

1993

# A Study to Determine if GED Classes Helped Students to Gain Employment and Build Self-Esteem

Diane J. Calhoun  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects)

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Calhoun, Diane J., "A Study to Determine if GED Classes Helped Students to Gain Employment and Build Self-Esteem" (1993). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 372.  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots\\_masters\\_projects/372](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/372)

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

A STUDY TO DETERMINE IF GED CLASSES HELPED  
STUDENTS TO GAIN EMPLOYMENT AND BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

A RESEARCH PAPER  
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES  
AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

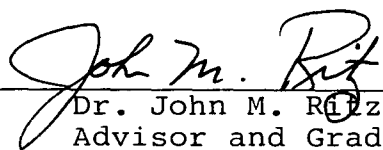
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ADULT EDUCATION

BY  
DIANE J. CALHOUN

AUGUST, 1993

This research paper was prepared by Diane J. Calhoun under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Education. The report was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Adult Education.

Approved By

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. John M. Ritz,  
Advisor and Graduate  
Program Advisor

8-3-23  
Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher wishes to thank Dr. Elaine Chase, Special Projects Administrator for Adult Continuing Education in Chesapeake, Virginia, for the help given to me during this study. Many thanks to Mrs. Joyce Brown, secretary to Dr. Elaine Chase, for her assistance. The researcher also thanks Dr. John M. Ritz for the guidance provided during this study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	ii
<b>Table of Tables</b> .....	v
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1-2
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Objectives .....	3
Background and Significance .....	3-4
Limitations .....	4
Assumptions .....	4-5
Procedures .....	5
Definitions .....	5-6
Overview .....	6-7
<b>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b> .....	8
Philosophy of GED .....	8-10
Benefits of GED Graduation .....	10-12
Economic Implication of GED .....	12-14
Motivation and Self-Esteem .....	14-16
Summary .....	17

III.	<b>METHODS AND PROCEDURES</b> .....	18
	Population .....	18
	Instrument Design .....	18-19
	Instrument Administration .....	19
	Statistical Analysis .....	19
	Summary .....	19-20
IV.	<b>FINDINGS</b> .....	21
	Enrollment in GED Preparation Classes .....	21-23
	GED Preparation Classes and Students Self-Esteem .....	23-24
	Summary .....	24
V.	<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	25
	Summary .....	25
	Conclusions .....	25-26
	Recommendations .....	26-27
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	28-29
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	
	APPENDIX A. Sample of Questionnaire .....	30-31
	APPENDIX B. Sample of Follow-up Letter .....	32

**TABLE OF TABLES**

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.	Reasons for GED Enrollment .....	22

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Jobs are demanding better reading, writing, reasoning skills, and much more math and science skills. Twenty-five percent of our young people--perhaps as many as one million students a year--drop out of high school. And of those who do graduate, a very disturbing number cannot even read their diplomas. Seventy percent of all high school seniors cannot write a basic letter seeking employment, and another sixty percent of them cannot correctly add up their own lunch bills. These problems extend beyond our future workers to include our current labor force. The skills of a large number of experienced workers are now obsolete or soon will be made obsolete by changes in technology. Additionally, at least 20 million and possibly as many as 40 million adults experience substantial literacy problems (Dole, 1989, pp. 2-3). With the disappearance of low-skill and manufacturing jobs, there is no question that most people who drop out of school are at a severe disadvantage in the United States economy (The GED Testing Service Letter, 1992, p. 2).

The General Educational Development (GED) program has been and will be a valuable alternative for people who have dropped out of high school for various reasons. The GED program prepares adults to take



the General Educational Development Tests which cover what graduating high school seniors are supposed to know about writing, science, mathematics, social studies, and literature of the arts. They also measure reading comprehension, analytical ability, and other important skills (General Educational Development Brochure, Chesapeake, VA).

The city of Chesapeake addressed its problem of literacy and lack of adults with high school diplomas by offering General Educational Development through its Adult Continuing Education program. The city boasted only 5.5 percent unemployment in 1986, but current Census Bureau data showed in excess of 26,500 Chesapeake adults ages 25 and above who had not completed high school (Farr, 1986, p. 17). In 1990, 320 residents took the GED test and over half qualified for diplomas (General Education statistical Report, Chesapeake, VA, 1990).

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine if General Educational Development Preparation classes in the Chesapeake Public Schools Adult Continuing Education programs helped students obtain employment.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to determine:

1. If GED classes were adequately preparing students to compete in the high-tech, competitive job market.
2. If GED classes are building student self-esteem.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The first tests of General Educational Development (GED) were developed in 1942 to measure the major outcomes and concepts generally associated with four years of high school education. Initiated by the United States Air Force Institute (USAFI), the original tests were administered only to military personnel to assist World War II veterans in pursuing educational, vocational, and personal goals. Passing GED Tests proved these persons had the same learning outcomes as high school graduates. Also, they allowed them to qualify for jobs and continue post-secondary education once they left military service.

The American Council on Education realized the need for such a program for civilians and directed the GED program over the past four decades. The GED Tests were used in all 50 states and most Canadian Provinces. These tests have offered millions of people

opportunities to get a job, get a better job, increase income, continue education, gain self-esteem, and have an investment in their future (The Tests for General Educational Development, American Council on Education). The current demands of the workplace and why a person decided to take the step to increase his/her level of education by getting a GED diploma was the motivation behind this investigation.

#### LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to a survey of students who have completed GED Preparation classes and have received their GED diploma, including English as a Second Language students, in Chesapeake Public Schools Adult Continuing Education program for Fall 1991 and Fall 1992.

#### ASSUMPTIONS

It was assumed in this study that:

1. Students enrolled in GED Preparation classes have a common goal of obtaining their GED Certificate.
2. Students responses would be an indication of how other students would respond.
3. Gaining self-esteem played a vital part in in the continuation toward getting a GED

certificate.

4. Getting a GED Certificate is a positive step toward achieving employment.

#### PROCEDURES

Subjects of this study were selected from GED Preparation classes and from students who have received their GED diploma in the city of Chesapeake, Virginia adult education program. To satisfy the objectives of this study, a questionnaire was developed and sent to students with a stamped return envelope for their immediate response. A follow-up letter was sent to each student to ensure receipt of the questionnaire and for their timely return to the researcher.

#### DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were important to understanding terms used in this research study:

1. GED Program (General Educational Development Program). A program designed for persons who once were enrolled in school but did not complete requirements for high school graduation (Adult Education Program Brochure, Norfolk, Virginia).
2. GED Tests (General Educational Development Tests). A battery of five tests, each measuring the major skills considered to be the outcome

of a high school education. These skills include writing, social studies, science, reading, and mathematics.

3. Literacy. The ability to read and write.
4. Low-skill. Lacking the ability to solve problems, organize and verbalize thoughts, conceptualize, and resolve conflicts (Taylor, 1989).
5. GED (General Educational Development) Certificate. The equivalent of a high school diploma earned by passing the GED test.
6. Functional illiterate. Hunter and Harman describes it as lack of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, job-holders, and members of social, religious or other associations of their choosing (Wood, 1990, p. 11).

#### OVERVIEW

Chapter I presented the problem of this study, provided background regarding the problem, and discussed why the problem was being studied. Also, this chapter gave the limitations and assumptions, and a list of definitions which will aid in

understanding certain terms used by the researcher. Chapter II reviewed the literature previously researched on this subject. Chapter III described the methods and procedures for collecting data, including various subjects surveyed, design of the questionnaire, and when and where the survey was administered. Chapter IV presented the data collected, and Chapter V described the summary, conclusions, and recommendations that resulted from the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature that was related to the objectives of this study. Contained within this chapter were sections on the benefits of GED graduation, economic implications of GED, and motivations and self-esteem of students who enrolled in GED programs.

### PHILOSOPHY OF GED

For nearly forty years, the General Educational Development (GED) Testing Program has been the principal means of obtaining a high school credential for adults who have failed to complete traditional high school. According to Larson (1981):

At the end of World War II, the military and the educational communities were faced with a problem. Many servicemen who had voluntarily left high school to fight in the war were handicapped by the lack of a diploma. It was assumed that, for many of these men, the education they received before the war, coupled with their military experience, led to a level of "general educational development" equal or superior to that of adolescent students completing high school. Rather than force these men to return to high school, the American Council on Education, working with the military, developed the GED testing program (p. I-1).

Since that time, the GED tests have become accessible to civilians, who currently comprise 97 percent of the total testing population (GED Testing Service, 1983). From 1976 to 1986, the number of persons taking the tests has doubled. In 1986, the volume of test-takers approached 800,000 ("High School Equivalency", 1984). Between 1971 and 1981, nearly four million adults have earned high school credentials by passing the GED tests (Malizio and Whitney, 1982), and approximately fourteen percent of the diplomas issued in the United States during 1981 were based on GED test results (Cervero and Peterson, 1982).

More adults were taking the GED tests in 1991. The number increased six percent from the previous year. In addition, the 1991 Statistical Report showed the number of GED graduates increased twelve percent in 1991. This marks the second year in a row that the number of people taking and passing the GED tests has shown increases. A total of 806,038 adults took the GED tests in 1991 in the United States, its territories, and Canada; 488,854 received GED Diplomas (GED Items, 1992, p. 1).

In the United States, forty-three states reported greater participation in the GED testing program. Ten states reported increases of at least 15 percent, with Oregon reporting the highest increase (36 percent), followed by Delaware (27 percent), North Carolina (26 percent), North Dakota (22 percent), Indiana (19 percent), Wisconsin (19 percent), Georgia (16 percent), Ohio (16 percent),



South Dakota (15 percent), and Tennessee (15 percent). In Canada, Nova Scotia reported a nearly 20 percent increase in participation for the second year in a row (GED Items, 1992, p. 1).

As public awareness of the testing program increased, a sizable educational enterprise designed to prepare adults to pass the GED tests came into being (Cervero, 1983; Malizio and Whitney, 1980). Nearly seventy percent of 1991 candidates that completed all five GED tests earned passing score, up slightly from seventy percent in 1990. Jean Lowe (Director, GED Testing Service) said, "At this passing rate, we know that nearly half a million GED graduates with excellent reading, writing, and reasoning skills are strengthening the work force every year" (GED Items, 1992, p. 2).

#### BENEFITS OF GED GRADUATION

The increase in participation in GED testing programs is attributed to several factors, including concern over the economy, better outreach efforts, and increased awareness of higher education and the need for upgraded skill for most jobs (GED Items, 1992, p. 1). There are additional benefits of GED graduation. They are: (a) the possibility of enrolling in college, trade and technical school, (b) sets better example for children, (c) feels better about self, (d) does job better, (e) is more likely to keep job, (f) got better job, (g) got pay increase,

(h) got job promotion, (i) working more hours (j) worked more months, and (k) stopped receiving public assistance (Valentine and Darkenwald, 1986, p. 27).

A study in 1991 consisting of 432 respondents, revealed that most students who passed the GED examination had a more positive attitude toward education and educational goals. There was a significant change in the overall employment status of graduates, from fifty-nine percent employed in fall of 1989 to sixty-six percent employed in spring of 1991. Another finding was that almost half of the graduates with further education as their primary goal enrolled in college degree programs within two years after earning their GED credential (GED Items, 1992, p. 6).

A random survey of GED recipients was conducted two years after recipients completed certificate requirements to determine if the GED attributed to gains in employment, education, community life, and personal development. Actual outcomes related closely to the expected outcomes of the federal adult basic education program in the areas of employment, education, and improving attitudes toward education, but few reported gains in community activities. Participants reported high gains in self-satisfaction and feelings of self-worth as a result of obtaining a GED certification (Thompson and Jimmerson, 1986, p. 27).

Based on the various data presented in this section, the main value of obtaining the GED certificate was its

boost to the recipients' feeling of self-confidence and self-worth. The GED certificate appeared to provide a "stamp-of-approval" from society which not only opens doors to employment and further schooling but also provides the recipient with the self-confidence to pursue those goals (Thompson and Jimmerson, 1986, p. 35).

#### ECONOMIC IMPLICATION OF GED

In a recent policy paper entitled "Workplace Competencies: The Need to Improve Literacy and Employment Readiness", it was maintained that the typical discussion of workplace literacy needs usually focused on formal education or on literacy. Although these were very important considerations, they were just one component of the ability required to function in the modern workplace (Hull and Sechler, 1987).

Results from a study indicated that basic literacy skills often serve as prerequisites to the learning of more technical knowledge. Company managers, instructors and union trainers reported that the types of skills needed to enter and progress on the job could be classified into five categories: reading, mathematics, writing, listening and speaking (Hull and Sechler, 1987). GED programs prepare adults in these areas.

Benefits such as job advancement, increased income, improved self-image, and further education prompted four million adults to earn high school credentials by passing

the GED tests between 1971 and 1981 (Malizio and Whitney, 1982). Through improving literacy and basic skills, productivity will increase (GED Testing Program, 1992, p. 9).

The economic tab for illiteracy totals approximately \$20 billion each year. Government studies have shown a high correlation between illiteracy and low-income levels, unemployment and under-employment, the need for public assistance, and involvement in crime; an estimated seventy-five percent of unemployed adults in the United States were functionally illiterate, costing taxpayers an estimated \$6 billion yearly in welfare and unemployment payments. In addition, an estimated \$237 million in unrealized earnings were forfeited annually by people who lack basic learning. Clearly, the costs were too high (Wood, 1990, p. 13). If we lost our economic power, then we will continue to lose, in measure, our strength and position as a leader internationally, in the military, in diplomacy or anything else (Squires, 1989, p. 2).

The Federal Adult Basic Education Act of 1984 and its Amendments provided funds to the States for adult basic and secondary education and for research, development, demonstration, and evaluation of adult education. These funds were allocated to the States on a formula basis and the States, in turn, funded local programs and special projects to help adults to become more employable and build self-esteem (Wood, 1990, p. 15).

It was certain that the need for Federal involvement would continue to grow with increased need for education. In 1984, Secretary of Education Terrell Bell reported that twenty-three percent of those entering ninth grade did not graduate with their class. There were forty-five million Americans eighteen years or older without high school credentials, and fourteen percent of the 3.5 million high school credentials issued in 1981 were through the GED test.

GED programs were clearly a positive approach to improving illiteracy in the workplace and for personal gain. The nation would continue to recognize the profitability of such a program. There has been growth of in-house programs in adult education in the private sector as employers began to view educational handicaps as occupational handicaps (Bedenbaugh and Rachal, 1985, p. 5). It was important that the benefits of GED programs be communicated to potential students, the general public, and legislators. It was equally important that the economic benefits of GED programs aid in the development of America's human resources (Ridlehuber, 1983, p. 7).

#### MOTIVATION AND SELF-ESTEEM

Illiterate adults suffer psychologically, socially and economically. Both the non-reader and the general public share certain myths about people who have poor reading skills or are illiterate. According to Eberlee

and Robinson, many illiterate people feel that something is wrong with them; they are dumb, morons, incompetent at everything and guilty of something, afflicted with illiteracy by their own choice, and as children in classrooms, wasted teachers' time, space and materials. Persons with poor skills often lack self-esteem, feel continually vulnerable and dependent, and also feel that they will make errors that will cost money and impair the safety of themselves and others. For many, this fear is real. In addition, they may expend enormous energy masking their illiteracy with elaborate excuses and strategies. For example, an illiterate adult may pretend that he or she can read by carrying a newspaper or magazine to work, or may order from a menu by "reading" the pictures rather than the words (Woods, 1990, p. 13).

In order to overcome these stigmas and fears, GED is affording adults the opportunity to become literate. Becoming literate means possible increased earning power and becoming more marketable for jobs that require high and better skills because of technology.

Boshier identified four motivations of adult education students in his Education Participation Scale:

1. Social Contact/Community Service/External Expectations. This motivation included such items as improving social relationships, making new friends, improving social position, preparing for community service, and participating in group activity. It was a motivating

factor particularly for students in the 16-20 year old age group.

2. Professional Advancement. This motivation included increasing job confidence, securing professional advancement, earning a degree, meeting formal requirements, gaining insight into personal problems, and carrying out recommendations of some authority. This was a motivating factor of the 16-35 year old age group.

3. Escape-Social Stimulation. This motivation included getting relief from boredom, overcoming frustrations of day-to-day living, escaping an unhappy relationship, escaping television, and sharing a common interest with a spouse or friend. This was a motivating factor of many groups, including non-whites.

4. Cognitive Interest. This motivation included learning just for the joy of learning, just for the sake of learning, seeking knowledge for its own sake, satisfying an inquiring mind, and providing a contrast to the rest of one's life. This was a motivating factor of the over 36 year old age group (Long, 1983, p. 13).

The expectation of acquiring flexibility in ones' occupation was probably the most often cited reason of adults for enrollment in GED programs. These adults linked literacy with self-worth and independence and viewed attaining literacy as a way to gain self-fulfillment (Bedenbaugh and Rachal, 1985, p. 26).

## SUMMARY

The review of literature explored research into the benefits of GED graduates, how the economy benefits from adults' participation in GED programs, and what motivates adults to participate in such programs. Also, the review of literature touched upon how adults' self-esteem improved as a result of participation in GED programs. Each year the enrollment in GED programs increased because the needs of business and industry have changed. Adults are finding in order to compete in a high technological society, they must prepare themselves by upgrading and improving their skills.

Chapter III discusses the methods and procedures used to determine if GED classes were adequately preparing students to compete in the high-tech, competitive job market. Also, did GED classes play a part in building student self-esteem. In this chapter, the population, instrument design, instrument administration, and statistical analysis are reviewed.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the survey and procedures used to obtain data for this research study. The data was obtained from Chesapeake General Educational Development (GED) Preparation classes which included English as a Second Language. In subsequent chapters, this data was interpreted to determine why the students enrolled in GED Preparation classes and if the GED Preparation classes helped students to obtain employment and build self-esteem. Noted in Chapter III were population, instrument design and administration, and statistical analysis.

#### POPULATION

Participants of the research were students who completed GED Preparation classes, including ESL, in 1991 and 1992 in Chesapeake, Virginia, Adult Learning Centers. This study included a population of 50: 40 GED Preparation students and 10 ESL students.

#### INSTRUMENT DESIGN

To obtain information about the population, a closed-form questionnaire was used. The questionnaire included questions pertaining to why students enrolled in GED Preparation classes. The questions asked guided

the researcher in determining if GED Preparation classes helped students to obtain employment, got a better job, sustained a job, and gained self-esteem. A sample of the survey form has been included in Appendix A to this study.

#### INSTRUMENT ADMINISTRATION

Survey forms were mailed to participants who completed GED Preparation classes in 1991 and 1992. The questionnaire forms were mailed on June 15, 1993. Written instruction, including purpose, was provided for the students. The students were given a two-week period to respond and return the questionnaire to the researcher. A copy of the cover letter is included in Appendix B.

#### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Survey data was compiled by the researcher so that findings as to why students enrolled in GED Preparation classes could be determined. Data was organized and then analyzed using percentiles. The data focused on: if GED preparation helped students obtain employment, get a better job, continue employment, and gained self-esteem.

#### SUMMARY

The population, instrument design, instrument administration, and statistical analysis permitted the researcher to collect data pertaining to why students

enrolled in GED Preparation classes. In Chapter IV, findings that resulted from the collection of data were further analyzed.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

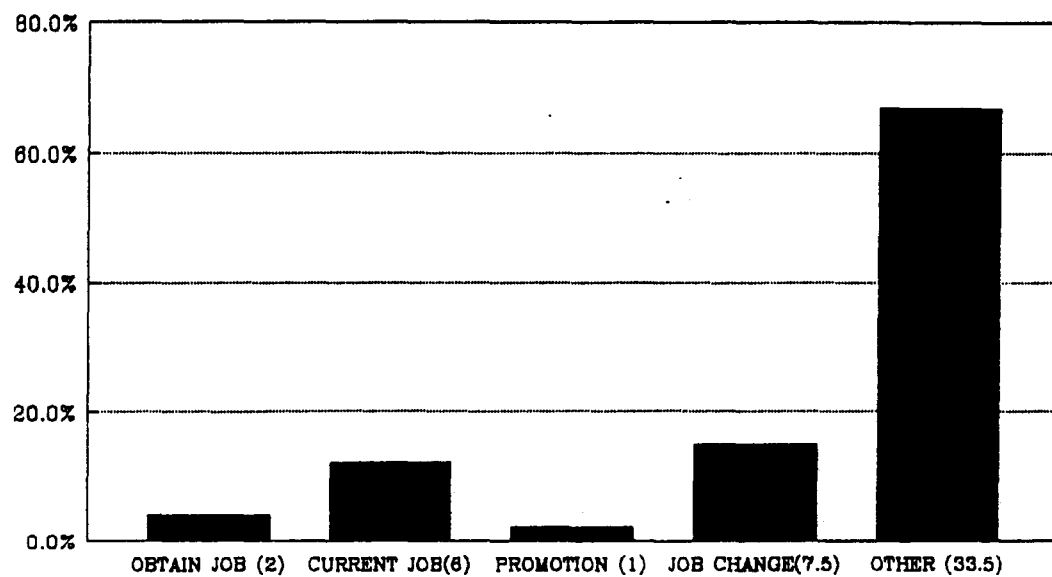
The purpose of this study was to determine if GED preparation classes helped students to gain employment and build self-esteem. Written explanations and tables were presented based on data collected from questionnaires sent out in June 1993 to graduates of the GED Program in Chesapeake Adult Continuing Education Program. The data collected was to be used to determine the following objectives:

1. If GED classes were adequately preparing students to compete in the high-tech, competitive job market.
2. If GED classes are building student self-esteem.

#### ENROLLMENT IN GED PREPARATION CLASSES

Table 1, Questions 1-7, contained the responses as to why students enrolled in GED Preparation classes in Chesapeake's Adult Continuing Education Program. Fifty students were administered questionnaires to determine why they decided to take GED Preparation classes. Ages ranged from below eighteen years of age to over sixty years of age. As Table 1 illustrates, every category received responses. However, the "other" category received the most responses (67%). Reasons such as ready to be out of school, self-improvement, needing to have a degree,

TABLE 1  
REASONS FOR GED ENROLLMENT



( ) Number of Students

■ PERCENT OF STUDENTS

and mandatory reasons were the responses why students enrolled in these classes. Four percent of the students enrolled to obtain a job, 12% to assist with their current job, 15% to prepare for a job change, and only 2% enrolled to receive a promotion. Also included was the desire to further their education by attending a community college or to attend a four-year university.

In response to question 5 of the questionnaire, 21% of the students got a job as a result of completing their GED and 10% did not. Seventy percent of the students indicated that they were already employed prior to enrolling in the GED program.

Question 6 contained information pertaining to if students got a promotion after completing their GED. Ten percent of the respondents indicated they did and a larger percent (90) did not get a promotion.

Question 7 addressed whether GED Preparation classes helped to make students more marketable in the job market. Ninety-five percent indicated that the classes helped to make them more marketable and five percent indicated the classes did not. Of the five percent that responded negatively, the reason stated was that they felt experience was more important than getting a degree.

#### GED PREPARATION CLASSES AND STUDENTS SELF-ESTEEM

Information obtained in question 8 relates to how students felt about themselves after completing their GED.

Ninety-five percent of the students felt GED Preparation classes helped them to feel better about themselves. The reasons were gained self-confidence, felt a sense of being able to accomplish something, a sense of completion and the courage to pursue higher education, and having the ability to learn. Five percent stated that they felt the classes did not help build their self-esteem.

Question 9 of the questionnaire addressed whether the students are currently employed. Eighty-eight percent of the students responded that they are currently employed and twelve percent are not currently employed.

#### SUMMARY

Information obtained from the questionnaire administered to students who completed their GED in Chesapeake Adult Continuing Education program was presented in this chapter. This data was used to determine why students enrolled in GED preparation classes and if the classes helped to build self-esteem. This information was presented in written explanation and table form. A summary of the findings, conclusions reached, and recommendations as a result of those findings and conclusions is presented in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter reported the summary of this study, the conclusions, and the recommendations as a result of the research data obtained from the questionnaires answered by GED graduate students in 1991 and 1992. The results were to be used to assist Chesapeake adult educators in planning more effective GED programs.

#### SUMMARY

This study indicated that students enrolled in GED Preparation classes in Chesapeake for a variety of reasons. They had different opinions as to whether the program helped them to feel better about themselves. Data collected was relevant and reliable and allowed for comments concerning the program. It also provided answers to the objectives of the study.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The researcher conducted a survey which established that students enrolled in GED Preparation classes for many reasons, such as obtaining employment, assisting with current job, receiving a promotion and preparing for a job change. Other reasons were stated such as being ready to finish school, self-improvement and needing a high school diploma for work requirement. Also evident



from the study was the desire on the part of these students to fulfill more personal goals such as self-satisfaction and improving their chances of going to a community college, a four-year university or a trade school.

Also, the researcher established that as a result of GED classes, the majority of students felt better about themselves. Feelings of self-confidence, sense of accomplishment and the courage to pursue higher goals were expressed.

Many of the students were currently employed even though a small percent (10) did not get a job after completing their GED. Ten percent of the students got a promotion.

The first objective of this study explored "if GED classes were adequately preparing students to compete in the high-tech competitive job market". Ninety-five percent of the students agreed that these classes helped them to be more marketable. The second objective of this study dealt with "if GED classes are building student self-esteem". Again, an overwhelming majority of the students felt that GED classes helped them to feel better about themselves. The outcomes of these objectives gave credibility and validity to this study and to the field of adult continuing education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data and the findings of this study, the researcher recommended the following:

1. That GED Preparation classes incorporate some type of work study program to give students some real world work experiences.

This recommendation was a result of responses by students that felt jobs are requiring people with experience.

2. That GED Preparation classes have more personalized instruction and smaller classes.

This recommendation was a result of responses by students that felt more personalized instruction and smaller classes would be more effective.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adult Education Program Brochure, Norfolk, Virginia.
- Bedenbaugh, Edgar H., and John R. Rachal. "Economics of Adult Basic and Secondary Education", Lifelong Learning, IX (September, 1985), 4-26.
- Cervero, Ronald M. "Is a Common Definition of Adult Literacy Possible?", Adult Education Quarterly, 36 (Fall, 1984).
- Cervero, Ronald M. "National Survey of GED Test Candidates Preparation, Performance, and 18-Month Outcomes". Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 7, (1983), 13-29.
- Cervero, Ronald M., and N. L. Peterson. "After the GED Tests: Employment and Training Activities of GED Examinees", GED Testing Service Research Studies No. 4, American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., November, 1982.
- Dole, Elizabeth. State of The Workforce Address: Delivered to the State Teachers and Principals of the Year, Washington D.C., October 26, 1989.
- GED Items: The Newsletter of the GED Testing Service, (September/October, 1992), 1-16.
- GED Testing Program: The First Fifty Years, American Council on Education (1992), 1-19.
- GED Testing Service, "1983 GED Statistical Report", American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., 1983.
- "High School Equivalency Test Volume Doubles", ETS Developments, 30 (1), (Summer, 1984), 9.
- "History and Governance of the GED Tests and Testing Program: Use of Tests and Credentials", 2-1; 2-2.
- Hull, W., and J. Sechler, "Adult Literacy: Skills for the American Workforce", National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio, 1987.
- Larson, G. A. "Toward a Rationale and Technical Specifications for an Adult High School Equivalency Exam", New Brunswick, N.J. Center for Adult Development: Research Monograph No. 5, Rutgers University, 1981.

- Long, Jerry. "Recruiting and Retaining the Prospective of Adult Basic and Secondary Education Student", Lifelong Learning, (October, 1983), 12-24.
- Malizio, A. G., and D. R. Whitney, "Examinee and High School Senior Performance on the GED Tests: A Detailed Analysis,
- Malizio, A. G. and D. R. Whitney, "1980 GED National Candidate Study", American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., 1980.
- Ridlehuber, Tom, "Adult Education--The Nation's Best Investment", Lifelong Learning, (June, 1983), 7.
- Taylor, Maurice C., "Workplace Literacy Demands", Proceedings from the Ninth Annual Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education Conference [June 1989]. Quebec City.
- Thompson, H. G., and R. M. Jimmerson, "Two-Year Follow-Up Study of GED Recipients in Washington State", Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 10 (1), (1986), 27-36.
- Valentine, Thomas, and Gordon G. Darkenwald, "The Benefits of GED Graduation and a Typology of Graduates", Adult Education Quarterly, 37, (Fall, 1986), 23-37.
- Wood, Bernie, "Literacy: Issues for the Coming Decade", Adult Learning, (June, 1990), 11-19.

**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

## SURVEY

## GED PREPARATION CLASSES

PURPOSE: This survey is being undertaken to determine if GED Preparation classes helped students to obtain employment. Data collected will assist adult educators in effectively designing these classes.

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the following questions by placing a ( ) in the spaces provided.

1. Age:

- Under 18  
 18-25  
 26-30  
 31-40  
 41-50  
 51-60  
 Over 60

2. Place of residence:

- Deep Creek  
 Great Bridge  
 Greenbrier  
 South Norfolk  
 Western Branch  
 Other

3. Were you employed prior to enrolling in the GED Preparation program?

Please check as many answers as apply in the following question:

4. Reason or reasons you enrolled in a GED Preparation class?

- To obtain a job  
 To assist with your current job  
 To receive a promotion  
 To prepare for a job change  
 Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you get a job as a result of completing your GED?

- Yes  
 No

6. Did you get a promotion as a result of completing your GED?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

7. Do you think GED Preparation classes helped to make you more marketable in the job market?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you feel GED Preparation classes helped you to feel better about yourself?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes (in what way) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Are you currently employed?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

**APPENDIX B**

Follow-up Letter



Dear Graduate,

I am currently a graduate candidate in the College of Education at Old Dominion University. I am working on a study to determine the effectiveness of GED Preparation classes. You recently received a letter from Dr. Elaine Chase asking your participation in this study. Without your input, it is impossible to complete this study. I truly need your assistance.

If you were hesitant in responding to the letter because of your status as a GED graduate, let me address the issue briefly. Your name will not be used in any way in this study. However, your input into the study is very important in order to construct my analysis. You need not sign the survey and the envelope bearing your name and address will immediately be destroyed for it has no importance in this study.

A high response rate is essential to the success of the study. Your participation can make a difference. Please help make the hard work spent on this research worthwhile. When you complete the enclosed survey, place it in the stamped envelope provided for your convenience and return it by June 30, 1993. It will only take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete this survey.

I sincerely appreciate your cooperation and support in this effort. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me on 804-667-2292 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. or 804-547-7578 after 5:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

Diane Calhoun