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A Study of the Relationship Between General Business and Business Block Programs at Poquoson High School

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A Study of the Relationship Between General
Business and Business Block Programs
At Poquoson High School

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Old Dominion University

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

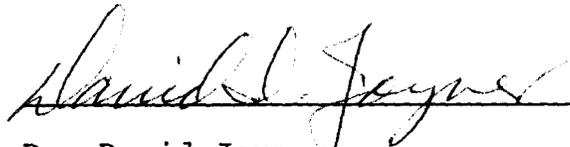
by
Ann F. Semeyn
April 21, 1981

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This research paper was prepared by Ann F. Semeyn under the direction of Dr. David Joyner in VIAE 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:



May 4, 1951
Date

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL BUSINESS
AND BUSINESS BLOCK PROGRAMS AT POQUOSON HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years there has been much controversy over the requirement of a general business course by students wishing to enter the business education block programs of stenography and clerk typing. The Virginia State Department of Business Education suggests general business as a prerequisite to the block programs. Poquoson High School now adheres to this policy by requiring the completion of general business by all students wishing to enroll in either stenography or clerk typing programs. The purpose of this study is to determine the need for the general business requirement. This will be accomplished by reviewing related literature concerning this subject, and by investigating the effects of general business on students previously enrolled in business education block programs at Poquoson High School.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine the influence of the course, general business, on the achievement of students enrolled in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing at Poquoson High School.

RESEARCH GOALS

The basic objective of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. Does the course, general business, have a significant effect on the achievement of students enrolled in block programs of stenography and clerk typing at Poquoson High School?
2. Should completion of the course, general business, be a requirement of all Poquoson High School students enrolling in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Before one considers the influence of the course, general business, on any high school student, he/she must understand primarily what the course entails. General business, as the course is known in most Virginia school systems, is one of the principle subjects involved with the economic emphasis in business education. Some other titles for the course may be basic business, consumer education, or any of a dozen other courses containing either the word business, consumer, economics, or law.

The philosophy of this course of study has progressed considerably over the decades. During the twenties the emphasis was on junior business knowledge for getting a job at a young age. The depression years of the thirties brought out consumer emphasis and in the fifties the main concern was with economic principles. In general, three roles of the individual as worker, consumer, and citizen are explored in general business

classes (1, p. 37).

Sluder (3, p. 190) found that the important objectives recommended by general business teachers during different decades revealed that the objectives have not changed to any great extent since the thirties. There is general agreement that the greatest contribution made by the course is in the development of an understanding of the common business principles and basic economic concepts needed by the average citizen in conducting his/her personal and business affairs. Sluder (3) also determined from an analysis of 27 studies involving 14 surveys concerned with the business activities and opinions of various groups and 13 analyses of textbooks that the major topics considered appropriate for the general business course were banking, insurance, communications, savings, transportation, consumer buying, credit, travel, occupational information, legal information, business records, business organization, money, budgeting, taxation, filing, merchandising, money management, introduction to business, government and business, personal traits and ethics, home ownership, and business mathematics.

As one can see, the general business course has played a variety of roles in the educational schematic. At one time or another, this course has been geared to develop either vocational, prevocational, consumer, or economic competencies in students. A unique characteristic of modern general business is that all of these goals are currently being implemented throughout the country, giving rise to a widespread feeling of confusion about

just what the true objectives of general business ought to be.

A review of recent literature would lead one to believe that there is agreement on the objectives of general business. While many general business courses do strive toward the objectives of providing the economic understandings necessary for students to function effectively in their roles of citizens, consumers, and wage earners, many classrooms are operating by objectives that run counter to much of this subject matter. While some students learn how to write checks, use the telephone, buy an airline ticket, or apply for credit, other general business students are receiving a conglomeration of instruction in typewriting, shorthand, recordkeeping, and salesmanship. A recent survey by a textbook publisher found that some general business teachers wanted textbooks that included filing exercises, arithmetic, and office machines instruction. In other classrooms, the basic business course stresses consumer education or theoretical economics to the virtual exclusion of other content. Surprisingly enough, all of this subject matter is being "lumped" under the guise of general business (4, p. 181).

It is all too apparent that the content and objectives of general business are truly an issue to be explored. It is my main concern in conducting this study, to determine what influence the objectives and content of the general business course at Poquoson High School actually have on the achievement of students enrolled in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited by the following:

1. It sampled only a small portion of students involved in business education at Poquoson High School. Only the grades of 1980 graduates who completed either stenography or clerk typing block programs were reported.

2. Exposure by some individuals to economic or business related courses other than general business courses were not considered.

ASSUMPTIONS

It was assumed in this study that:

1. Grades received in stenography and clerk typing were valid and not subjective in any way.

2. Students whose grades were reported were representative of the total population of business education students.

3. The fact that students have or have not had general business was the only variable being tested.

4. Differences in ability of the students whose grades were reported was minimal.

PROCEDURES

The subjects of this study were 1980 graduates of Poquoson High School who had completed either a stenography or clerk typing block program. The final grades of each student in the respective courses were collected. It was then determined whether each student had completed general business prior to stenography or clerk typing. The students' grades were then

classified according to those who had completed general business and those who had not. The t-test was then used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two means.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

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

1. General business - a one-year, single-period course offered on an elective basis primarily for 9th and 10th grade students. The course is designed to help the students understand the activities of business and how business affects their everyday lives.

2. Stenography block I - a double-period occupational preparation course offered at the 11th and 12th grade levels. A shorthand system is taught along with communication skills. Office machines, secretarial procedures, recordkeeping, and secretarial skills are integrated in the instructional approach.

3. Stenography block II - a double-period occupational preparation course offered at the 12th grade level. Emphasis is on refining stenographic and secretarial skills developed in stenography block I. This is accomplished through office simulation and cooperative office education.

4. Clerk typing block I - a double-period occupational preparation course offered at the 11th and 12th grade levels. Development of production typing skill is emphasized along with instruction in ten-key calculating, records management, office duplication, office practices and procedures, recordkeeping,

business behavior, and office careers orientation.

5. Clerk typing block II - a single-period occupational preparation course offered at the 12th grade level. Emphasis is placed on the production of quality typed material along with the refinement of skills through office simulation or related work training through cooperative office education.

SUMMARY

In Chapter I the problem and objectives of the study have been presented. The reader has also been given a background and significance for the study, its limitations, assumptions, and definition of terms. A brief description of the procedures involved with collecting and treating the data was also discussed.

In the following chapters the literature related to this study will be reviewed, the methods and procedures used to collect and treat data will be discussed in detail, and an analysis of the findings of the study along with recommendations and conclusions will be presented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

In studying the relationship between general business and business block courses of stenography and clerk typing, it was found that the primary topic of concern is the general business course itself. Van Hook (7, p. 178) lists some of the issues related to this topic such as: Should it be a required course? At what level should it be offered? Which instructional techniques are most effective? What should be the duration of the course? Should the name be changed? The list of issues is virtually endless. They are issues that have been debated for years and remain largely unresolved. The various arguments, both pro and con, are well known to business educators, but of greater importance, these issues usually involve more critical issues, which, if ever resolved, would eliminate further discussion of the previous questions. Therefore, this chapter will explore current schools of thought, individual studies, and suggestions made by well-known authorities concerning the relationship between general business and the business education block programs of stenography and clerk typing.

CURRENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Business education in the high school curriculum primarily includes the development of effective stenographers, clerk

typists, and other related fields of employment. This curriculum is currently having a noticeable impact upon the general business course. There are three phases involved in business education, according to Van Hook (7, pp. 178-179), which include business career awareness, exploration, and preparation. Of these three phases, career exploration has the greatest implication for curricular change in general business. Two schools of thought on this issue seem to be emerging. Both views agree that career exploration has a definite place in the general business course, but they differ as to its emphasis.

School of thought number one advocates the inclusion of business career exploration in the course without tremendous emphasis on the topic itself. A variety of suggestions for implementing the topic have been discussed. The most common is a unit approach in which students would receive general information on such items as future occupational growth, locating career related information, and diagnosing one's own interests and potentials.

School of thought number two presents business career education as the backbone of the general business course. A return to the business exploratory approach is advised in which students would receive a preview of the advanced offerings of the business department. The content of the restructured general business course would comprise some degree of typewriting, shorthand, accounting, office machines, and so forth. Through this concept, students could decide which courses to select in beginning their career preparation.

Van Hook (7) states that both schools of thought contain advantages and disadvantages. The unit approach found in the ~~first~~ school of thought has been criticized for providing too little in the area of relevant exploratory experiences. Contrarily, the business exploratory approach has been criticized for presenting subject matter to students who may be unable to cope with that content. Personnel in some schools have found that students who had been exposed to stenography instruction at the junior high grade levels were reluctant to enroll in the high school courses. These very young students who had achieved less than satisfactory success in the exploratory stenography were not eager to repeat the experience.

Simply stated by Van Hook (7), the issue at hand appears to be whether general business will be of service to, or a servant of, business education.

INDIVIDUAL STUDIES

One of the main objectives, as viewed by leaders in the field of business education, (1) is the need for developing economic concepts within students of general business. Whitney (8, p. 140) reports that an extensive study was conducted in New York by a commission of the Alpha Mu Chapter of Delta Pi Epsilon in 1977. The study was conducted to determine the level of competence of the graduating high school seniors in the area of basic business. It was found that after answering 50 true-false questions, 78 percent of the over 10,000 students surveyed scored below 65 percent. The two questions that were asked by the commission were: Are high school graduates leaving school

without sufficient basic business skills necessary to adequately manage one's personal business affairs? And, what role is the business education department playing to provide all students with the basic business skills necessary to manage one's personal business affairs?

In the study reported by Whitney (8), it was found that students who had taken general business scored no higher than those who had not taken the course. One possible conclusion drawn by the commission was that basic business skills were not being taught in the typical general business course. The requirement of a one-semester course for all graduating seniors was recommended by the commission.

Another study was conducted by Thomas B. Duff (2), at the University of Minnesota in 1976. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there are differences in the level of personal economic understanding of high school students who have completed a general business course, and of high school students who have not completed such a course. The Test of Understanding in Personal Economics (TUPE) was the instrument used to measure the economic understanding of 192 juniors and seniors during the 1972-73 school year at Richfield High School in Minnesota. One of the findings of the study revealed that the completion of some type of economics course, regardless of the content, is likely to increase the level of economic understanding.

Based on Duff's (2) findings, it was recommended that the objectives and content of each secondary level course designed to develop economic understanding should be identified,

and an appropriate criterion measure should be used to determine whether the course objectives are being accomplished.

Millie Frandino and Eileen Duffy (3, pp. 23-24), business teachers at Monroe-Woodbury High School in Central Valley, New York were disturbed with the general business curriculum at their school and decided to conduct an experiment in content and scheduling of the course. In an attempt to reach a greater number of students and to teach some of the basic needs which had been neglected in the past, the traditional one-year course requirement for general business was revised and broken up into the quarter-course system. Each quarter course offered credit, required attendance, and was looked upon as an in-depth curriculum offering of the business department. The one-year curriculum was further expanded to offer seven quarter courses consisting of; (1) Basic Economics, (2) The Court System, (3) Principles of Banking and Insurance, (4) Consumer Education I, (5) Consumer Education II, (6) The Working Citizen, and (7) Business Management. These ten-week courses expanded the original one-year general business course into a year and three quarters, enabling students to choose any four of the seven for a general business unit requirement. The courses were then opened to any student, business-non-business from grades nine through twelve. The experiment produced an over 100 percent increase in enrollment in general business courses as well as related courses which required general business as a prerequisite. The results also indicated that academically oriented students were being integrated into the business program.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

In the 1977 National Business Education Association Yearbook, Schultheis and Clow (6, p. 24) suggest that business educators adopt a broadly based conceptualization of career education which encompasses the various facets of life rather than a narrow orientation to career development.

Anne Nemesh (5, p. 3) agrees when she states that much of the present general business curriculum is important and useful, but some improvement is required. She states further that all teachers play a significant role in students' development of economic awareness, and an interdisciplinary approach can be useful. Social studies teachers present consumer law, energy issues, and housing concerns; English teachers explore language usage through advertising and the media; science teachers develop a greater awareness of ecological problems; and business teachers cover banking skills and unit pricing in a number of courses. This overlapping of content, according to Nemesh (5), results in unnecessary repetition of information and consequently, students who become bored with business-related material and therefore do not wish to enroll in other business courses.

Jones (4, p. 16) states that perhaps it is time for business educators to think seriously about new organizational patterns for offering general business content in the curriculum. The traditional patterns of organizing the subject matter as consumer education, economic education, and career education encourages the duplication of some content areas and the

ommission of others. The same can be said for the multiple course offerings. Many business courses have expanded their content so much in recent years that excessive repetition of various material frequently occurs among them. This results in business education students receiving an unnecessary abundance of the same information in different business subjects.

Jones (4, p. 16) contends that the total body of general business content can and should be offered in fewer courses. He suggests that by carefully selecting and sequencing the subject matter, better basic business education can be offered in two courses--a two-semester course at the freshman and sophomore levels and a two-semester course at the junior and senior levels.

SUMMARY

After reviewing the related literature it was found that many authorities disagree as to how the content and objectives of general business should be implemented. It was also found that many discrepancies exist concerning the role of general business in influencing students' achievement in other business courses as well as in their total environment. In the next chapter, the methods and procedures used to determine the influence of general business on the achievement of business education students enrolled in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing at Poquoson High School will be discussed.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the procedures involved in collecting, treating, and analyzing the data obtained from this study. This was accomplished by describing the population involved, the collection of data, and the statistical techniques used in the final analysis.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

The subjects of this study consisted of all 1980 graduates of Poquoson High School who were enrolled in either stenography block I, stenography block II, clerk typing block I, or clerk typing block II during the 1979-1980 school year. To insure accuracy of numbers, the subjects were obtained from the guidance department records at Poquoson High School. All subjects in the study were female and the total number enrolled in each of the block courses were as follows:

Stenography I	3
Stenography II	8
Clerk typing I	1
Clerk typing II	<u>12</u>
Total subjects	24

Each of the preceding subjects had been determined by guidance personnel to be of average to above average ability.

COLLECTION OF DATA

After it was determined that there were 24 subjects to be studied, the final grade received by each subject in her respective block course was recorded. Since only letter grades are recorded by the guidance department at Poquoson High School, numerical values of 1 through 4 were assigned in this manner: A=4, B=3, C=2, and D=1.

The records of each subject were further reviewed to determine whether or not each student had completed the course, general business. The subjects were then classified into two groups-- those who had completed general business, and those who had not.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The means of each group of scores were then computed. A t-test of mean differences was performed for the specified variable of general business. The result of the t-test was applied using the proper degree of freedom to determine the level of significance.

SUMMARY

This chapter has described the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data for this study. In the preceding chapters, the findings, recommendations, conclusions, and summaries reached by the researcher will be stated.

The means of groups A and B were 2.8 and 2.64 respectively. The sum of the deviations squared were 5.6 and 7.22 respectively. Table II shows the application of the previous figures to the t-test formula.

TABLE II

$$t = \frac{2.8 - 2.6}{\frac{5.6 + 7.22}{10 + 14 - 2} \sqrt{\frac{10 + 14}{10 \times 14}}}$$

$$t = 2.0024$$

The result of the t-test was then applied to Table III of J. T. Spence's Elementary Statistics (1) at the proper degree of freedom which indicated the value of t for one-tailed and two-tailed tests at specified levels. The degree of freedom for this sample was 22 ($10 + 14 - 2 = 22$).

By using the figures in Spence's Table III (1), it was determined that the t-test result of 2.0024 was significant at the .025 level of a one-tailed test and at the .050 level of a two-tailed test. Thus, the findings of this study indicated that the variable, general business, had a significant effect on the achievement of students enrolled in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing at a range of 2.5 to 5 percent.

In the last chapter the researcher will use the findings to draw conclusions and make recommendations as to whether general business should be required of all students enrolling in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing at Poquoson High School.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to question the need for requiring the completion of the course, general business, by all students enrolled in the business education block programs of stenography and clerk typing at Poquoson High School. As a means to accomplish this goal, a study was conducted to determine the influence of general business on the achievement of students enrolled in stenography and clerk typing programs at Poquoson High School.

After an extensive review of the literature related to this topic, the researcher found that sufficient provocation existed to encourage proceeding with the study.

Chapter III explained the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data involved in the study. The data consisted of grade point averages of 1980 graduates enrolled in stenography and clerk typing during their senior year. The GPA's were then classified into two sets--those who had completed general business and those who had not completed such a course. The means of the two sets were then applied to a t-test in order to determine whether a significant difference existed.

The findings were given in Chapter IV, which presented tables to illustrate the procedures used. The results indicated that the course, general business, had a significant effect on

the achievement of students enrolled in the block programs of stenography and clerk typing at a range of 2.5 to 5 percent.

In the next two sections, the researcher will draw conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for improvement of the current practice.

CONCLUSIONS

From the results indicated in the findings of Chapter IV, it can be concluded that 1980 graduates of Poquoson High School who had completed general business had a slightly higher GPA mean in the courses of stenography and clerk typing than those who had not completed general business. This higher mean proved to be significant only at a range of 2.5 to 5 percent, however.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the procedures involved in researching this problem, the data that was collected and analyzed, and the results that were obtained, it can be implied that:

1. The findings indicate that the influence of the course, general business, is not significant enough to merit a requirement of the course by all students who enroll in stenography or clerk typing block programs at Poquoson High School.

2. The findings in this study should be expanded into further research before the conclusions presented can be confirmed or refuted.

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