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A Follow-up Study of Business Education Graduates of Northampton High School for the Years 1980-81

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A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES OF
NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL
FOR THE YEARS 1980-81

A Research Paper

Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Doris M. Upshur

Spring, 1982

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, thanks to Dr. Joyner and Dr. Mason for their guidance and instruction.

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Doris M. Upshur 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 of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

Approved by: Mildred Mason
Mildred A. Mason, Ed.D
Advisor

April 5, 1982
Date

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5/5/82
Date

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

At the time of its inception in 1973, the office occupations curriculum, at Northampton High School, was designed to provide training relevant to the needs of the students. This objective was in keeping with the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Amendments of 1968 which mandated that emphasis be placed on planning programs that would fit the needs of those vocational education students who are to receive training. Many students have completed the business program since 1973. Studies indicate that a program evaluation is necessary in order to answer certain questions concerning the effectiveness of the program. Congress recognized the need for evaluation and program improvement by passing legislation. This legislation provided the basis for periodic evaluation of all vocational programs. In order to provide a program evaluation, a follow-up study should be done which will determine the number of business graduates who are actually employed in the area for which they were trained and how successful they perform the tasks learned.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the training received by the business education

students at Northampton High School as perceived by the employers of students completing the program during 1980 and 1981. The information obtained provided necessary data on which to make an evaluation of the business program at Northampton High School.

Research Goals

The data obtained from this study provided answers to the following questions:

1. Do the business education graduates entering the world of work possess job-entry-level skills?
2. Do the business education graduates entering the world of work possess job-entry-level employment attitudes conducive to achieving success as office workers?
3. Do the business education graduates entering the world of work display an understanding of the critical issues involved in absenteeism and tardiness?

Background and Significance of the Study

Many articles have been written concerning the preparation of office workers for the 80's. If educators accept the fact that change is taking place, then educators should take a new look at the skills, and traits needed to succeed in office careers.

Many follow-up studies have been done to ascertain the relevancy of the business curriculum. The federal government makes the job placement and follow-up a part of the vocational education evaluation program through federal legislation.

The findings of this study resulted in a better understanding of the effectiveness of the office occupations

curriculum at Northampton High School. The findings of this study gave the business teachers insight into the need to expand the curriculum. The results of the data gathering enabled the business department to follow-up one of the recommendations proposed as a result of the VEEVA Report for Business Education conducted by the State Department of Education in 1980.

Basic Assumptions

It was assumed in this study that:

1. Employers would respond to the questions regarding skills
2. Employers would respond to questions regarding attitudes
3. Employers would respond to questions regarding non-absenteeism and tardiness

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to students enrolled in the Stenography II and Clerk-Typist II Classes for the years 1980 and 1981. This study was limited to employers of graduates of the business program 1980 and 1981. No generalizations were made to any other vocational programs at Northampton High School or to other employers.

Procedures

The researcher developed a survey/questionnaire which consisted of questions concerning the Stenography and Clerk Typist programs at Northampton High School. The questionnaire was distributed to 44 graduates of the business pro-

gram at Northampton High School for the years 1980 and 1981. The researcher also developed a questionnaire for the employers of the business graduates. This survey was used to determine the success of the business graduates, thereby determining the effectiveness of the business program.

Definition of Terms

- Office Occupations Curriculum.....Part of the Business Program at Northampton High School which includes Stenography and Clerk Typist
- Job-entry-level skills..... Those skills and knowledges needed to make the initial job experience successful. For example, clerical operations, neatness, grammar usage.
- Job-entry-level attitudes..... Those attitudes needed to make the initial job experience successful. For example, dependability and promptness.
- Absenteeism and Tardiness..... A failure of workers to report on the job when

they are scheduled to
work.

VEEVA Report..... A study conducted in 1980
by the Virginia State
Department of Education
to determine if Vocational
Programs were in compliance
with State mandates for
Vocational Education.

Summary

In the preceding chapter the need to evaluate the Business Program at Northampton High School was discussed. This need was met by conducting a follow-up study of business graduates.

Chapter II concerns the review of the literature in regard to the Office Occupations Program.

Chapter III concerns the procedures used in the study.

Chapter IV reports the data gathered from the survey.

Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations drawn from this research.

Chapter II

Review of The Literature

Introduction

Educators across the nation have focused much attention on assessing relevance in business education. Many educators feel that when students know that their courses are designed to meet their needs, they become motivated. They learn more, they are confident, and become better workers and citizens. Maxwell, Winnett (1)

The cry for relevance came into focus with the Vocational Act of 1963 and the Amendments of 1968. This was a major mandate to place emphasis on meeting the needs of those who are to receive the training. Students were to receive training for job entry or career advancement. This legislation caused the development of the occupational curriculums, specifically for business education it was the office occupations curriculum.

Studies related to entry-level skills and attitudes

According to Klevins (2), over 15 million people, more than 17 percent of the total work force, were currently engaged in office work of some kind. In light of this fact, business teachers have a responsibility to see that students who are the employees in this job market receive the skills and knowledges necessary for job success.

Many employer surveys have been done in an effort to ascertain what employers expect of their workers. According to one study, employers of students with entry-level jobs felt that students need the ability to work diligently the entire day, they need to be punctual, and possess the ability to write clearly and simply, spell correctly, be neat and use correct grammar Melick and Iannizzi (3) According to further studies perhaps the most emphasized comments by employers were in the area of attitude and traits such as dependability and promptness. Attitude is important for business students. A positive attitude can facilitate enjoyable, continuous employment and job success. Teachers of business and office education must be realistic as well as innovative--they must teach positive attitude development in order to promote student employability and success in the business world.

According to another study, it was apparent that personality and attitude were very important attributes. Employers felt that getting along with fellow workers was very important. Many people were fired because of personality difficulties Stinespring(4) Other articles discussed personal qualities for job success as being: responsibility, initiative, resourcefulness and the ability to work well with others.

According to a study by Benton (5) absenteeism and tardiness have been matters of serious concern in every segment of business and industry. Employers expect workers

to be punctual. Some companies grant bonuses for good attendance.

According to an article written by Hoggart and Dowrey (6) an important determiner of success in today's business world was ability in the area of human relations.

Madison and Madison (7) discussed certain work habits and attitudes. Students should learn proper attitude from their instructors who should stress the importance of a favorable attitude. How to get along with people, how to act and how to react, has a bearing on the personality development of the individual. A good personality generally reflects favorable attitude, which in turn promote good work habits. These are prerequisites for advancement, security and the well-being of the individual as well as for the company for which he/she works. Attitudes affect appearance, which is an impressionable factor. If a beginning employee is assured because of appropriate dress and appearance, he/she is more apt to perform his/her tasks with concentration and expediency. Business teachers should stress work habits in all classes. They should constantly help students understand where and how work habits reflect the quality and quantity of work produced.

Summary

In this chapter the expectations of employers have been discussed. Much emphasis was placed on attitude. One writer thought of attitude as the key to employability. Attitudes were present and were manifested in the behavior

of every individual. Positive attitudes toward individuals, work, society and the universe has tremendous influence on the total person, his life and how successful he/she is in the business world.

The primary goal of business education should be to provide instruction that prepares students to acquire, adjust to and progress in entry-level business occupations.

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Chapter III

Methods and Procedures

Introduction

In order to determine the effectiveness of the business program at Northampton High School, a survey was conducted to obtain certain information regarding the courses offered in the business program. It was necessary to survey those students completing the business program. It was also important to obtain knowledge concerning the relevancy of the skills taught; therefore, it was necessary to survey the employers of students completing the program.

In this chapter the researcher discussed the procedures used to conduct the survey which included the administration of the instrument and the population of the study.

Procedures

The opinion survey/questionnaire was distributed to 44 graduates of the business education program at Northampton High School for the years 1980 and 1981. The questionnaire used in this study was constructed by the researcher. Questions were derived from several sources including some reference sources. Questions were made short and to the point. A questionnaire was also designed and sent to the employers of the graduates.

Population

The population for this study consisted of 44 females who were enrolled in Stenography II and Clerk-Typist II for the years 1980 and 1981. During the year 1981, ten (10) were enrolled in Stenography II and seventeen (17) were enrolled in Clerk-Typist II. In 1980, eight (8) were enrolled in Stenography II and ten (1) were enrolled in Clerk-Typist II. The population for this study also included the employers of the graduates for the years 1980 and 1981.

Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaire and cover letter were mailed to the graduates. The researcher also included a self-addressed envelope for the responses. A questionnaire was also sent to the employer of those graduates who were working. After receiving the responses, the researcher proceeded to compile the information. The data was analyzed in the following chapter. The results of the survey were compiled and presented with tables. The tables indicated the year of graduation, occupational status, present location of graduates, answers to direct questions by graduates concerning the Stenography and Clerk-Typist programs, answers to direct questions by employers concerning the skills and attitudes of graduates.

Summary

In this chapter the methods and procedures for the research study were discussed. The population included

44 graduates of the business program for the years 1980 and 1981. A survey/questionnaire was distributed to the graduates. A questionnaire was also sent to the employers of those graduates who were employed in office occupations. The information received from these surveys was analyzed in the next chapter.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the business education program at Northampton High School as perceived by the employers of the business graduates for the years 1980 and 1981.

In this chapter the researcher presented data gathered from the business graduates and from the employers of the business graduates. The data was presented with tables giving a breakdown of the occupational status, present location of graduates, answers to direct questions by the graduates, answers to direct questions by the employers. Comments from graduates and from employers were also presented in this chapter.

A questionnaire was sent to 44 business graduates of Northampton High School for the years 1980 and 1981. Thirty-nine, (eighty-eight percent) responded to the survey. A questionnaire was sent to four employers. All employers responded to the survey.

Explanation of Tables

Table I indicated the number of graduates completing the business program. In 1980 the number completing the

Stenography was eight; the number completing the Clerk-Typist program was ten. In 1981, the number completing the Clerk-Typist program was seventeen. The number completing the Stenography program was nine.

Table I
Number Completing Business Program

Year Graduated	Number Completing Stenography	Number Completing Clerk-Typist
1980	8	10
1981	9	17

Total 44

In Table II it can be seen that thirty-four of the business graduates resided in Virginia, seventeen (forty-five percent) resided on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, while two percent resided in other states.

Table II
Present Location of Respondents

Areas in Virginia	Number	Other States	Number
Eastern Shore	17	New Jersey	1
Norfolk	11	Indiana	1
Newport News	1	Washington D.C.	1

Table II (continued)

Areas in Virginia	Number	Other States	Number
Blueridge	1	North Carolina	1
Petersburg	2		
Richmond	1		
Lynchburg	1		
		Total	39

In Table III it can be seen that seventeen (forty-five percent) of the business graduates continued their education. Eight percent were employed in the field for which they were trained, twenty-seven percent were employed in other areas, and twenty percent were unemployed.

Table III
Present Occupational Status of Respondents

Year Graduated	College	Area of Training	Other Areas	Unemployed
1980	7	3	2	5
1981	10	1	8	3

Total 39

In Table IV it can be seen that seventy-seven percent of the graduates indicated that the overall quality of the business program was excellent. Eleven percent of the graduates indicated that the business program was good. The graduates were also asked about the subject that proved to be most helpful. Thirty-two (seventy-three percent of the graduates indicated that their typing skills were most helpful to them. In every instance the respondents indicated that they received sufficient knowledge to advance in their occupation.

Table IV

Answers to Direct Questions

Questions	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. How do you rate the quality of the clerk typist program	19	4	0	0
2. How do you rate the quality of the Stenography program	15	1	0	0
3. What business course proved to be most helpful	2	32	4	1

Gen. Bus. Typing Shorthand Acct.

Table IV (continued)

Question	Yes	No
4. Do you feel that you received sufficient knowledge and skills in the business program to advance within your field	39	0

Comments by Graduates

"I feel that I should have received shorthand skills along with the typing skills."

"I should have taken Shorthand."

" I should have taken accounting and Stenography."

These comments were made by graduates who continued their education in Business; however, lacked the necessary background in certain courses.

" Some courses in Data Processing should be added to the curriculum."

"In my opinion the Stenography and Clerk-typist Programs were beneficial. It could be improved by starting the program in the tenth (10th) grade and typing in the ninth (9th) grade. I think more can be learned."

"I think the program should be started in earlier grades in order to give students more time to learn the necessary skills and knowledges needed in the job market."

These graduates felt that the business program could be expanded to include Data Processing, and that typing should begin at the ninth (9th) grade level.

In Table V it can be seen that all of the employers indicated that the skills and knowledges displayed were favorable. One graduate is employed by a County Administrator, one by a Law firm, another by the Richmond Newspaper, and one by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. The employers indicated that the employees in question were outstanding in quality of work, dependability, attendance, attitude, and human relations.

Table V
Answers to Direct Questions

Questions	Favorable	Unfavorable
1. How do you rate the employees quality of work	4	0
2. How do you rate the employees dependability	4	0
3. How do you rate the employees attendance	4	0
4. How do you rate the employees attitude	4	0
5. How do you rate the employees human relations	4	0
Total		4

Comments by Employers

"Has real nice personality. Work attitude is excellent."

"Glad to have her as a part of our staff."

Summary

Table I indicated the number of graduates in the business program for the years 1980 and 1981. Table II indicated the present location of the graduates. Table III indicated the occupational status of the business graduates. Table IV gave answers to direct questions by the graduates concerning the Stenography and Clerk Typist Programs. Table V gave answers to direct questions by employers. Comments were also given by the graduates and the employers.

The researcher's summary, conclusions and recommendations were given in the following chapter.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The researcher chose to do a follow-up study of the 1980 and 1981 Northampton High School business graduates. The study was done with the following objectives in mind.

First, the study would result in a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Office Occupations Curriculum at Northampton High School.

Second, the findings of the study would give the business teachers insight into the need to expand the curriculum.

Finally, the report was done in order to comply with the recommendations proposed as a result of the VEEVA report for business education conducted by the State Department of Education.

In Chapter II the researcher discussed the results of various studies that had been done in an effort to ascertain what employers expect of their workers. Many employers felt that students with entry-level jobs need the ability to work diligently the entire day, they need to be punctual, and possess the ability to write clearly and simply, spell correctly, be neat and use correct grammar. Other employers felt that attitude was the key to employability. Positive

attitudes toward individuals, work, society and the universe has tremendous influence on the total person, his life and how successful he/she is in the business world.

In Chapter III the methods and procedures for the research study were discussed. A one-page questionnaire (8 questions) and a forwarding letter were mailed to forty-four Northampton High School business graduates on February 5, 1982. Thirty-nine of the graduates returned the questionnaire. After the responses of the graduates were received and compiled, a questionnaire was sent to the employer of those graduates who were working in their area of training. All of the employers contacted responded to the survey. The researcher compiled the data and presented the data in tabular manner. The interpretation of the data was presented using five tables in Chapter IV.

Summary of Findings

1. Thirty-four of the business graduates resided in Virginia.
2. Seventeen or forty-five percent of the graduates resided on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.
3. Five lived in other states.
4. Seventeen or forty-five percent continued their education at the college level.
5. Four or ten percent were employed in the area of training.
6. Ten were employed in other areas
7. Eight were unemployed.
8. All of the respondents felt that they did receive

sufficient knowledge and skills to advance in the business field.

9. Thirty-four or eighty-seven percent indicated that the overall quality of the business program was excellent.
10. Thirty-two or eighty-two percent felt that the typing skills received were most helpful to them.
11. All of the employers felt that the skills and attitudes demonstrated were favorable. All employers indicated that the graduates were assets to their staff.
12. A number of graduates who continued their education in business indicated that they failed to take all of the business courses offered; therefore, lacked sufficient background in certain areas.
13. Many graduates who completed the clerk-typist program indicated that they regretted not taking Shorthand.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

1. That the majority of the 1980 and 1981 business graduates remained on the Eastern Shore; however, only two of these graduates found employment in the area for which they were trained.
2. That the two graduates who did obtain employment on the Eastern Shore were successful in entry-level jobs.
3. That the office occupations curriculum at Northampton High School provided the necessary skills and attitudes for success in entry-level jobs.
4. That a significant number of graduates continued their education at the college level majoring in business.

Recommendations

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

1. That some effort be made to expand the curriculum to include a course in data processing or word processing.
2. That more emphasis be placed in the area of Vocational guidance so that business students who continue in business can take all of the necessary subjects to prepare them for college.
3. That every effort be made to give potential business graduates the opportunity to take Shorthand.
4. That a job placement service be established in order to help with employment of students who complete the business program.
5. That the office simulation program or the Co-Op Program be continued.
6. That other follow-up studies be done in order to have a continuing evaluation of the business program at Northampton High School.

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APPENDIX A

Phone
(804) 678-5144, 5401

Vocational Wing 678-5906

February 19, 1982

Mrs. Lisa Smith Lieske
7611 D. Jeff Street
Spring Lake, North Carolina 28390

Dear Mrs. Lieske:

I am presently enrolled in the Master's Degree Program at Old Dominion University. Part of the requirements for graduation is that I complete a research paper. I have selected to do a follow-up study of the Northampton Business Graduates for the years 1980 and 1981.

For this reason I am enclosing a short questionnaire which you are asked to complete and return to me. Your answers will be most helpful to me and other business teachers at Northampton. Your time and effort are appreciated.

A postage paid return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you again for your cooperation and may I urge you to complete and return the form while it is fresh in your mind.

Sincerely Yours,

Doris M. Upshur
General Business Teacher

Encl (2)

Letter to Graduates

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Graduating Class of _____

1. What business program did you complete?

Clerk-Typist _____ Stenography _____

2. How would you rate the overall quality of the Clerk-Typist Program?

_____ Poor _____ Fair _____ Good _____ Excellent

3. How would you rate the overall quality of the Stenography Program?

_____ Poor _____ Fair _____ Good _____ Excellent

4. Are you employed in the occupation for which you were trained? _____ Yes _____ No

5. What is the name of your employer _____

6. What business courses taken proved to be most valuable?

7. Do you feel that you received sufficient knowledge and skills in the business program to advance within your field _____ Yes _____ No

8. In what ways could the program be improved? _____

APPENDIX C

Northampton High School

28

Eastville, Virginia 23347

PI
(804) 578-5144, 5401

Vocational Wing 678-5906

February 19, 1982

Mr. R. Keith Bull, County Administrator
Northampton County
Eastville, Virginia 23447

Dear Mr. Bull:

I am presently enrolled in the Master's Degree Program at Old Dominion University. Part of the requirements for graduation is that I complete a research paper. I have selected to do a follow-up study of the Northampton Business Graduates for the years 1980 and 1981.

For this reason I am enclosing a short questionnaire which you are asked to complete and return to me. The questions asked are concerning one of your employees whose name appears on the questionnaire. Your answers will be most helpful to me and the other business teachers at Northampton High School. Your time and effort are appreciated.

A postage paid return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you again for your cooperation and may I urge you to complete and return the form while it is fresh in your mind.

Sincerely yours,

Doris M. Upshur

Encl (2)

Letter to Employers

APPENDIX D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Employers

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone No. _____

Name of Employee _____

 Please rate the following as favorable or unfavorable

	Favorable	Unfavorable
1. The quality of work produced	_____	_____
2. Dependability.....	_____	_____
3. Attendance.....	_____	_____
4. Attitude.....	_____	_____
5. Human Relations.....	_____	_____

Comments: