describe the population, the design of the survey, the detailed account of the administration of the survey, the collection of data and the statistical techniques used to analyze the data.

POPULATION

The sample for this study was divided into two groups. The first group consisted of lowerclassmen (20 eighth graders, 20 ninth graders, and 20 tenth graders). Within the first group there were two sub-populations of thirty students enrolled in academic programs and thirty students enrolled in vocational programs. The sub-populations had thirty males and thirty females. The average age of the group was fourteen.

The second group consisted of upperclassmen (20 Juniors and 20 Seniors). Within the group there were two sub-populations which consisted of twenty students enrolled in academic programs and twenty students enrolled in vocational programs. The sub-populations had twenty males and twenty females. The average age of the group was seventeen.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

An instrument of 25 questions was designed to be given to the sample population. Since the survey was going to be administered in person, the cover letter was short and was worded only to establish a sincere purpose for the instrument and to solicit the respondent's help. The major concern of the instrument was to elicit information about how students viewed the vocational programs, how they had chosen their present programs, and their views of the future. It was decided to make the questions in a structured, closed form, thus requesting the respondent to check either the "Yes" or "No" column. This would make the questions easier and quicker to answer, knowing time would be a factor. This format would also facilitate tabulation and analysis of data while improving reliability and consistency of the data.

INSTRUMENT ADMINISTRATION

The survey was administered in person at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia between February 7, 1983 and February 11, 1983. There was a booth set up in the Vocational Fair at Smithfield High School during Vocational Education Week. The students from each English class were called on separate days to view the vocational booths.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from both groups who made up the sample by the application of the survey. Permission from the Isle of Wight County Schools was obtained to run the survey. Both groups were given the survey during the same period of time.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The raw scores were computed on the 25 questions. The mean score was calculated for use in comparison tables.

SUMMARY

In order to help evaluate and improve the Vocational Department at Smithfield High School the researcher chose a survey with the intention of finding students attitudes toward the department. Two groups were used to compose the sample, one group consisted of academic and vocational underclassmen; the other group consisted of academic and

vocational upperclassmen. The data was collected from these two groups and analyzed by determining the central tendency (the mean). In the last two chapters, the researcher will state the findings and give her recommendations, conclusions, and summaries on the attitudes towards the Vocational Education Department at Smithfield High School.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to report the findings of the survey. The survey was administered on five different dates ranging from February 7-11, 1983, as discussed in Chapter III. Fifty academic and fifty vocational students were selected to complete each survey. The goals of this study was to identify and analyze the views of vocational education at Smithfield High School. In this chapter the researcher had hoped to meet her goals set in Chapter I.

A breakdown of the surveys was as follows: One hundred percent of the Vocational and Academic lower-classmen (Grades 8-10) completed their surveys. The upperclassmen (Grades 11-12), vocational and academic, completed their surveys by 100 percent. In Table I the demographic information was shown on page 19.

TABLE 1
 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FROM SURVEY
 QUESTIONS (1-7)

QUESTIONS	STUDENTS					
	Academic			Vocational		
	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Are you a Thetamore?	10	40	20	10	40	20
2. Are you a Freshmen?	10	40	20	10	40	20
3. Are you a Sophomore?	10	40	20	10	40	20
4. Are you a Junior?	10	40	20	10	40	20
5. Are you a Senior?	10	40	20	10	40	20
6. Are you between the ages of 13-15?	23	27	46	24	26	48
7. Are you between the ages of 16-18?	26	24	52	24	26	48

Y=Yes

N=No

In Questions 1-5 the number of students surveyed was determined. Within the lower and upperclassmen 100 percent of the students surveyed responded. In Question 6 of the survey 48 percent of the 50 vocational students surveyed were between the ages of 13-15. The academic students that were surveyed between the ages of 13-15 was 2 percent lower than the vocational students. Fifty-two percent of the academic students were between the ages of 16-18 which was 4 percent higher than the vocational students of that age group.

The first goal of this study was to identify student views of vocational education at Smithfield High School by conducting a survey. The second goal was to analyze the differences in reasons why the academic students and vocational students selected to enroll in their specific concentrations. These goals were met by collecting data from the surveys. In order to analyze the reasons why the academic students and vocational students selected to enroll in their specific concentrations, opinions of 50 academic and 50 vocational students were sought. Table 2 concurrently shows the students overall views of Vocational programs at Smithfield High School, and the opinions and percentages of "yes" responses of the vocational and academic students. In Table 2 the last 18 questions of the survey were broken down into three groups. In Questions 8-13 of Table 2, the students views of vocational education and vocational courses were surveyed as shown on page 21.

TABLE 2
 OPINIONS ON QUESTIONS (8-13) AND PERCENTAGES
 IN CONCENTRATION SELECTION

QUESTIONS	STUDENTS								
	OVERALL			ACADEMIC			VOCATIONAL		
	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
8. Do you know what Vocational Education is?	95	5	95	45	5	90	50	0	100
9. Have you taken any Business courses since you have been at Smithfield High School?	59	41	59	28	22	56	31	19	62
10. Are you planning to take a Business course next year?	58	42	58	24	26	48	34	16	68
11. Have you taken DE, EFE, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, or Auto at Smithfield High School?	60	40	60	27	23	54	33	17	66
12. Do you plan to take one of the courses mentioned in Number 11 next year?	33	67	33	13	37	27	20	30	40
13. If Smithfield High School offered a class in Data Processing would you take it?	69	31	69	33	17	66	36	14	72

Y=Yes

N=No

The overall view of students on vocational education was 95 percent. On Question 8, the vocational students were more informed than the academic students by 10 percent due to their familiarity with vocational programs.

In the survey, vocational course preferences were discussed. Overall 59 percent of the students surveyed had taken a Business course since they had been at Smithfield High School. A comparison of the academic and vocational students showed that the vocational students had a 6 percent increase over the academic students on previously taken Business courses. Fifty-eight percent of the students surveyed plan to take Business courses next year. Sixty-eight percent of the vocational students planned to take a Business course next year, as compared to the 48 percent for the academic students. The findings showed that of the 50 vocational and 50 academic students surveyed that the vocational students would be more apt to take a Business course by 20 percent.

Overall 60 percent of the students surveyed have taken several of the vocational courses offered at Smithfield High School. In Question 11, 66 percent of the 50 vocational students surveyed have taken several of the vocational courses offered at Smithfield High School. The vocational students have taken more vocational courses than the academic students by 12 percent.

Thirty-three percent of the students surveyed planned to take vocational courses next year. Forty percent of the vocational students surveyed planned to take vocational courses next year. Less than 50 percent of the vocational students surveyed planned to take vocational courses for the 1983-84 school year.

Data Processing was not part of the vocational curriculum at Smithfield High School. It was offered for students at P. D. Pruden Vocational School in Suffolk. Overall, Question 13 on the survey indicated an interest in adding Data Processing to the curriculum at Smithfield High School by 69 percent. The vocational students indicated an interest in Data Processing of 72 percent; academic students had an interest of 66 percent. In Questions 14-19 of Table 2, the students' opinions of the vocational course offerings, future courses, and concentration selection influences were surveyed. The results may be found on page 24.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED
 OPINIONS ON QUESTIONS (14-19) AND PERCENTAGES
 IN CONCENTRATION SELECTION

QUESTIONS	STUDENTS								
	OVERALL			ACADEMIC			VOCATIONAL		
	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
14. Would you have taken a Vocational Exploration course during the 8th grade, if it had been offered?	63	37	63	30	20	60	33	17	66
15. Are you presently enrolled in a vocational course?	63	37	63	29	21	58	34	16	68
16. Are you taking classes at P.D. Pruden this year?	3	97	3	0	50	0	3	47	6
17. Do you plan to take classes at P.D. Pruden next year?	12	88	12	2	48	4	10	40	20
18. Are you presently taking a study hall? or are you presently an aide?	22	78	22	8	42	16	14	36	28
19. Do your parents influence your class schedule decisions?	70	30	70	40	10	80	30	20	60

Y=Yes

N=No

Overall 63 percent of the students surveyed would have taken a Vocational Exploration course in the eighth grade.

Sixty-six percent of the Vocational students would have taken a Vocational Exploration class as Thetamores. Sixty percent of the academic students would have taken a Vocational Exploration class as Thetamores. In the past at Smithfield High School students have not had the opportunity to take Vocational courses at the eighth grade level.

Sixty-three percent of the 100 students surveyed have taken Vocational courses in the 1982-83 school year. At present, 68 percent of the vocational students were taking a vocational course. Fifty-eight percent of the academic students were taking vocational courses.

Among the students surveyed it appeared that P. D. Pruden Vocational Center did not affect the vocational programs at Smithfield High School. Three percent of the total students surveyed were taking classes at P. D. Pruden Vocational Center. Zero percent of the academic students attended this year, and six percent of the vocational students attended. Overall 12 percent of the students surveyed planned to attend P. D. Pruden next year. The survey; however, indicated that 20 percent of the vocational students surveyed were interested in attending P. D. Pruden next year, and 4 percent of the Academic students were interested.

Students taking study halls or who served as aides were a part of the declining vocational enrollment. Overall 20 percent of the students surveyed were taking a study hall or serving as an aide. Twenty-eight percent of the vocational

students surveyed had free periods during the school day. Sixteen percent of the academic students were taking a study hall or were serving as aides.

Overall 70 percent of the students surveyed said that their parents influenced their class schedule decisions. Parents (the significant other) influenced the academic students more than the vocational students. Eighty percent of the academic students were influenced by parents, and sixty percent of the vocational students were influenced by parents. In Questions 20-25 of Table 2, the students influences on concentration selection, and opinions on early release, vocational clubs, and high school graduation were surveyed.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED
OPINIONS ON QUESTIONS (20-25) AND PERCENTAGES
IN CONCENTRATION SELECTION

<u>QUESTIONS</u>	<u>STUDENTS</u>								
	<u>OVERALL</u>			<u>ACADEMIC</u>			<u>VOCATIONAL</u>		
	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
20. Does your guidance counselor influence your class schedule decisions?	75	25	75	35	15	70	40	10	80
21. Would you be interested in getting early release through COE, DE, or Agriculture?	76	24	76	38	12	76	38	12	76

TABLE 2 CONTINUED
 OPINIONS ON QUESTIONS (20-25) AND PERCENTAGES
 IN CONCENTRATION SELECTION

QUESTIONS	STUDENTS								
	OVERALL			ACADEMIC			VOCATIONAL		
	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
22. Are you presently a member of a Vocational Club?	28	72	28	14	36	28	14	36	28
23. Do you feel that you will be prepared to leave high school and enter the world of work?	80	20	80	37	13	74	43	7	86
24. Are you planning to go to work directly after high school graduation?	42	58	42	15	35	30	27	23	54
25. Are you planning to go to college?	61	39	61	33	17	66	28	22	56

Y=Yes

N=No

Seventy-five percent of the 100 students surveyed were influenced by their guidance counselors on class schedule decisions. Guidance counselors influenced the vocational students more than the academic students. Eighty percent of the vocational students were influenced by their counselors, and seventy percent of the academic students were influenced by counselors.

Overall 76 percent of the students surveyed were interested in early release through vocational programs. Both the academic and vocational students were equally interested in getting out of school for early release through vocational programs. Seventy-six percent of the academic and vocational students were interested in Cooperative Office Education, Distributive Education, or Agriculture for early release.

Academic students may join a Vocational Club if they enroll in a vocational course. Twenty-eight percent of the students surveyed were a member of a vocational club. The fifty academic and 50 vocational students surveyed that were in a vocational club was by a margin of 28 percent.

Overall 80 percent of the students thought they were prepared to enter work after high school. Only 42 percent of the students surveyed actually planned to work directly after high school. Eighty-six percent of the vocational students stated they were prepared to enter work after high school. However, only 54 percent planned to actually go to work directly after high school. Thirty percent of the academic students planned to go to work directly after high school.

Sixty-one percent of the students surveyed planned to go to college. Question 25 on the survey had these results: 66 percent of the academic students planned to

go to college. Fifty-six percent of the vocational students planned to go to college. Thirty-four percent of the academic students did not plan on going to college and probably are not vocationally skilled.

SUMMARY

These findings for this study can be summed up very easily. The study was conducted to identify students views of vocational education at Smithfield High School. This was met by conducting a survey which was given to a population of 100 students. The survey was conducted from February 7-11, 1983 during Vocational Education week. The study was, also, conducted to analyze differences in reasons why the academic and vocational students selected to enroll in their specific concentrations. This was met by dividing the population into two sub-groups (academic and vocational). A percentage of "yes" answers was taken to determine the reasons why students enroll in their selected programs. Conclusions will be made in Chapter V. In the last chapter, the researcher will give her summaries, conclusions, and recommendations on the attitudes toward the Vocational Education Department at Smithfield High School.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Vocational Education enrollment decreases continue to be a major problem in education. The extent and effects of this problem have been well documented in the literature, few high school graduates would deny the importance vocational courses have played in their lives. Within this chapter will be included the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

SUMMARY

This study was conducted to determine student's views toward vocational education programs at Smithfield High School, Smithfield, Virginia. To partly accomplish this goal, a survey using a questionnaire to determine the views of academic and vocational students, was administered to 100 respondents.

After an extensive review of the literature in the vocational education field, the researcher found similar studies which supported the findings in this paper. Sufficient backing seemed to exist to proceed with the study.

Chapter III explained the methods and procedures in detail. It explained the instrument that was used to collect and analyze the data.

The second part of the study was to analyze the differences in reasons why academic and vocational students select their concentrations. These findings were given in the text of Chapter IV. The findings was documented by using tables showing the overall and subgroup percentages of "yes" answers on the survey. These results will be reported in the conclusions.

In the next two sections, the researcher draws conclusions from the findings of this study. The researcher, also, makes recommendations for improvement of the current situation.

CONCLUSIONS

The two research goals of this study were met concurrently. Table 2 in Chapter IV documented the survey in three parts. The first part of the table was the percentage of the "yes" answers of the overall students surveyed. The second part of the table was the percentage of "yes" answers for the academic students surveyed. The third part of the table was the percentage of "yes" answers for the vocational students surveyed. The results from the survey was reported as follows:

The survey revealed that the overall students had these views of vocational education at Smithfield High School:

Question 8: Vocational Education Knowledge	95%
Question 9: Business courses taken at Smithfield High School	59%

Question 10:	Plans to take Business courses	58%
Question 11:	Vocational courses taken at Smithfield High School	60%
Question 12:	Plans to take Vocational courses	33%
Question 13:	Would you take Data Processing at Smithfield High School	69%
Question 14:	Would you take a Vocational Exploration course at the eighth grade level?	63%
Question 15:	Are you presently enrolled in a Vocational course?	63%
Question 16:	Classes taken at P. D. Pruden this year.	3%
Question 17:	Plans to take classes at P. D. Pruden next year.	12%
Question 18:	Study hall presently taken	22%
Question 19:	Parents influence on class schedule decisions.	70%
Question 20:	Guidance counselors influence on class schedule decisions.	75%
Question 21:	Early release through Vocational programs.	76%
Question 22:	Presently in a Vocational Club	28%
Question 23:	Prepared to leave high school	80%
Question 24:	Work directly after high school	42%
Question 25:	Plans to attend college	61%

The students views of vocational education were above average (50 percent). One exception; however, was on Question 12. Question 12 clearly showed a decrease in Vocational Education at Smithfield High School for next year. Eighty percent of the students thought they were prepared to enter the world of work after graduation; however, only 42 percent planned to actually work after high school. This showed that the students were not prepared to enter the world of work.

The survey revealed that the main reasons the academic students selected to enroll in their concentrations were:

1. parents (significant other influence) = 80%
2. guidance counselors = 70%

3. early release through vocational programs = 76%
4. college goals = 66%

These four major influences showed that the academic students were not choosing the academic programs because they wanted to. They were taking courses in the academic programs to please others. They wanted to please parents and guidance counselors. They were influenced, also, because they wanted to get out of school early. The most important influence should have been college goals. However, college goals for academic students ranked the lowest on influences for program selection.

The survey revealed that the main reasons the vocational students selected to enroll in their concentrations were:

1. guidance counselors = 80%
2. early release through vocational programs = 76%
3. parents (significant other influence) = 60%
4. work goals = 54%

The vocational students, like the academic students, were largely influenced by things other than preparation for the future. The vocational students were more influenced by the guidance counselors and the early release programs than by their parents.

In both of the sub-groups the lowest influence was college and work goals. The students were "present-minded", only thinking of today. They were choosing their programs without giving a great deal of thought to what their abilities and wants were.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study the researcher has learned a great deal about the strengths and weaknesses of the Vocational Education Department at Smithfield High School. The researcher has one recommendation. The Vocational Department should hold an inservice program conducted to convey the philosophy and programs for teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents. The purpose of this program should be to open communications between the groups and to determine if vocational education needs are being met for all students.

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APPENDIX A

V O C A T I O N A L D E P A R T M E N T S U R V E Y

The following questionnaire is being used to support a study to determine the importance of Vocational Education at Smithfield High School, your time can help educators better serve you. Your signature is not necessary. Check yes or no in the answer column next to the question.

Cynthia Feazell

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

V O C A T I O N A L D E P A R T M E N T S U R V E Y

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
1. Are you a Thetamore?	_____	_____
2. Are you a Freshmen?	_____	_____
3. Are you a Sophomore?	_____	_____
4. Are you a Junior?	_____	_____
5. Are you a Senior?	_____	_____
6. Are you between the ages of 13-15?	_____	_____
7. Are you between the ages of 16-18?	_____	_____
8. Do you know what Vocational Education is?	_____	_____
9. Have you taken any Business courses since you have been at Smithfield High School?	_____	_____
10. Are you planning to take a Business course next year? (General Business, Typing I, Recordkeeping, Accounting, Office Technology, Secretarial Administration)	_____	_____
11. Have you taken DE, EFE, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Trade and Industry, Auto, or Agriculture at Smithfield High School?	_____	_____
12. Do you plan to take one of the courses mentioned in number 11 next year?	_____	_____
13. If Smithfield High School offered a class in Data Processing would you take it?	_____	_____

- | | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> |
|--|------------|-----------|
| 14. Would you have taken a Vocational Exploration course during the eighth grade, if it had been offered? | _____ | _____ |
| 15. Are you presently enrolled in a Vocational course? | _____ | _____ |
| 16. Are you taking classes at P. D. Pruden this year? | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Do you plan to take classes at P. D. Pruden next year? | _____ | _____ |
| 18. Are you presently taking a study hall? or are you presently an aide? | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Do your parents influence your class schedule decisions? | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Does your guidance counselor influence your class schedule decisions? | _____ | _____ |
| 21. Would you be interested in getting early-release through Cooperative Office Education, Distributive Education, or Agriculture? | _____ | _____ |
| 22. Are you presently a member of a Vocational Club? | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Do you feel that you will be prepared to leave high school and enter the world of work? | _____ | _____ |
| 24. Are you planning to go to work directly after high school graduation? | _____ | _____ |
| 25. Are you planning to go to college? | _____ | _____ |

Check the following:

MALE _____

FEMALE _____

Thank you for your answers.