Factors Related to the Drop-Out Problem at Arcadia High School During 1979 and 1980

William E. Hall
Old Dominion University

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FACTORS RELATED TO THE DROP-OUT PROBLEM AT ARCADIA HIGH

SCHOOL DURING 1979 AND 1980

A Research Paper

Presented to

the Writers Advisor and the Faculty

of the College of Education

Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science

in Secondary Education

by

William E. Hall

Spring 1982
This research paper was prepared by the researcher under the direction of Dr. Mildred A. Mason in Vocational and Technical Education 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

Approved by:

Mildred A. Mason Ed. D.
Advisor and Program Leader, Occupational Education

Date

David L. Joyner, Ed.D.
Graduate Program Director
Department of Vocational and Technical Education

Date 5/5/82
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

For several years, much has been written or spoken either through the newspaper, radio, television or other media sources concerning the quality of education and the drop out rate of students in our public schools. Many reasons have been presented why public education has been under attack. This study was undertaken to find out why students dropped out of Arcadia High School. From this study the researcher was able to understand some of the problems that faced the drop-out.

Drop-outs have always been a concern for educators. When a boy or girl leaves school before successfully completing the necessary requirements for graduation, the odds are great that he or she will more than likely become a number on the unemployment list.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors related to the drop-out problem at Arcadia High School during the school years 1979 and 1980.

RESEARCH GOALS

This study identified factors which influenced student's decisions to drop out of school before completing graduation requirements at Arcadia High School.

The following research questions were investigated:

1. What were the factors or reasons which had an influence on their decision to drop out of school?

2. Having made the decision to drop out and having been out of school for at least a year, did they have any regrets having made that decision?
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The term drop-out has always presented a problem throughout the educational system. At the state level there has been a great deal of concern about the high rate at which young people drop out of school. Under the United States form of government, every child is entitled to an education. Looking at the alarming rate that students leave school causes concern among educators. One wonders if an extra effort may have kept some of the drop-outs in school.

Odds are against the drop-out advancing in a job. Today, in a technological society, an education is a must. Having an education does not guarantee success, but the chances for success is greater once he or she has attained a high school education. With these thoughts in mind, hopefully, the researcher will have a better understanding and ways can be developed to identify the potential drop-out early and before he or she becomes disinterested and drops out of school.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to Arcadia High School drop-outs. Many variables such as home environment, mental health, family income and pupil attitudes were not considered in this study.

Several limitations recognized in this study were:

1. Only Arcadia High School drop-outs during the 1979 and 1980 school year were included in this study.

2. The instrument used in this study has not been tested and proven to measure the real reason of student drop-out.

3. Drop-outs may not want to respond.

4. All drop-outs would be difficult to locate.
ASSUMPTIONS

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Most of the former students sampled or questioned would give definite reasons why they dropped out of school.

2. The drop-outs would answer the questions honestly.

PROCEDURES

Students who dropped out of school before completion during the school years 1979 and 1980 were selected from Arcadia High School Registers. A random sample of ten (10) former students were surveyed.

Results from this study were tabulated. Tabulations were divided into the following categories: Sex, grade levels, and the five most frequently reasons for dropping out of school.
DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Drop-out - A student that dropped out of high school before completing the necessary requirements for graduation. (Those students that were classified W8 and W9).

2. W8 - Pupils withdrawn for other reasons and not entering another school.

3. W9 - Pupils withdrawn after being absent fifteen (15) consecutive days. At the end of the school year, the pupils classified W9's and did not return to school were coded and counted as a W8.

SUMMARY

Due to the number of drop-out at Arcadia High School during the years 1979 and 1980, a study was made to identify factors that influenced students' decisions to drop-out of school. Home environment, family income, mental health, and pupil attitudes were not considered or included in this study. Sex, grade levels, and the five most frequently reasons for dropping out of school were tabulated.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study was made to determine if there were a need for an indepth study on ways to deal with the problems that have had an influence on student's decisions to drop out of school.

The drop-out percentages have continued to climb during the two years Arcadia High School has been in operation. (Registers 1979 and 1980). Accomack County's drop-out percentage for the school year 1978-1979 was 7.5 percent, much higher than the 5.7 percent for the state or the United States percentage of 5.2 (Facing-Up 14 Virginia Department of Education, Statistical Abstract of the United States). The county drop-out rate for 1979-1980 was 5.3 percent compared to the 5.4 percent for the state. (Facing-Up 15, Virginia Department of Education). The new report for the 1980-1981 school year has not been published yet, so this information was not available at the present time. The national average for the same two years was 5.4 percent.

A renewed effort has been made by the school administration to improve the educational offerings needed to meet the needs of the individual students. Not only was the administration concerned about the graduate, but the time had come to take a closer look at the drop-out problem. Why did Arcadia have a higher drop-out percentage than the state or national average?

Drop-outs have left school for many reasons. In this study the researcher found that there were many variables that have played an important role for their leaving school.
Many employers have not required or asked for a diploma and in many cases the employers has hired a drop-out believing that the person had graduated from high school. Once that person had been hired, the employer found the person unable to perform the required task he or she was hired to perform.

Hoyt (1976) noted, "every teacher is a counselor." Teachers have not been trained to detect possible drop-outs. There is a need to be concerned and to become involved in helping all students remain in school until they are able to graduate. The vocational areas in the high school have many strong points subjects of interest that will help keep potential drop-outs in school, if they can have access to these areas. Many times teachers blame the guidance department for using the vocational area as a dumping ground. In some cases this might be true, but on the positive side, students have to be exposed to these areas. Vocational subjects and curriculums can allow students to find an interest area that is not available in any other department in the school.

Statistics relate that Accomack County and Arcadia High School have a higher drop-out percentage than the state and the nation.
CHAPTER III
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In this study, the researcher, through extensive research of registers for the years 1979 and 1980 identified all W8 students that had dropped out of school before completing the grade in which they were enrolled. These former students were classified by grade, sex, and reasons for dropping out of school. Records have been kept on students that dropped out of school by the guidance department and the researcher.

POPULATION

The population of this study was made up of one hundred and forty students identified as drop-outs during the two year period of 1979 and 1980. Ten former students were selected at random for personal interviews.

DATE GATHERING INSTRUMENT

Using materials and ideas from Evaluative Criteria, 5th Edition, Section 2, Page 15, School Community enabled the researcher to make up a survey form, page 19, that would provide the necessary information to secure data needed to complete the research. Some of the items the students had to complete were as following: Year they left school, (Several possible reasons were listed and the students checked or circled the block or a space was provided to write in any reason not stated on the form.) Ten former students selected at random were asked the following questions: Had they regretted not completing high school?, and if they had the opportunity, would they re-enter and complete high school? A sample survey can be found in the appendix.
COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

A suitable method for comparison of the data was utilized in the compilation for the findings of this study. The research questions were analyzed to study the results of the interviews with the ten drop-outs selected randomly.

Results of the interviews and the information reviewed from the guidance department and the teachers' registers for the years 1979 and 1980 compared as follows:

1. A survey form (sample in appendix) was used to identify all students that dropped out of school during the school year 1979 and 1980.

2. The survey form (sample in appendix) was used for each year (1979 and 1980) to classify former students by grade and sex.

3. The survey form was used to note reasons given for dropping out of school before completing the school year.

As each drop-out was identified, the former student's information was noted on the survey form by the researcher. Ten former students were personally interviewed from the random selection of the one hundred forty known drop-outs.

From this data, the researcher found that there was a strong comparison between the two year figures. The grades, sex, and reason given in both 1979 and 1980 were comparable.
CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors related to the drop-out problem in Arcadia High School. In the following tables, the researcher, compared students who dropped out of school during the year 1979 with those who dropped out of school during the school year 1980. Grade levels, sex, and the five most frequently stated reasons for dropping out of school were tabulated for 1979 and 1980.

**TABLE I**

**THE NUMBER OF DROP-OUTS FOR THE TWO YEAR PERIOD 1979 AND 1980**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of drop-outs for the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades for the 1979-1980 school year and the 1980-1981 school year is presented in Table I.
TABLE II
A COMPARISON OF THE BOY/GIRL DROP-OUTS BY GRADE LEVEL FOR THE TWO YEAR PERIOD 1979 AND 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the boy/girl drop-outs for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 is presented in Table II.

TABLE III
A COMPARISON OF REASONS GIVEN FOR 9TH GRADE DROP-OUTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
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<td>Emotional</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the most frequently stated reasons for dropping out of school in the 9th grade during the school year 1979-1980 and the school year 1980-1981 is presented in Table III.
TABLE IV
A COMPARISON OF REASONS GIVEN FOR 10TH GRADE DROP-OUTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the most frequently stated reasons for dropping out of school in the 10th grade during the school year 1979-1980 and the school year 1980-1981 is presented in Table IV.

TABLE V
A COMPARISON OF REASONS GIVEN FOR 11TH GRADE DROP-OUTS

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter Military Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enter Military Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the most frequently stated reasons for dropping out of school in the 11th grade during the school year 1979-1980 and the school year 1980-1981 is presented in Table V.
TABLE VI
A COMPARISON OF REASONS GIVEN FOR 12TH GRADE DROP-OUTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter Military Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the most frequently stated reasons for dropping out of school in the 12th grade during the 1979-1980 school year and the 1980-1981 school year is presented in Table VI.

TABLE VII
RESPONSE TO PERSONAL INTERVIEW

1. Have you had any regret for not completing high school? Yes 2 No 8
2. If you had the opportunity, would you re-enter school and complete high school? Yes 2 No 8
3. Total Interviewed 10

Response to personal interviews conducted by the researcher to the ten drop-outs selected at random from the 1979-1980 and 1980-1981 school year.

SUMMARY

The table that has been presented in this chapter will be summarized in Chapter V. Also, conclusions and recommendations will be drawn from the information presented in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The basic purpose of this study was to identify factors related to the drop-out problem at Arcadia High School during the years 1979 and 1980 Arcadia has been in operation.

After studying the factors or reasons the drop-outs gave either from personal interviews, records kept by the researcher for the past two years, information obtained from the guidance department and teachers' registers for the two year period, tables have been set up in Chapter IV to identify the drop-out into the several categories.

The study was limited to drop-outs at Arcadia High School. Variables such as home environment, mental health, family income and pupil attitudes were not considered in this study.

It should be emphasized that the instrument used in this study has not been tested and proven to measure the real reasons why students drop out of school. In this study, the researcher, was unable to locate or obtain enough information to identify the reasons for three of the former students who dropped out of school in the ninth grade. (One in 1979 and two in 1980, Table III). In Table IV, two students gave no reason for dropping out of school in 1980.

CONCLUSIONS

A great number of students dropped out of school in the 1980-1981 school year than in the 1979-1980 school year. This was true in every grade level.

The ninth grade had the highest number of drop-outs in both 1979 and 1980. There was an increase in the number of drop-outs in all grades in
1980-1981 compared to the 1979-1980 school year. There was a slight increase in the number of students who listed lack of interest in the 9th grade in 1980-1981 over the previous year 1979-1980 school year. The number of students having emotional problems in the 9th grade was the same for both years. In 1980-1981 pregnancy and marriage increased slightly over the 1979-1980 school year while disciplinary decreased from the 1979-1980 school year.

Lack of interest was the most frequent reason for dropping out of school in the 10th grade. Illness, disciplinary reasons, and marriage were other reasons stated. Each having one former student to place in that category. In 1980-1981, employment and marriage had two each, and information was not available for the two 10th grade drop-outs during the 1980-1981 school year.

Twelve former students in the 11th grade listed lack of interest as their reason for dropping out of school during the 1979-1980 school year. One dropped out to enter the military service. In 1980-1981, the number decreased by one from the previous year for lack of interest as a reason for dropping out of school. Two of the drop-outs entered military service and one gave marriage as her reason for dropping out of school.

Thirteen students dropped out of school in the 12th grade for lack of interest during the 1979-1980 school year. In 1980-1981, ten students listed lack of interest as the reason for dropping out of school. A decrease of two from the previous year. Two students entered military service and one gave marriage as the reason for dropping out of school in the 1980-1981 school year.

Personal interviews were conducted with ten students that had dropped out of Arcadia before completing their grade level. The persons interviewed
gave a Yes or No answer to the questions asked by the interviewer. Two of the ten interviewed stated that they had regretted not completing the year and they would go back to school to complete their education. Eight interviewed expressed no interest in returning to school nor had they regretted having stopped school before they had completed the grade in which they had been enrolled.

During the 1979-1980 school year there were sixty-five (65) students that dropped out of school. In 1980-1981 there were seventy-five (75) students that dropped out of school. There is a trend during the two year research that boys drop out of school in the 9th and 10th grades in greater numbers and girls drop out of school in greater number in the 11th and 12th grades.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings, observations and conclusions of this study, the researcher submits the following recommendations:

1. This study should be replicated in its present design in order to obtain additional statistics.

2. A more accurate analysis as to why the student drops out of school can and should be made at the time he or she withdraws from school.

3. Consideration should be given to include other ways of classifying the drop-out. (Social-economic, home environment, mental health, and family income.)

4. The guidance department and/or the Administrative Assistant (the researcher) should interview the drop-out at the time the student notifies the two departments that he or she is dropping out of school. The information obtained at that time would be more accurate.
5. Consideration should be given to determine why there was a lack of interest since this was the reason most often given in this research study.

6. This study should be continued in 1982-1983 to determine if there is a further increase in the total number of drop-outs.

7. A committee should be set up to seek possible ways to reduce the number of students that drop out of Arcadia High School.
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Notes

In summary, the approach the researcher used to interview the ten former students at Arcadia High School was as follows:

I am currently doing research for a Master Degree in Secondary Education at Old Dominion University.

I have been identifying reasons why students drop out of school. In this study I hope to find information which might be used to come up with new ideas which might keep some of the potential drop-outs in school to obtain their high school education.

I would appreciate a few minutes of your time and have you answer a few questions on this form. (Hand them the survey form and a pencil, explain it to them). Your name will not be used, only the information you place on the survey form.

(At the end of the interview) Thank you for taking your time to fill out this survey form. Hopefully it will help provide useful information that can be used to keep someone you know in school.
SURVEY

In the table below, indicate by using a check (✓) in the following places. Grade in which you dropped out of school and the reason you dropped out of school. If the reason is not listed, there is a blank where you can write in the reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Withdrawal</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
<th>Grade 11</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circle the correct answer.

2. Do you have any regrets for not completing high school? Yes No
3. If you had the opportunity, would you re-enter and complete high school? Yes No