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A Longitudinal Study of Vocationally Trained High School Graduates to Determine the Relationship of Vocational Training to Present Employment, Leisure Time Activities and Continued Education

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A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF VOCATIONALLY TRAINED HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATES TO DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIP OF VOCATIONAL
TRAINING TO PRESENT EMPLOYMENT, LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES
AND CONTINUED EDUCATION

by

Sylvia Joyce Stull

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the
Degree of Specialist in Education
Department of Counseling and Personnel

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1980

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF VOCATIONALLY TRAINED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES TO DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIP OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO PRESENT EMPLOYMENT, LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES AND CONTINUED EDUCATION

Sylvia Joyce Stull, Ed.S.

Western Michigan University, 1980

A longitudinal follow-up was conducted of three and five year graduates of vocational high school programs in Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg and Marcellus High Schools in Southwestern Michigan. A questionnaire was administered to determine if high school vocational training was related to the graduate's present occupation, leisure time activities and advanced educational training.

Only 18% of the questionnaires were returned. The findings revealed 61% of the respondents indicated present employment was directly or somewhat related to vocational training in high school; 46% of those who responded replied that present leisure time activities were directly or somewhat related to their high school vocational training; 58% indicated that secondary vocational training was directly or somewhat related to advanced training.

Because of the very small percentage of returned responses, no conclusions can be drawn from this study. Rather, the results might be thought of as a sampling of a larger population. Follow-up is already in progress in an effort to obtain a sufficient number of responses from which some generalizations could be drawn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very appreciative of the support of my supervisor, Ned B. Sutherland, and members of the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District for their support and guidance in the completion of this project. The members of my committee, Dr. Thelma M. Urbick, Dr. Richard E. Munsterman, and Dr. Gordon G. McMahn receive my special gratitude as does Dr. Paul Griffeth who encouraged me in the initial stages of this endeavor. Most of all, I want to thank my husband, Pete, and my children, Nicholas, Kimberly, and Christopher without whose support and cooperation I could not have completed my goal.

Sylvia Joyce Stull

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, ED.S., 1980

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The term "follow-up study" designates a technique. The technique is a study made of the experience and status of former pupils; either for the purpose of assisting them in further adjustment, or for securing information to help improve instruction or guidance for those still in school. In Vocational Education, this term refers to a research activity designed to determine what occupations are pursued by graduates and/or former pupils in occupational programs and how effective their preparation was in relationship to job requirements (Cock, 1977).

There are several other formal definitions of "follow-up," but the central theme in a definition of follow-up is that a former student or his employer is asked to express values and opinions about certain factors involved with the educational process.

Obviously, if follow-up data is not used, it has little, if any, value. Data collected in the most effective follow-up programs are of questionable worth when they are relegated to virtual non-use and merely shelved for future reference. An effective follow-up program is comprised of several processes, one of which is the actual utilization of the information collected (Headrick, 1977).

A follow-up is credible on the day it is filled out. For example: If an individual were to fill out a follow-up for today, send it in, and five minutes afterward drop dead, the person would, in terms of many of the responses, be operating on false information. A follow-up should contain information which is pertinent, relative, and credible. A follow-up must be specific and must have a use. A follow-up must be directed towards obtaining information that can and will be used, either in curriculum modification, program development, or in the total process of evaluation (Ohio Placement Guide, 1978).

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if students who graduated from a Vocational High School Program, from Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg and Marcellus High Schools, have entered into employment in jobs related to their high school program.

Objectives of this Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the number of students who have entered employment related to the high school vocational training.
2. To determine if the vocational training received in high school is useful in their leisure life.

roles.

3. To determine the number of students who are receiving vocational-technical training as related to their high school vocational training.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine the number of students who have entered into jobs related to the vocational training they received in high school. To obtain this information, the study was designed to collect information from 1975 and 1977 vocational graduates, from the following Michigan High Schools: Dowagiac, Edwardsburg and Marcellus. A survey instrument was developed to answer the following questions:

1. Is the present job of the graduate related to the vocational training received in high school?
2. Is the vocational training related to leisure time activities?
3. How many students continued their education in a field related to their vocational training?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is threefold. First, to determine if these particular schools can justify the expense of their vocational programs. Second, to deter-

mine if the training offered these students is relevant to the needs of their communities. Third, to evaluate the relationship of the vocational programs offered in these communities to the relatedness of jobs in three and five years after high school graduation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Purpose of Review

The purpose of the review of literature for this study was to obtain information relative to the process of developing and conducting a longitudinal follow-up study. If it was discovered that proper significance could be attributed to such surveys, then an application with vocational students would be sought.

Purpose of Follow-up

Since most educational programs are usually dedicated to the objective of preparing individuals to succeed in life, one way to discover whether or not the curriculum is appropriate or needs to be changed is to investigate how well graduates succeed at higher educational levels, in their vocation, and in their community. Follow-up of graduates may be elaborate or simple, but basically the school turns to the former pupil and asks: 1) What experiences did you have in our school which proved to be the most valuable to you? 2) What experiences were of the least value? 3) If you could do it all over again and were in a position to make changes, what would you recommend (Oliver, 1965)?

Follow-up in Vocational Education is the means utilized to provide current data to the educational institution for assistance in evaluation programs as well as in providing valid reasons for decision making. One of the main reasons for the follow-up study is to secure feed back information from students, employers and educational administrators. The feed back derived from these sources is useless to Vocational Educators, unless it is utilized to determine the effectiveness of instructional programs in meeting their stated goals and objectives. A good utilization of follow-up information can help the Job Placement Coordinator assist students in finding immediate employment, in changing or upgrading jobs, and in obtaining further education. It also assists the vocational training institution in evaluating and making recommendations for revising existing vocational curricula and in implementing, if necessary, new occupational training programs (Gibson, 1975).

Follow-up data are extremely important to local and state educational agencies, and since federal support programs are often involved, they are equally important to the United States Office of Education. In fact, federal requirements for the collection of follow-up information have been expanded by Title II, Section 112, of the 1976 Vocational Amendments. Since the best follow-up systems are usually dependent upon data collected in

well designed and properly implemented local educational agency follow-up programs; integration and articulation of information from all levels is essential. Thus, the need and importance of follow-up, especially at the local level, is an educational fact of life.

Many school districts and individual institutions collect follow-up information for their own varied purposes and needs. Irrespective of the institution or agency called upon to collect the data, follow-up studies are generally gathered for four major purposes: 1) to improve programs; 2) to provide a basis for accountability; 3) to aid in planning and 4) to aid in decision making (Headrick, 1977).

Follow-up Procedures

Information must be obtained periodically after the exit of students from occupational training programs. This information is necessary to evaluate and make recommendations for revising vocational curriculum. The Placement Specialist must be able to contact each vocational student at the end of one, three and five year periods of time. In order to do this, an office procedure and filing system must be developed. A form must be developed. Data must be completed which indicates strengths and weaknesses and overall trends of each occupational area. This information must be distributed

to all individuals who would be instrumental in evaluating and revising vocational curriculum. Annual contact with employers must be maintained to ascertain employer's satisfaction, career advancement of the former student, and other information.

Follow-up data must be summarized and overall trends communicated to the administration, counselors, instructional staff, and other individuals who would be instrumental in evaluating and revising vocational curriculum (Gibson, 1977).

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The principal purpose of this study is to determine if graduates from vocational high school programs have entered into employment in jobs related to their high school program. Information was gathered by questionnaire from three and five year graduates from four Southwestern Michigan High Schools of various populations in the spring and summer of 1980. The data was then analyzed, compared and reported.

Data Collection

To obtain information relevant to the purpose of this research, data on relatedness of vocational training to employment information was collected from 1975 and 1977 vocational high school graduates from four Southwestern Michigan communities. The questionnaire survey method was used to generate data to answer the following research questions:

1. Is the present job of the graduate related to the vocational training received in high school?
2. Is the vocational training of the graduate related to leisure time activities?
3. How many students continued their education in

a field related to their vocational training?

Population

Vocational graduates of 1975 and 1977, from four Michigan high schools were surveyed. The secondary schools selected were Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, and Marcellus. Table 1 indicates the vocational enrollment ranges of the participation schools.

Table 1
Enrollment Range of School Population

Schools	1975 Vocational Graduates	1977 Vocational Graduates
Cassopolis	97	38
Dowagiac	130	117
Edwardsburg	87	62
Marcellus	36	23
Total	350	240
Total Population	590	

Procedures

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and the cover letter (see Appendix 2) were mailed to the graduates.

The cover letter was on stationery provided by Lewis Cass Intermediate School District. The envelopes were provided by the four local schools. This was done to insure a better response. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was enclosed in each mailing packet. Prior to mailing, the survey researcher had designated on the questionnaire, the vocational high school class which had been completed by the graduate. (See Appendix 1, questions 18, 19, 25)

Research Questions

The study focused on obtaining information on three research questions:

1. Are the present jobs of the graduates related to the vocational training received in high school?
2. Are the leisure time activities of the graduate related to the vocational training received in high school?
3. Did students who received vocational training in high school continue their education/training in a field related to their vocational training?

Data Analysis

For the purpose of this study, simple percentages were sufficient to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to learn if the students who graduate from vocational high school programs have entered into jobs related to their high school programs. Data were collected in the spring and summer of 1980 through use of a mail questionnaire. The survey results are presented in this chapter. Three research questions were the basis for organization of this study.

1. Are the present jobs of the graduates related to the vocational training received in high school?
2. Are the leisure time activities of the graduate related to the vocational training received in high school?
3. Did students who received vocational training in high school continue their education/training in a field related to their vocational training?

Data on the Return of the Questionnaire

Four Southwestern Michigan High Schools were chosen as the population for this study: Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg and Marcellus. A summary of questionnaire returns is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of Returns

Questionnaire	Cassopolis	Dowagiac	Edwardsburg	Marcellus
Returned	22 (16%)	38 (15%)	26 (17%)	21 (36%)
Not Able to Locate	11 (8%)	32 (13%)	24 (16%)	10 (17%)
Not Returned	102 (76%)	177 (72%)	99 (67%)	28 (47%)
Total	135	247	149	59

One hundred and seven (18%) of the total students surveyed responded. Seventy-seven graduates were not able to be located. Three hundred and six (52%) of the questionnaires were not returned.

Three objectives and research questions were formulated to carry out the purpose of the study. The summary of findings has been organized around the below listed objectives and questions. (See Table 3 categorical percentages)

Objective 1 To determine the number of students who have entered employment related to their high school vocational training.

Research
Question 1 Is the present job of the graduate related to the vocational training received in high school?

Only 83 graduates, 14% of the total population of 590, 77% of the 107 respondents replied to this question. Of those responding 27, 4.5% of the total population, 32% of the respondents, stated that their jobs were directly related to their vocational training. (See Table 3) Twenty-four, 4% of the total population, 29% of the respondents, stated that their jobs were somewhat related to their vocational training. Thirty-two, 5.4% of the total population, 39% of the respondents, stated that their jobs were not related to their vocational training.

Objective 2 To determine if vocational training in high school is related to leisure time activities.

Research
Question 2 Are the leisure time activities of the graduate related to the vocational training?

Eighty-one graduates, 1.3% of the total population of 590, 75% of the respondents, replied to this question. Seven, 1.1% of the total graduates, 9% of the respondents stated that their leisure time activities are directly related to their high school vocational training. Thirty, 5% of the total graduates, 37% of the respondents to the question stated that their leisure time activities are somewhat related to their vocational training and 44, 7.4% of the total population, 54% of the question

respondents, stated that their activities were not related.

Objective 3 To determine the number of students who are receiving vocational-technical training related to their high school vocational training.

Research
Question 3 Did students who received vocational training in high school continue their education/training in a field related to their vocational training?

Only fifty-seven graduates, 9.6% of the total population, responded to this question. Nineteen graduates, 3.2% of the total population of 590, 34% of the question respondents, stated that their major area of study beyond high school was directly related to their vocational training. Fourteen, 2.3% of the total population, 25% of the question respondents replied that their training was somewhat related. Twenty-four, 4% of the total population, 41% of those responding to the question stated that their training beyond high school was not related to their high school vocational training.

Table 3
Summary of Questionnaire Data

Vocational Training	Directly Related	Somewhat Related	Not Related	Respondents
Job	32%	29%	39%	83
Leisure	9%	37%	54%	81
Advanced Training	33%	25%	42%	57

Conclusions

Because of the very small percentage of respondents, 107 or 18% of the total vocational graduate population of 590, no generalizations can be drawn from this study. At this point, prior to further, more personalized follow-up as discussed in Chapter V, if the 18% response is thought of as a sampling of the vocational graduates, it can be only tentatively hypothesized that, for the four school districts involved in this study:

1. Between one-third and one-half of the 1975 and 1977 vocational graduates are presently in jobs either directly or somewhat related to their high school training.
2. Less than one-half of the 1975 and 1977 vocational graduates are engaged in leisure time activities either directly or somewhat related

to their high school training.

3. Slightly over one-half of the 1975 and 1977 vocational graduates have continued their training after high school in fields either directly or somewhat related to their previous high school vocational training.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the total number of questionnaires mailed, the return (18%) was small. This is a problem that plagues survey research. Therefore, inasmuch as the researcher is continuing and expanding the present study into a longitudinal study of greater scope, there will be an effort to contact former students within two years of graduation regarding their present jobs, leisure activities, and post-graduate training. Hopefully, the shorter elapsed time will result in a better return. Telephone contacts will also be included as a follow-up to non-respondents, thus increasing the data base. Another result of the personal telephone call contact could be the inclusion of personal interviews or perhaps a case study approach to a portion of the research. This could be important to the vocational educators and the communities by revealing the frustrations of vocational education students in being unable to find work in the fields in which they were prepared.

Work satisfaction is a subject of increasing interest. According to Studs Terkel's book, Working, (1974) very few people experience satisfaction in their daily work. The present study did not touch the satisfaction of

vocational education students with their jobs. The expanded study could seek information indicating whether or not former vocational education students employed in a line of work for which their training prepared them were more satisfied than those who were in work unrelated to their high school training.

Inasmuch as this study dealt with high schools in predominantly rural areas, replication could include schools in urban settings to attempt to determine any differences between vocational education students in rural and urban settings and their post high school job experience. It would also be of interest to know whether or not there is a difference between these two groups of students in the number who receive additional post high school vocational training other than on-the-job.

Therefore, the longitudinal study on which this researcher is already embarked incorporates the following:

1. Telephone follow-up to non-respondents allowing for:
 - a) Personal interviews
 - b) Some case studies
2. Determination of work satisfaction of those employed in work for which their high school vocational education prepared them as opposed to those working in unrelated fields.

3. Inclusion of vocational education graduates from urban high schools as well as from rural high schools.

The present study has perhaps raised more questions than it answered. However, inasmuch as it has stimulated the researcher to undertake a more inclusive longitudinal study that will provide schools, vocational educators, and communities with valuable information, it has accomplished a purpose.

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Lewis Cass Intermediate School District

May 21, 1980

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Trustee

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Trustee

Dear Graduate:

This year we are asking our graduates to tell us what they are doing and how school programs can be improved.

The information we receive from you and your fellow graduates, will help us make our schools a better and more interesting experience.

To help us, would you please fill out the enclosed survey form in pencil. Read the question and fill in the circle of the proper answer.

EXAMPLE: 1. I am employed (1) Yes; (2) No ☐ (1) ☒ (2)

If employed, you would fill in number 1 (yes), on the answer sheet.

Please return the completed form in the enclosed, stamped self-addressed envelope as soon as possible, by Friday, June 6, 1980.

Thank you for your help and best wishes in what you are doing.

Sincerely,

Ned B. Sutherland

Ned B. Sutherland
Director of Vocational Education
CEPD #48 Vocational-Technical Specialist

Sylvia Stull

Sylvia Stull
Vocational Counselor

NBS:SS:ts

Enclosures

Dear Parents: If your son or daughter is not available to fill out his Follow-up Survey, we would appreciate your time in answering the questions.

Thank you,

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY						FORM NUMBER 2	SIDE 1
1. Marital Status: (1)Single; (2)Married; (3)Separated; (4)Divorced						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4	
2. Number of children:						<input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9	
3. Present Status: (1)Employed full-time; (2)Employed part-time; (3)Not employed						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3	
A. (1)I am looking for a job; (2)I am not looking for a job						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
B. I am a homemaker: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
C. I am in the military service: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
D. I am a full-time student: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
E. I am a part-time student: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
4. I (1)am/(2)will be/(3)have been in the military service (by June '80)						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3	
5. Branch of military service: (1)Army; (2)Navy; (3)Air Force; (4)National Guard; (5)Marines; (6)Coast Guard; (7)Reserves; SPECIFY TRAINING: _____						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7	
<u>WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL, I WAS TAUGHT TO:</u>							
6. Complete a job application: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
7. Write a resume: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
8. Interview for a job: (1)Yes; (2)No						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2	
<u>IN RELATION TO THE HOME ECONOMICS CLASSES I TOOK IN HIGH SCHOOL, MY LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES ARE: ANSWER - (1)Directly related; (2)</u> <u>Somewhat related; (3)Not related</u>							
9. Foods:						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9	
10. Clothing:						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9	
11. Family Living:						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9	
12. Child Development:						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9	
13. Consumer Education:						<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9	
First Name		First	Maiden	Year of Graduation			
Street Address		City		County			
State		Zip		Telephone			

25-48 ON SIDE 2

INSTRUCTOR	COURSE NO.	SECTION
-------------------	-------------------	----------------

SIDE 2

IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED FULL OR PART-TIME, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Firm Name		Date of Employment
Address		
City	State	Zip

15. Job Title: _____
16. Duties on present job: _____
17. Distance from school of graduation: (1) 0-25 Miles; (2) 26-50 Miles; (3) 51-75 Miles; (4) 75 or over
18. In relation to the _____ class I took in high school, my job is: (1) Directly related; (2) Somewhat related; (3) Not related
19. In relation to the _____ class I took in high school, my leisure time activities are: (1) Directly related; (2) Somewhat related; (3) Not related
20. Have you changed jobs? (1) one time; (2) two times; (3) three times; (4) four or more times
21. Who gave you the information to find your first job after graduation from high school? (1) Parent, relative, friend; (2) Public Employment Agency; (3) High School Counselor, Teacher, Coordinator; (4) Private Employment Agency; (5) No one but myself

IF ANY TRAINING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Name of school, training or apprenticeship program	City	State
--	------	-------

22. I have been enrolled in a: (1) one semester; (2) six months; (3) one year; (4) two years; (5) four years; (6) five years; (7) undecided _____ program.
23. Have you considered a program? (1) Yes; (2) No
24. Are you still attending? (1) Yes; (2) No
If major area of training is: _____
25. If major area of study is: (1) Directly related; (2) Somewhat related; (3) Not related

**DO NOT WRITE
IN THIS SPACE**

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