A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE CONGRUENCY BETWEEN THE PRESCRIBED CURRICULUM FOR HIGH SCHOOL VOCATIONAL BUSINESS STUDENTS AND THE ENTRY LEVEL SKILL DEMANDS OF BUSINESS.

MASTER'S PROJECT

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the next University of Dayton graduate

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Discovering and developing the skills and talents of every student is the quest each year of every classroom teacher. Fall may signal the end of the growing season, but for the classroom teacher fall is a time of rebirth. It is a time to find ways to discover talents and a time to develop avenues to channel those skills and talents.

No classroom is more exemplary of discovering and developing skills and talents than the high school business vocational classroom. The vocational teacher's quest each year is to deliver the curriculum of vocational training and then match those trained with entry level business positions. High school vocational seniors leave school with not only a diploma but also with the confidence that their training will find them in demand in the professional business world.

The question ever present for the vocational teacher is, "Have I taught the skills and curriculum that business is seeking?" The question ever present for the vocational student is, "Are businesses looking for what I have to share?"

With the fast pace, quick change atmosphere of business, businesses are placing new demands on the entry level employee. Today's workplace requires employees who not only have good basic and technical skills but also are flexible, adaptable, and able to initiate and respond to changes in work

organizations (Warmbrod, 1985). With this in mind, the Ohio Division of Vocational Career Education of the Ohio Department of Education has developed a profile of competencies it feels are necessary for vocational business student success. This profile (list) is the basis for the curriculum for vocationally trained business students in the state of Ohio. This profile is called Ohio's Competency Analysis Profile (OCAP).

Fulfilling the needs and requirements of this fast paced world of business is the ultimate goal of vocational business education. Adjusting the OCAP curriculum to those needs and requirements is the challenge of the vocational business teachers for it is not always an easy task to determine what business needs or wants. Is it computer training? Is it keyboarding? Is it specific software packages? Is it intrinsic values such as work ethic and honesty? Or is it something altogether not included in the OCAP? By knowing which skills and attitudes are important to a metropolitan employer, the teacher can help focus the training on certain skill areas (Anderson, 1991). This knowledge of knowing which skills and attitudes are valued by business shapes not only the lesson plans for the teacher but also shapes the learning base for the students. Together, the teacher and student have a directed purpose for learning.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine the congruency between the prescribed curriculum for high school vocational business students and the skill

demands of entry level employees of selected local businesses.

Assumptions

The content questions of attitudes and skills on the questionnaire were taken from the OCAP. The author believed and assumed the OCAP is a viable curriculum for teaching entry level skills and attitudes to high school business vocational students. The author also believed the questionnaire method, with a five-point Likert type scale, accurately addressed and measured the purposes of this project. Finally, the author assumed the businesses would respond in an open and honest manner to the questionnaire.

Limitations

Limitations to the project were as follows. One, only a few selected content curriculum areas listed on the OCAP were placed on the questionnaire. This opened the possibility that overlooked content curriculum areas could result in different results. A second limitation was the use of a limited choice questionnaire. This did not allow for business to offer open-ended opinions. Another limitation was only those businesses in the county of the author were surveyed; therefore, the probability exists that other county businesses may have different results. Another limitation was that businesses were chosen, using the systematic sampling method, from membership in the local Chamber of Commerce, listings in the city telephone book, and involvement in the business/education link program with the school. Other sources and another

sampling method may produce different businesses producing different results. The questionnaire was distributed and returned during the summer months. The possibility of summer vacations causing a small sampling return may present a limitation to the project.

Definition of Terms

Vocational business classroom refers to a high school classroom where the program is funded, to some degree, by the Ohio Division of Vocational and Career Education and where the student's primary goal is to leave high school and enter the work force and/or enter college.

Entry level employee refers to the first time professional business employee who has basic business skills and who will begin work at the lowest entry point in the professional business environment.

Professional business environment is defined as a progressive business offering positions of employment such as, but not limited to, receptionist, administrative assistant and office aide in an environment such as, but not limited to, financial institutions, medical office, legal office and places of management.

Keyboarding is defined as the act of placing information into the computer through the use of a typewriter-like keyboard, involving the placement of fingers on designated keys in the middle "home" row of the keyboard and moving fingers as needed to depress other keys. This method is in contrast to

hunt-and-peck typing. (Wentling, 1992)

Software package refers to the various computer program opportunities available for business such as, but not limited to, word processing, data base, spreadsheet, and desktop publishing.

Computer experienced refers to the expertise of the user at the computer. It is defined by the following: the user can turn on the computer, access a software program, and implement, as intended, that program.

Early job placement refers to the opportunity for high school seniors to leave school the last nine weeks of their senior year and be placed in a job that correlates with their curriculum. Students are then graded on their job performance, rather than classroom performance, for their last nine weeks of school.

OCAP refers to the Ohio Competency Analysis Profile. This is a list of career/employment competencies created by the Division of Vocational and Career Education, Ohio Department of Education. (Ohio Department of Education, 1993)

Intensive business education refers to a two-year vocational business education program where students are involved in business/career education for three hours per school day with the curriculum focus being Administrative/ Secretarial Services.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Preparing a student for the workplace, be it his/her first job or the fifth

one, can be an anxious process. Learning names of fellow employees,

learning job specific language and skills, and hoping to remember everything

one learned in school can make for many apprehensive moments. The ever

increasing demands of today's employer add to this anxiety. To some

observers, it may appear, more than ever before, the employer is holding high

expectations of employees. According to Warmbrod (1985) "Today's

workplace requires employees who not only have good basic and technical

skills but also are flexible, adaptable, and able to initiate and respond to

changes in work organizations."

Because of these demands placed on employees in the workplace, it is

ever more increasingly important that educators respond to business and its

employment concerns. This chapter reviewed the literature concerning the

employment needs in business, the skill development needs of entry level

employees, and the educator's role in training the business students.

Employment Needs in Business

Where are the employment needs of business? According to a survey

sent to selected Florida employers in 1990, "the job areas of clerical/

administrative and professional/technical were most often cited as needing

additional qualified applicants" (Florida State Department of Education, 1990).

Johnson's (1986) research supported the finding by the Florida State

Department of Education. She cited in her research the 1985 Occupational

Outlook Handbook which reported "employment of secretaries is expected to

increase about as fast as the average for all occupations." Employment needs

in business were never more obvious than in the ad that ran simply--"Wanted:

a secretary who is good at everything" (Dartnell, 1990).

It would seem, however, that the clerical/technical fields are not the only

employment demands in business. Johnson and Packer (1987) stated if the

nation is to continue to prosper economically, then ways must be found to

accelerate productivity in the service industries." Ettinger (1989) seemed to

agree with Johnson and Packer (1987) when she related that the economy is

moving in the direction of knowledge-oriented, service-oriented jobs which will

require individuals who can think and make decisions and employees who

possess good communication skills.

With businesses placing more cognitive and affective demands on

employees in both the technological and non-technological areas, what are the

necessary and specific skills needs of the entry level employee?

Necessary Skill Development Needs of the Entry Level Employee

One of the first essential skill development needs of the entry level employee must be on computer skills. USA Today (1988) reported the ability to use computers to perform everyday tasks will be the most important job skill for the 1990's. Supporting *USA Today,* Dartnell (1990) stated word processing is one of the most requested skills for secretaries. Dartnell (1990) further stated spreadsheet, database, and desktop publishing were also essential computer skills for the entry level employee. Nellermore (1992) reported in Michigan, managers were in agreement all employees, current and future, need to have successfully completed studies in word processing, basic data processing, programming, and information systems.

Computers appear to be the productivity tool of today. Wentling (1992) supported that idea in her research. Wentling discovered business professionals used the computer more than 15 percent of the time during the typical work day. She also discovered that of the 527 surveyed business professionals, 66 percent reported having computer keyboarding skills.

With the use of the computer having an impact on the business professional environment, it would appear that the skill of computer keyboarding would also be an area of focus in skill development needs for the entry level employee. In fact, the majority of the business professionals surveyed (93 percent) think "keyboarding skills should be learned" (Wentling,

1992). Results of surveys conducted in Michigan show employers "want office employees who are able to perform a variety of typewriting tasks with average speed and accuracy" (Grannis, 1982). Today, the method of written communication is primarily through the keyboard. Wiggs (1993) discovered keyboarding can no longer be considered just a skill needed by secretaries. Keyboarding is a basic skill needed by all students and all employees.

Additional evidence that all need to learn keyboarding is revealed in a survey conducted by Anderson (1992). Anderson (1992) reported nearly one-half of the business managers in this country had computer terminals on their desks, yet many of these managers did not have the necessary keyboarding skills or training to use microcomputers or executive workstations productively. Nellerman (1992) stated managers felt all employees need to be able to keyboard (using the touch system) in order to be more productive. These managers also indicated too many personnel, in all departments, were productively handicapped by being able to keyboard using only one or two fingers on each hand while operating the computer. Therefore, Wiggs (1993) concluded that keyboarding, a basic skill, should be a requirement for high school graduation for all students. Further, Wiggs (1993) felt this proliferation of microcomputers has made keyboarding a necessary skill for all students regardless of their educational level.

Another consideration in the skill development needs of the entry level

employee should be on flexibility. Warmbrod (1985), in her research of the changing workplace, discovered that flexibility was a necessity for all employees. She learned that flexible workers developed the ability to interchange tasks within a short period of time, as needed, and they could be retrained for a different job as the company undergoes fundamental changes. Many business professionals felt the characteristics of being open and curious to learning are especially necessary in companies which use work groups and where change and improvement are an ongoing process. McLean and Knapp (1990) agreed with Warmbrod (1985). They stated employees should be prepared and ready to work productively in diverse and changing situations. Flexibility in employees offers opportunities for the entry level employee to be placed within the company where they are most needed.

Along with flexibility, skill development needs for the entry level employee should include "practice in group dynamics, teamwork problem solving, participative management concepts and decision-making skills" (Ashley, Schler, Zahniser, 1986). Developing and teaching the skills of group dynamics may appear challenging to the teacher. However, Yopp (1992) felt these affective experiences could be gained through teacher and student support of student vocational organizations. The experiences students receive as state and national officers far exceeded anything teachers can expose the students to in the classroom. These vocational organizations give students many varied

opportunities to put into practice the flexibility, teamwork, and decision making demands of business. Vocational student organizations also allow for a safe environment to practice these intangible skills. Vocational student organizations truly help students develop to their optimum potential while they are students. These vocational organizations then help launch students into successful business and office careers.

Skill development for the entry level employee would not be complete without basic communication skills. Nellermore (1992) stated business managers indicated all future employees must possess excellent communication skills. Skill development, as reported in the Occupational Outlook Handbook (1985), should include activities to help employees understand what they have read as well as how to apply basic spelling and grammar concepts. Grannis (1982) supported the opinion of the Occupational Outlook Handbook in that the skill development of the entry level employee needs to lean towards a strong English background in addition to their hands-on computer training. It would seem logical that word processing skills without proper grammar and English skills would render the word processing skills useless.

Skill development needs of the entry level employee should also focus on developing a good employee work ethic. Mansfield (1991) reported the workplace is centered on a product or service that is something other than the

interest of the employee. Therefore, skill development of the entry level employee should focus on the expectations of business for a good job performance with a low tolerance for error without the need for constant reassurance. Mansfield (1991) further reported the business world expects adult behavior with personal responsibility for actions and that the business world is not overly tolerant of error or immature responses to criticism made by the employer to the employee.

With an attitude of respect for this expected adult behavior, the entry level employee needs to apply this attitude towards all tasked. The entry level employee needs to understand the importance and value of what appears to be routine, redundant tasks. Sometimes these tasks appear unimportant to the entry level employee, therefore, giving the impression to the employee of not being necessary or just "busy work." Being able to respond appropriately to these "mundane" tasks may make the difference in keeping or losing a job. If the entry level employee exhibits an unwillingness to perform those task, the employer may believe there is an "attitude problem." (Mansfield, 1991)

Knowing the employment needs of business and the skills businesses are seeking, the educator's role comes into focus--educate the students with the skills needed to match the needs of business. With that in mind, what is the educator's role in educating the business student?

Educator's Role in Training the Business Student

Responses to surveys indicate that "employers are generally satisfied with the educator's role in training the business students" (Florida State Department of Education, 1990). The educator must continue, according to Nellerman (1992), to confirm that the competencies identified as essential are included in his/her classroom curriculum. Johnson (1986) held an even stronger opinion that educators have a role in training the business students. Johnson (1986) felt educators should not only confirm that the appropriate competencies were included in the curriculum but also teach the entry level skills necessary for employment. Further, Johnson felt business educators should then be held accountable for preparing workers with these necessary skills.

The educator's role in training the business student is unique. According to Mansfield (1991), teachers are in the perfect position to help students make the transition from school to work. Further Mansfield (1991) believed by the very nature of their teaching the educator is able to make the business world real for the student. Mansfield (1991) felt one of the most effective ways for the teacher to strike to the heart of this concept was to take a summer office/business job and refresh his/her own personal experience and understanding of what entry level employees will experience. In fact in their study, Ashley, Sechler, and Zahniser (1986) indicated that at the secondary

level, educators need to be more fully acquainted with the workplace practices and procedures of the occupations for which they are training students. This practice of summer workforce employment by the teacher would allow the educator to experience first hand the tasks of the business world. What better way to cement a point with students than to say, "When I performed this task at XYZ Company this summer, I...."

Another way for the educator to prepare students for entry into the workplace is to develop a work study program with local businesses. McLean and Knapp (1990) believed these partnerships with local businesses could give students the opportunity to serve as interns thereby giving the students first-hand workplace experience. The educator could also prepare students for entry into the workplace by inviting guest speakers. McLean and Knapp (1990) suggested asking people from a variety of industry settings to come into the classroom to speak with students would bring the workplace to the students. This is an important concept considering today's tight educational budgets which sometimes omits field trips altogether.

Educator's role in training the business student should be to continue to identify the tasks and responsibilities performed by graduates on the job in order to keep curriculum up-to-date. An ongoing dialog between student and teacher places the student in the position of teacher by constantly feeding the educator with current business trends. With such tremendous growth in the

technological field and the impact this growth has on office professionals, "educators would be remiss by not incorporating into the curriculum those elements which match the needs of a busy work force" (Gonzenbach, Davis, 1994).

One way for the educator to incorporate into the curriculum the elements of a busy work force would be to collect problem situations that first-time workers might experience. Mansfield (1991) believed small group discussions would encourage students to work out potential ways to hand the problem. In this way the educator's role in training the business student is realistic based on actual events of first-time employees.

The educator's role in training the business student might also be to design assignments that require several students to work together. These assignments would not be set up in final format but rather be set up in handwritten, rough draft, or edited fashion. The educator would then expect students to set their own format and to find their own errors. Because the educator is frequently placed in the position of planning and developing curriculum. McLean and Knapp (1990) felt the planning and developing of curriculum in business education should reflect the needs of business. Today, educators speak in terms of *"functional literacy,* a term which has greater implications in a society beset by new technology and change" (McLean and Knapp, 1990). Today, the educator's role in training the business student must

go beyond the basic literacy of reading and writing. Rather, basic literacy includes the "ability to cope with the needs and demands placed on individuals in the society" (Worthington, 1985). McLean and Knapp (1990) suggested one unique and exciting aspects of education is that it prepares students to enter any business or industrial setting.

If business communication is widely transmitted through keyboarding information into the computer, then the educator's role is definitely to include keyboarding in the curriculum. In secondary schools, Wiggs (1993) believed, all students needed to reinforce their keyboarding skills (speed and accuracy) in addition to understanding the proper formatting and composing of documents. Wiggs (1993) further stated the keyboard is used by today's business professionals to originate their own documents such as letters, reports, memos, and forms more frequently than any other origination method. Students who can apply their keyboarding skill, according to Toppe (1991), in preparing these types of documents have definite employment and advancement advantages. However, the keyboard is not just used by professionals to complete work assignments. Wiggs (1993) discovered that customers place orders, pay bills, and get information using the keyboard. Considering both author's research, it appeared whether a student is planning on entering the workplace or not, keyboarding was a skill that needed developing.

Although there is still a need for the traditional typewriting/keyboarding course for the student whose goal is a secretarial career, Toppe (1991) reported with the abundance of microcomputers in classrooms at all educational levels and with the recent emphasis on keyboarding instruction in the elementary grades, curriculum decision makers need to consider how and where keyboarding will be taught. These new objectives may call for new methods of teaching keyboarding as well as a different set of performance standards. Therefore, the educator's role in training the business student may be to teach typewriting/keyboarding skills not just for speed and accuracy but for the access of information. A New York state position paper, as reported by Toppe (1991) addressed areas where the educator's role in teaching keyboarding is essential: responding to interactive educational drills, addressing information from a database, participating in computer games, and recording data and ideas.

Jackson and Berg (1986) allude to "the production delays associated with the hunt/peck method of keyboarding." Struggling with the keyboard adds frustration and time to the preparation of any document and as the saying goes "Time is money." To gain better production, after just 15 hours of appropriate keyboarding instruction, employee productivity increases. Therefore, it would seem the educator's role in training the business student would be to insure the appropriate number of keyboarding hours to reduce keyboard frustration and

increase productivity.

Overall the educator's role in training the business student is one of balance. Any skill shared by the educator, either technical or knowledge base, is valuable. But a majority of all the groups in a study conducted by Johnson (1986) revealed that company training is the most common single avenue of training for entry-level skills. As a result, the educator's role should be "to give their students tools for developing their technical abilities and for adapting to a workplace that will challenge their abilities to think critically and solve problems" (McLean and Knapp, 1990). Therefore, the educator's role in training the entry level employee should be to develop "training programs for skilled workers [that] keep pace with the constantly changing needs of industry. Some expectations [of the entry level employee] are made clear after hiring but others are seen as pre-employment qualifications. Vocational programs [and the educator] should help students develop the latter ones while they are in school" (Ashley, Sechler, Zahniser, 1986).

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Subjects

Primary subjects of this study were businesses located in the county and community of the author. Eighty percent of the responding businesses classified themselves as service type business. The remaining twenty percent was divided: 18 percent product oriented business and 2 percent both service and product oriented. Over 50 percent of the responding business had 20 or fewer employees. Twenty percent of the businesses employed over 200 employees. The majority (56 percent) of the businesses have been operating for over 20 years. Only 4 percent of the responding businesses listed themselves as franchise. Coporated owned business (45 percent) was the most typical type of business organization with entrepreneurship organizational structure responding at 37 percent. The remaining percentage (14 percent) described other type of business organizational structure.

Setting

The author and the businesses of this study live in a growing, progressive county. In this county, there is a major shopping mall, extensive shopping adjacent to the mall (all shopping is easily accessible by an interstate), an active Chamber of Commerce, a variety of research type businesses, various types of self-employed entrepreneurs, and an extensive

involvement of local businesses in education through a business/education link type program. This author's county is considered to be one of the fastest growing counties in this midwest state.

A 23-year teaching veteran, the author holds a professional vocational and comprehensive business teaching certificate. The author's high school is a comprehensive high school in a suburban setting. This high school houses 1,600 students in grades 10-12. The author is one of two vocational intensive business education teachers in the building. In a seven-period day, the author teaches three periods of non-vocational business classes, three-periods of senior vocational intensive business education and has one conference period. The author is also the chairperson of the business department. The seniors in the author's program may be employed in early job placement the last nine weeks of their school year affording them the opportunity to implement their training.

Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. Businesses involved with the local business/education link program and businesses advertising in the author's district high school yearbook were chosen to respond to the questionnaire. The author used a five-point Likert type questionnaire to survey the businesses. The questions on the survey were developed, in part, from the curriculum described in the Ohio Competency Analysis Profile (OCAP) for

Administrative/Secretarial Services. (See Appendix 1 for survey.) The curriculum described in the OCAP is developed and supported by the Division of Vocational and Career Education, Ohio Department of Education; therefore, the content questions on the questionnaire are considered to be valid.

The businesses were asked to rate both technical and knowledge base skills entry level employees should possess. The rating scale ranged from definitely needed for employment to not needed by our company for entry level employment.

Included with the questionnaire was an employer demographic information sheet. This employer demographic information sheet was used to determine the type of technology hardware used by the business and to determine the type of software used in that particular business environment. The author chose to survey hardware and software because according to Butts (1993) with the integration of computer technology in the office, a review of hardware and software competencies needed by employers would help determine the needs of the curriculum. (See Appendix 2 for employer demographic information.)

Administration of the Data Collecting Instrument. Data were collected by mailing the questionnaire to the selected businesses. The businesses were selected from the local business directory received from the author's high school yearbook advisor. The directory was complied by the yearbook staff

using the local Chamber of Commerce members and businesses listed in the

local telephone book. The businesses were then systematically chosen by

selecting every fifth business in the list. The remaining businesses were

chosen because of their involvement with the author's school program called

Business/Education Link. The questionnaire was mailed at the beginning of the

summer season. A letter was included explaining the purposes of the

questionnaire and a suggested date to return the materials. (See Appendix 3

for copy of letter.) The selected businesses returned the questionnaire to the

author by using an enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope provided by the

author. The author's telephone number and address were included for

businesses to use as a reference. The author had a 69 percent return rate.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Presentation of the Results

Seventy-four surveys were mailed. All responses were received within three weeks of mailing. Fifty-one businesses responded giving a 68.9 percent return rate.

Since the questionnaire was divided into five portions, a separate table illustrates the results of each section. The portions were as follows: communication, technology, accounting/finance, general office, and professionalism. The selected businesses were instructed to rank each question in each of the five portions based on the individual needs of their business for an entry level employee. The Likert type scale was as follows: definitely needed for employment, needs to have some knowledge, would be nice to have some knowledge, not important, and not needed by our company for entry level employment. The results (expressed in percentages) are shown in tables one through five.

The author received three telephone calls asking for clarification of the questionnaire. All callers were pleased to participate and appreciated the opportunity to respond. Some businesses did not respond to all questions. This obviously resulted in not all questions receiving a 100 percent response.

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF COMMUNICATION PORTION
(Numbers expressed in percentages)

COMMUNICATIONS					
	Definitely needed for employment	Needs to have some knowledge	Would be nice to have some knowledge	Not important	Not needed by our company for entry level employment
Read, interpret, and follow written instructions	95	4	0	0	1
Apply basic grammar rules	64	27	8	0	1
Use correct punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and numbers	53	34	12	0	1
Proofread, edit, and correct documents	39	34	22	1	4
Development listening skills	82	14	2	0	2
Compose a speech	4	17	35	22	22
Speak in front of a group	6	12	32	27	23

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF TECHNOLOGY PORTION
(Numbers expressed in percentages)

TECHNOLOGY	Definitely needed for employment	Needs to have some knowledge	Would be nice to have some knowledge	Not important	Not needed by our company for entry level employment
Operate a computer	56	31	12	0	1
Create, enter, store, and retrieve documents on word processing software	42	31	16	1	10
Create and format files using spreadsheet program	20	16	38	12	14
Export spreadsheet files into word processing file	10	18	34	20	18
Proofread, edit, store, retrieve spreadsheet files	20	18	32	12	18
Create and format files using data base program	18	20	30	16	16
Export data base files into other programs	10	18	31	24	18
Proofread, edit, store, retrieve data base files	19	19	32	14	16
Design publications using desk top publishing software	4	10	31	18	27
Transcribe documents	17	18	32	8	25
Transmit facsimile	40	25	27	0	8
Use electronic mail	21	26	25	8	20
Use voice messaging	25	18	29	8	20
Operate electronic calculator	54	30	12	0	4
Operate telephone equipment	77	14	4	1	4

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF ACCOUNTING/FINANCE PORTION
(Numbers expressed in percentages)

ACCOUNTING/FINANCE					
	Definitely needed for employment	Needs to have some knowledge	Would be nice to have some knowledge	Not important	Not needed by our company for entry level employment
Solve addition, subtractions, multiplication, division problems on calculator	78	14	4	0	1
Solve percentage problems	52	34	12	1	1
Process accounts payable	19	34	27	6	14
Process accounts receivable	20	31	29	6	14
Prepare financial reports	14	20	21	24	21
Process payroll	12	24	20	18	26
Maintain and balance check book	30	24	16	16	14
Maintain and balance petty cash	31	25	16	10	18

TABLE 4
RESULTS OF GENERAL OFFICE DUTIES PORTION
(Numbers expressed in percentages)

GENERAL OFFICE DUTIES	Definitely needed for employment	Needs to have some knowledge	Would be nice to have some knowledge	Not important	Not needed by our company for entry level employment
Prepare documents for filing	61	22	10	0	1
Greet, assist, and monitor visitors	73	16	6	0	1
Process incoming and outgoing mail	57	18	16	1	1
Create and prepare travel arrangements	14	12	24	16	29

TABLE 5
RESULTS OF PROFESSIONALISM PORTION
(Numbers expressed in percentages)

PROFESSIONALISM	Definitely needed for employment	Needs to have some knowledge	Would be nice to have some knowledge	Not important	Not needed by our company for entry level employment
Maintain professional image	80	14	0	0	0
Demonstrate punctuality	90	94	0	0	0
Demonstrate dependability	100	0	0	0	0
Demonstrate flexibility	78	12	4	0	0
Demonstrate empathy toward others	67	22	6	0	0
Manage stress	65	24	8	0	0
Demonstrate honesty	92	1	0	0	0
Able to deal with conflict	76	12	6	0	0
Project professional attitude	84	10	0	0	0

Discussion of the Results

The questionnaire contained five sections containing a total of 43 individual questions for the employers to rank entry level employee needs. The responding employers appeared to agree with the study conducted by the Dartnell Corporation (1990) when they stated employees need to be good at everything. The categories of definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge received the most percentage points in 34 of the 43 individual areas. Businesses responding to this questionnaire appear to want entry level employees who are knowledge in everything.

The responding businesses also appeared to agree with Nellermore (1992) when he stated "employees must possess excellent communication skills. The first section of the questionnaire, the communication portion, surveyed the businesses on their communication needs and expectations of the entry level employees. There were seven individual areas in the communications portion of the questionnaire. Five of the seven questions received a high percentage of respondents who felt these skills were definitely needed for employment. The only two areas not receiving a high response rate in this section dealt with public speaking. Composing a speech and speaking in front of a group ranked in the not important range. Therefore, it would appear businesses have a stronger need for entry level employees who can communicate in the written format over the oral format.

The respondents to this questionnaire appeared to agree with the Occupational Outlook Handbook (1987) when it stated employees need to understand not only what they have read but also have knowledge in proper grammar. Understanding written instructions (reading) received a 95 percent response for the definitely needed for employment choice. Following that were the areas of applying basic grammar rules receiving a 64 percent response for the definitely needed for employment choice.

Another highly ranked area in the communications portion by the responding businesses was the development of listening skills. Listening received an 82 percent response for the definitely needed for employment choice. It might appear, from the results of this questionnaire, that businesses would first expect their entry level employees to have expertise in reading and listening over speaking.

Johnson and Packer (1987) indicated that businesses needed to find ways to be more productive. If one defines being more productive as getting more accomplished during the day with greater efficiency utilizing technology, than the surveyed businesses appeared to agree with Johnson and Packer (1987). In the technology portion, needing to possess computer knowledge received a combined response of 87 percent in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices. Only one percent of the responding businesses indicating no computer experience needed by that

company for entry level employment. This would tend to indicate that businesses expect entry level employees to hold some type of computer experience.

While this questionnaire did not ask the businesses to respond to the keyboarding needs of their employees, it appears that computer skill needs and possessing keyboarding skills would go hand in hand. With this in mind, the questionnaire's findings that computer skills are necessary for the entry level employee, it appears then these responding employers closely mirror Wentling (1992) when she stated 93 percent of business professionals felt keyboarding skills were necessary.

Also in the technology portion was a question asking businesses on their use of the fax machine and telephone. Responding businesses favored knowledge of these two machines by the entry level employees. Transmitting a fax received a combined response of 65 percent in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices while knowledge on how to use the telephone received a 91 percent combined response in the same choices.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (1985) stated that employees needed to understand how to use arithmetic. By studying the responses in the accounting/finance portion of the questionnaire, the responding businesses appear to agree whole heartedly with the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

These businesses gave arithmetic a 92 percent combined response in the choices of definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge.

Businesses responding to this questionnaire felt only marginally persuaded (52 percent average) that entry level employees definitely needed or needs to have some knowledge of accounting. Accounting knowledge in accounts payable ranked 53 percent while accounts receivable a 51 percent response in those same choices.

In addition, the accounting/financial skills of processing payroll and preparing financial reports received a very low response, 12 percent and 14 percent respectively, in the definitely needed for employment choice by these responding businesses. It appears these businesses do not expect entry level employees to begin his/her tenure with the company in the payroll or financial areas of the business and only slightly convinced that entry level employees would begin their overall tenure in the accounting areas.

The general office duty section was a very diverse section covering four different areas. These four areas of entry level employee responsibilities ranged from working by oneself (filing) to skills requiring the interaction with others (greeting and assisting visitors). In their research, McLean and Knapp (1990) found that employees need to be ready to work in a diverse set of situations. This author's survey appeared to agree with McLean and Knapp.

Entry level employees need to know how to complete projects such as filing, but also, entry level employees need to know how to handle themselves in a group setting such as greeting and assisting visitors.

Filing was definitely needed for employment with a 61 percent response. When added to the 22 percent of the businesses who felt entry level employees needed to have some knowledge of filing, filing received an overall response of 83 percent in these two choices.

Greeting and assisting visitors received a 73 percent response in the definitely needed for employment choice and a 16 percent response in the needs to have some knowledge choice. These combined percentages gave greeting and assisting visitors an overall response of 89 percent. From this questionnaire, it appears these businesses expect entry level employees to be able to work by themselves and to be able to get along with others.

The professional portion of the questionnaire focused on the image and the attitude requirements of the entry level employee. Dependability, honesty and punctuality appear to hold the highest interest of employers of their entry level employees. One hundred percent of the responding businesses felt dependability was definitely needed for employment by entry level employees. In fact, it was the only 100 percent rating in any category for any section in the entire questionnaire. Honesty and punctuality received a 90 percent response in the definitely needed for employment choice. These responses appear to

agree with Mansfield's (1991) research that stated the business world expects adult behavior with personal responsibility for actions.

All nine areas of the professional portion received zero percentage points in the not important or not needed by our company for entry level employment choices. These results were also unique to this section. No other individual areas in any other section received a response of all zero percentage points for the not important or not needed by our business for entry level employees choices. These results seem to support the idea that the affective areas hold more importance in the workplace than the cognitive areas. This response further supports Mansfield's (1991) research that the workplace is centered on the product or service that is something other than the interest of the employee.

Employers appear to be looking for entry level employees who are also empathic towards others (67 percent response for the definitely needed for employment choice), employees who know how to manage stress (65 percent) and employees who can project a professional attitude (84 percent).

It appeared overall, the businesses responding to this questionnaire are not only looking for entry level employees who are able to communicate, who are computer literate, and who possess a basic understanding of general office duties but also businesses are looking for entry level employees who are

dependable, hard working individuals who are ready to work and are willing to project a professional image.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Discovering and developing the skills and talents of every student is the quest each year of every teacher. Readying the student for the workplace is the task of the vocational business teacher. Each vocational business student's skills and talents need to be honed so they, the students, are ready for entry level employment and prepared for the needs of business.

The vocational business teacher needs to prime every student for entry level employment by teaching not only the cognitive areas but also the affective areas. Discovering and teaching the skills and attitudes valued by businesses shapes not only the lesson plans for the teacher but also shapes the learning base for the students. Together, the teacher and student, have a direction for the year of learning.

The purpose of this study was to determine the congruency between the prescribed curriculum for high school vocational business students and the skill demands of entry level employees of selected local businesses.

The procedure followed by this author was to systematically chose local businesses to respond to a Likert type scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into five portions covering communications, technology, accounting/finance, general office, and professionalism. The businesses were

to respond to each question and to determine, based on their own individual business needs, what level of skill development the entry level employee should possess to be employed in their company.

Results in the communications portion showed businesses placed more importance in the written form of communication over the oral format. Ninety-five percent of the responding businesses felt reading, interpreting and following written instructions was definitely needed for entry level employees. Speaking in front of a group received only a six percent response in the definitely needed for employment choice. Businesses also gave a high response to listening which received an 82 percent rating in the definitely needed for employment choice.

Results in the technology portion, showed most businesses felt computer knowledge was important. Eighty-seven percent of the responding businesses felt entry level employees should have some computer knowledge. Word processing received the highest combined response in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices with a 73 percent. Knowledge of the use of spreadsheets and data bases were fairly even with a combined average response in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices of 37 percent. Desktop publishing ranked lowest in need for entry level employees with a 14 percent combined response (definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge).

Other technological needs of the entry level employee included transmitting a fax, a 65 percent combined response (definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices) and knowledge on operating a telephone a 91 percent combined response (definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices).

Basic arithmetic skills proved to hold the greatest need for the entry level employee in the accounting/finance portion. Ninety-two percent of the responding businesses felt basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division were definitely needed for employment and/or needed to have some knowledge. Solving percentage problems was also deemed important by the responding businesses receiving a 86 percent combined response in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices. Knowledge of processing payroll received the lowest combined response, a 36 percent, in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices. It appeared the responding businesses want entry level employees to possess basic math skills; then the businesses will decide where to apply that knowledge.

There were only four questions in the general office portion of the questionnaire. Three of the four questions received at least an 83 percent or higher combined response in the definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge choices. Creating and preparing travel arrangements

received a 26 percent combined response (definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge). It appeared the responding businesses felt filing documents, processing mail, and greeting visitors was very important to the entry level employee.

The professionalism portion of the questionnaire asked the businesses to respond to the affective areas of the entry level employee. Dependability received a 100 percent response in the choice of definitely needed for employment. In fact, it was the only question in any portion to receive this rating. It appeared obvious that businesses want and rely on dependable employees. In fact, all questions on this portion of the questionnaire received a 88 percent response or higher in the combined choices of definitely needed for employment and needs to have some knowledge. It appeared businesses valued the affective knowledge of professionalism more highly over the cognitive skills. This may imply that businesses can train any employee to the specific needs of their individual business providing the entry level employee is professionally ready for employment.

Conclusions

While several conclusions could be drawn from the results of this questionnaire, it should be mentioned that the businesses responding to this questionnaire were not only seeking entry level employees who were good communicators but also computer literate. The businesses also seemed to be

seeking entry level employees who possess basic arithmetic skills and who possess knowledge of general office duties. However, the most important quality for an entry level employee to possess is professionalism. Businesses highly rated the professional portion of the questionnaire. Businesses are looking for and seeking out dependable employees. Businesses are searching for hard working, dependable individuals who are willing to project a professional image.

Recommendations

This author would recommend that vocational business teachers continue to embrace and to teach the Ohio Competency Analysis Profile (OCAP). The results of this questionnaire appeared to indicate that businesses are still demanding the skills and competencies listed on the OCAP.

This author would also recommend that vocational business teachers search out and find activities for the teaching of professionalism. Businesses are requiring professionalism of the entry level employee. One way for teachers to develop professionalism is to encourage their students to participate in student vocational organizations. These organizations offer opportunities to both the teacher and the student to practice professionalism. Field trips and guest speakers would also be another recommendation for exposing the students to the professional expectations of entry level employees.

A teacher touches the future not by predicting future. No one can do that. But rather, a teacher touches the future by preparing his/her students with the skills the future will demand. The future of business appears to be demanding productive, independent citizens who are ready to accept their position in the workplace.

Appendix 1

BUSINESS SURVEY

Entry Level Employee Competency

By circling the number, please indicate the level of importance you would place on the following business competencies. Please consider these competencies from your perspective in your place of employment for the entry level employee.

RATING SCALE	5	Definitely needed for employment
	4	Needs to have some knowledge
	3	Would be nice to have some knowledge
	2	Not important
	1	Not needed by our company for entry level employment

COMMUNICATIONS					
Read, interpret, and follow written instructions	5	4	3	2	1
Apply basic grammar rules	5	4	3	2	1
Use correct punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and numbers	5	4	3	2	1
Proofread, edit, and correct documents	5	4	3	2	1
Development listening skills	5	4	3	2	1
Compose a speech	5	4	3	2	1
Speak in front of a group	5	4	3	2	1

RATING SCALE	5	Definitely needed for employment
	4	Needs to have some knowledge
	3	Would be nice to have some knowledge
	2	Not important
	1	Not needed by our company for entry level employment

TECHNOLOGY					
Operate a computer	5	4	3	2	1
Create, enter, store, and retrieve documents on word processing software	5	4	3	2	1
Create and format files using spreadsheet program	5	4	3	2	1
Export spreadsheet files into word processing file	5	4	3	2	1
Proofread, edit, store, retrieve spreadsheet files	5	4	3	2	1
Create and format files using data base program	5	4	3	2	1
Export data base files into other programs	5	4	3	2	1
Proofread, edit, store, retrieve data base files	5	4	3	2	1
Design publications using desk top publishing software	5	4	3	2	1
Transcribe documents	5	4	3	2	1
Transmit facsimile	5	4	3	2	1
Use electronic mail	5	4	3	2	1
Use voice messaging	5	4	3	2	1
Operate electronic calculator	5	4	3	2	1
Operate telephone equipment	5	4	3	2	1

RATING SCALE	5	Definitely needed for employment
	4	Needs to have some knowledge
	3	Would be nice to have some knowledge
	2	Not important
	1	Not needed by our company for entry level employment

ACCOUNTING/FINANCE					
Solve addition, subtractions, multiplication, division problems on calculator	5	4	3	2	1
Solve percentage problems	5	4	3	2	1
Process accounts payable	5	4	3	2	1
Process accounts receivable	5	4	3	2	1
Prepare financial reports	5	4	3	2	1
Process payroll	5	4	3	2	1
Maintain and balance check book	5	4	3	2	1
Maintain and balance petty cash	5	4	3	2	1

RATING SCALE	5	Definitely needed for employment
	4	Needs to have some knowledge
	3	Would be nice to have some knowledge
	2	Not important
	1	Not needed by our company for entry level employment

GENERAL OFFICE DUTIES					
Prepare documents for filing	5	4	3	2	1
Greet, assist, and monitor visitors	5	4	3	2	1
Process incoming and outgoing mail	5	4	3	2	1
Create and prepare travel arrangements	5	4	3	2	1
PROFESSIONALISM					
Maintain professional image	5	4	3	2	1
Demonstrate punctuality	5	4	3	2	1
Demonstrate dependability	5	4	3	2	1
Demonstrate flexibility	5	4	3	2	1
Demonstrate empathy toward others	5	4	3	2	1
Manage stress	5	4	3	2	1
Demonstrate honesty	5	4	3	2	1
Able to deal with conflict	5	4	3	2	1
Project professional attitude	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix 2

EMPLOYER DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following demographic information by placing an X on the line following the response that is correct for your business.

1. I/we are a
service_____
product_____
business.

2. In my/our business I/we have the following number of employees.
1-20_____
21-50_____
51-100_____
101-200_____
More than 200_____

3. My/our business is _____ years old.
1-5_____
6-10_____
11-15_____
16-20_____
Older than 20_____

4. My/our business is an entrepreneurship.
Yes_____ No_____

5. My/our business is a franchise.
Yes_____No_____

6. My/our business is corporate owned.
Yes_____ No_____

7. If your type of business organization was not listed in question 4, 5, or 6, please describe.
_____

8. In my/our business I/we use a word processing software.
Yes_____ No_____ If no, skip question 9.

9. The word processing software program I/we use is
WordPerfect for DOS
6.0_____
WordPerfect for Windows
6.0_____
Microsoft Word for Windows
6.0_____
Microsoft Word/Mac_____
Microsoft Works Windows
3.0_____
Microsoft Works/Mac_____
Other
(List)_____

10. In my/our business I/we use a data base software program. Yes_____ No_____ If no, skip question 11.

11. The data base program I/we use is
Microsoft Access_____
Dbase x.0_____
Microsoft Works Windows 3.0_____
Microsoft Works/Mac_____
Other
(List)_____

12. In my/our business I/we use a spreadsheet software program.
Yes_____ No_____
If no, skip question 13.

13. The spreadsheet program I/we use is
Microsoft Excel_____
Lotus 1, 2, 3 x.0_____
Microsoft Works Windows 3.0_____
Microsoft Works/Mac_____
Other
(List)_____

14. In my/our business I/we use a desktop publishing program.
Yes_____ No_____
If no, skip question 15.

15. The desktop publishing program I/we use is
Express Publisher_____
PageMaker x.0 DOS/Windows_____
Corel Draw x.0_____
PageMaker/Mac_____
Other
(List)_____

16. My/our business is currently using Windows 95 platform software.
All_____Some_____ No_____
If answered all or some, skip question 17.

17. My/our business will be switching to the Windows 95 platform.
Yes_____ No_____
Maybe_____

18. The computer hardware used in my/our business is
IBM_____
MAC_____
IBM Compatible_____
Combination IBM/MAC_____

Appendix 3

MRS. JANET FISHER
705 TALOWOOD DRIVE
BEAVERCREEK, OH 45430
429-2151

June 22, 1996

COMPANY NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP

GREETING:

Technology is changing the way businesses and individuals work and play. These fast pace changes certainly take a toll on the educational system. High School business teachers, in particular, are constantly striving to stay current with these changes so that business students leave high school ready to work.

I am a vocational and comprehensive business teacher at Beavercreek High School. In an effort to better prepare our next generation of employees and because your business is a viable part of our community, I have selected your business to participate in a short questionnaire.

The questionnaire contains two sections. The first section asks your opinion on content areas currently taught in our high school. The last section asks questions on the type of software and computer platform you are using. It is my hope by reviewing your responses I can better understand your needs and more effectively prepare Beavercreek business students to be your future employees. With your responses, I hope to discover our business curriculum's strengths and weaknesses. Also, based on your responses, I hope to discover where changes and updates can be addressed.

I realize your time is very valuable. This questionnaire is designed to complete in less than 10 minutes. I would appreciate your taking a moment now to complete this confidential questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped mailing envelope before July 4.

Thank you for your time. Above all, thank you for assisting our future generations as I help to prepare them for the next century. If I can be of any assistance during this process, please feel free to contact me at the above telephone number or address.

Sincerely,

Janet Fisher

Enclosure: Questionnaire
              Return envelope

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