

A CASE STUDY OF TRAINING SPONSOR PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE
COORDINATION PHASE OF SECONDARY COOPERATIVE-PLAN
DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN
ROANOKE CITY AND COUNTY,
VIRGINIA

by

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

This chapter is concerned with the problem of the study. Specifically, the chapter contains seven sections: (1) Background of the Problem, (2) Statement of the Problem, (3) Research Questions, (4) Importance of the Study, (5) Assumptions of the Study, (6) Limitations of the Study, and (7) Definition of Terms.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Since the passage of the first federally funded vocational education legislation in 1917, some method of utilizing the community work environment has been a part of vocational education program design. Those vocational education programs that have utilized the world of work to achieve educational goals have generally been thought to be among the most successful programs in terms of subsequent employment records, self-development, citizenship factors, salary earned, and related factors (Lynch and Reece, 1974).

Cooperative-plan distributive education is one of many secondary vocational education programs that has utilized the world of work to achieve educational goals. The program is based on a three-way partnership between the student, the training sponsor, and the teacher-coordinator who represents the school. In reviewing this partnership Mock noted:

Cooperative education programs are offered in secondary and post-secondary schools and in senior colleges throughout the United States and Canada, and in every instance, the employer [training sponsor] is the key person in making this partnership possible (Mock, 1973, p. 54).

The partnership between high schools offering cooperative-plan distributive education programs and training sponsors is a vital one. Very little formal literature is available concerning the factors which motivate employers to participate as training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education programs or the perceptions that training sponsors have toward distributive education students and other aspects of program operation.

Distributive educators have frequently assumed that they share a common set of beliefs or perceptions about cooperative-plan distributive education with employers in the business community. In addressing this point, Marks (1969) indicated that some employers felt the distributive education program was good for the community and that they were glad to judge contests and employ part-time distributive education students. However, she noted that employers did not communicate any real perception of the program as being specifically designed to prepare students for careers in distributive businesses. A knowledge of what training sponsors believe or perceive about the cooperative-plan distributive education program is essential if distributive education is to compete with other vocational programs for business community support.

The cooperative partnership that exists between the students, the training sponsor, and the teacher-coordinator is established by

the teacher-coordinator. The partnership is maintained through the use of quality control factors such as training agreements, training plans, and evaluation visits, and sustained through the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education (Meyer, Crawford, and Klaurens, 1975).

The coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education provides the means to communicate the importance of training agreements, training plans, and other quality control factors of the cooperative program to students, school personnel, and training sponsors. Training sponsor perceptions regarding the quality control factors depend to a large degree on the coordination effort of the distributive education teacher-coordinator (Wray, 1975).

Many employers are being solicited to serve as training sponsors without fully understanding the educational objectives of the program. Training sponsors are not being oriented as to how program objectives are achieved through the coordination phase of program operation (Wray, 1975). As a result, the purposes of training agreements, training plans, evaluation visits, advisory committees, and related classroom instruction are not understood by training sponsors. Many training sponsors are not familiar with these quality control factors for cooperative-plan distributive education programs (Nelson, 1974; Jacobs, 1973; and Hutt, 1975).

In a review of the literature, it was determined that an awareness of training sponsor perceptions is important in order to maintain a harmonious or reciprocal relation in the cooperative-plan distributive

education partnership. To accomplish this, training sponsor perceptions should be scrutinized on an individual program basis. The coordination phase of program operation is the major vehicle for establishing training sponsor perceptions regarding the use of quality control factors in cooperative-plan distributive education.

A study which determined training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs would be useful to individuals responsible for the development and administration of programs in cooperative-plan distributive education. The results could provide information which would encourage the use of quality control factors; improve the cooperative working relationship between training sponsor, student, and teacher-coordinator; and be helpful in the formulation of guidelines to facilitate training sponsor development through the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The central problem of this study was to identify training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education. Specifically, training sponsors from four United States Office of Education codes and classifications (04.08 General Merchandise, 04.07 Food Service, 04.06 Food Distribution, and 04.02 Apparel and Accessories) for secondary cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, were interviewed. The purpose of each interview was

to identify perceptions regarding objectives, training sponsor roles, training agreements, training plans, training sponsor benefits, and recommendations for improvement of the coordination phase of program operation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were stated to provide objectives for the study and a guideline for determining training sponsor perceptions.

1. What are the objectives of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education as perceived by training sponsors?
2. What do training sponsors perceive as their role in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs?
3. What are training sponsor experiences with the training agreement as a quality control factor for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education?
4. What are training sponsor experiences with the training plan as a quality control factor for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education?
5. What are the benefits which motivate training sponsors to participate in cooperative-plan distributive education?
6. What recommendations for improving the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs are offered by training sponsors?

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

A study which provides information on training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education can be of assistance to educators in the effective development, operation, and evaluation of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. More specifically, this study:

1. Provides a basis for the development of a description of the objectives of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education as perceived by training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia. Distributive education personnel are provided with the opportunity to assess the degree of congruency between their perceptions and those held by these training sponsors.

2. Enables educators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, to determine training sponsor perceptions of their role in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Distributive educators are provided with the opportunity to assess the degree of understanding held by training sponsors concerning their responsibilities.

3. Provides a basis for the determination of which quality control factors, i.e., training agreements, training plans, and evaluation visits of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education are known and understood by training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia. Findings from this portion of the study can be of value in planning contacts with the business community. Quality

control factors with which training sponsors have little or no knowledge can be given priority as discussion topics in coordination visits.

4. Enables educators to determine the benefits that training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, derive from participation in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. These results are valuable in tailoring informational and educational programs to business organizations, school district officials, trade associations, and business people with particular emphasis on recruiting new training sponsors.

5. Enables educators to determine recommendations for making improvements in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. The information provided can assist distributive educators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, in evaluating and modifying, if necessary, current coordination practices.

6. Provides a model for analyzing the types of experiences that training sponsors have had in working with the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Such an analysis can be helpful to coordinators in orienting prospective or new training sponsors to the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education by relating the actual experiences of other training sponsors.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The following assumptions were made in conducting the study:

1. The training sponsors interviewed were knowledgeable about the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

2. Twenty semistructured interviews represented an adequate sample for case study research.

3. The content analysis research design assumes that the frequency with which a perception appears in the transcripts is a valid indicator of concern, focus of attention, intensity, value, and importance (Holsti, 1969).

4. The content analysis research design assumes that each unit of content--word, theme, character, or item--should be given equal weight, permitting aggregation or direct comparison (Holsti, 1969).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations apply to this study:

1. Persons interviewed for purposes of this study had directly supervised students for at least two out of the previous three years while serving as a training sponsor for secondary cooperative-plan distributive education.

2. Training sponsors for the study were randomly selected from four United States Office of Education codes and classifications (04.08 General Merchandise, 04.07 Food Service, 04.06 Food Distribution, and 04.02 Apparel and Accessories).

3. Persons interviewed for purposes of this study were limited to training sponsors for secondary cooperative-plan distributive education in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

4. The study was limited to secondary distributive education programs employing the cooperative method of instruction. The study

excluded other forms of work experience programs in secondary schools which may utilize the business community for instructional purposes.

5. The study was limited to the identification or perceptions regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education; no attempt was made to identify perceptions regarding other aspects of the cooperative-plan distributive education program.

6. No attempt was made to compare teacher-coordinators' performance of coordination activities, or to determine which teacher-coordinators were actually performing coordination activities.

7. While much can be learned from the case study research method, it does not permit the generalization of findings beyond the case under study except as it might represent a similar situation in another area.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

To assist the reader in analyzing the structure and findings of the study, a definition of terms is provided to clarify the intent of the author.

Coding. The process whereby the raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics. The following terms are a central part of the coding process.

a. Universe of the Content. The universe of the content that is to be analyzed consists of all replies from training sponsors to the questions dealing with their perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

b. Unit of Content Analysis. A unit is defined as an excerpt from the communication being content analyzed. Berelson (1952) lists five major units of content analysis: words, themes, characters, items, and space-and-time measures.

c. Theme. The theme is the unit of content analysis used in this study. A theme may be a sentence, a proposition about something, or an assertion about a subject matter expressed in one or more terms. A theme takes the form in which issues and attitudes are usually discussed (Berelson, 1952).

d. System of Enumeration. A form of measurement the analyst chooses which yields quantification of the themes.

e. Frequency Count. The method of measuring characteristics of content in which every occurrence of a theme is tallied (Holsti, 1969).

f. Categorization. The selection and definition of categories or the compartments used for classification of the content being analyzed.

g. Theme Category. The compartments or "pigeon holes" into which themes are classified (Holsti, 1969).

Content Analysis. A research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952). Instead of observing people's behavior directly, or asking them to respond to scales, the investigator takes the communications that people have produced and asks questions of the communications (Kerlinger, 1973).

Cooperative Education. A program of vocational education for persons who, through written cooperative arrangements between the school and employers, receive instruction, including required academic courses and related vocational instruction by alternation of study in school with a job in any occupational field. These two experiences must be planned and supervised by the school and employers so that each contributes to the student's education and to his or her employability (U. S. Congress, 1976, p. 11985).

Cooperative-Plan Distributive Education. An organizational pattern of instruction which prepares student-trainees for gainful employment in distributive occupations by alternating periods of school-based instruction with periods of planned distributive occupational experiences in bona fide training agencies. This program design is structured and features quality control factors which include training agreements, training plans, and regular coordination visits to training sponsors (Crawford, 1975).

Coordination Phase. Those activities involving the teacher-coordinator's contact with the training sponsor such as placing the student, arranging for learning on the job, and evaluating the student's progress on the job.

Distributive Education. A vocational instruction program designed to meet the needs of persons who have entered or are preparing to enter a distributive occupation or an occupation requiring competency in one or more of the marketing functions. The vocational program offers instruction in marketing, merchandising, management, and personal development (Crawford, 1975).

Perception. The sensory impressions of the world that an individual receives via the different sense modalities of vision, audition, and others. These sensory impressions are influenced by the beliefs or values held by an individual. Whether a given impression is veridical (i.e., truthfully reflecting the objective state of affairs) or illusory (i.e., not in accord with the objective state of affairs) does not affect its status as a fact of perceptions (Bartley, 1958; and Rock, 1975).

Quality Control Factors. The performance requirements for teacher-coordinators of cooperative-plan vocational education programs which safeguard program integrity. In order for a cooperative-plan vocational program to operate as a bona fide cooperative education program, the teacher-coordinator must utilize most or all of the quality control factors such as training agreements, training plans, regularly scheduled coordination visits, and others (Reece and Brownlee, 1976).

Semistructured Interview. A specialized depth interviewing technique where the interviewer focuses the questions on a limited number of topics. In this form of interviewing, an interview guide is provided so that information about the same topics can be obtained from all respondents although the order in which the information is elicited and the extent of the probing and exploration depends on the interviewer (Smith, 1972). This form of depth interviewing is also described in literature as semischeduled, focused, and intensive interviewing.

Teacher-Coordinator. A member of the local school staff who teaches distributive and related subject matter to students preparing

for employment and coordinates classroom instruction with on-the-job training. He/she is responsible for the distributive education program in the school (Crawford, 1975).

Training Sponsor. A business employer who directly supervises comprehensive job experiences in part-time employment to students enrolled in the school's cooperative-plan distributive education program. The training sponsors interviewed for the purposes of this study were those who had served as training sponsors for two out of the last three years.

United States Office of Education Codes and Classifications. The United States Office of Education codes are used in vocational education for identifying and reporting enrollments in various vocational programs. In distributive education there are 19 codes, four of which are used for the purposes of this study.

a. 04.02 Apparel and Accessories. A code which identifies enrollees in cooperative-plan distributive education programs who are primarily engaged in sales and sales supporting activities of clothing and all related articles for personal wear.

b. 04.06 Food Distribution. A code which identifies enrollees in cooperative-plan distributive education programs who are engaged in sales and sales supporting activities of food for home preparation and consumption or selling a general or commodity line of home products at wholesale.

c. 04.07 Food Service. A code which identifies enrollees in cooperative-plan distributive education programs who are engaged in

selling, merchandising, or serving prepared food or drinks in a restaurant, cafeteria, or similar service business.

d. 04.08 General Merchandising. A code which identifies enrollees in cooperative-plan distributive education programs who are engaged primarily in selling and sales supporting activities of a variety of merchandise (Distributive Education Service, Department of Education, Richmond, Virginia, 1976).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of literature was undertaken to establish a need for the study and to identify information related to research methodology. Specifically, a search for relevant literature was concentrated in the following areas: (1) Cooperative-Plan Distributive Education, (2) Quality Control Factors for the Coordination Phase of Cooperative-Plan Distributive Education, and (3) Methods to Determine Perceptions (Perceptions, Case Study Research, Interview Procedures, and Content Analysis).

COOPERATIVE-PLAN DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION

A cooperative-plan distributive education program is based on a three-way partnership between the student, the training sponsor, and the teacher-coordinator who represents the school. Although various program designs can be identified in cooperative-plan distributive education, these three partners exist in all cases.

Cooperative education programs do vary according to program design. Some program designs are highly structured and feature a number of quality control factors in an attempt to achieve identified educational objectives. Typical of such program designs are those which utilize advisory committees, in-school vocational instruction

which is directly related to the student's work, a training agreement which delineates the commitment various persons have to the program, a training plan which details a listing of educational experiences to be learned on the job, and employment directly related to the student's career interest or career goals (Lynch and Reece, 1974). The cooperative-plan distributive education program is one of the cooperative education programs that features a number of quality control factors in an attempt to achieve identified educational objectives.

In order for cooperative-plan distributive education to operate as a bona fide cooperative education program, Reece and Brownlee (1976) suggested that the teacher-coordinator must utilize most or all of the traditional quality control factors such as training agreements, training plans, and regularly scheduled coordination visits to safeguard program integrity. Fifteen quality control factors have been identified by teacher educators in distributive education. These factors include guidelines for: program objectives, training agreements, teacher qualifications, pupil information, curriculum, training sponsor selection, training plans, student wages, facilities and materials, advisory groups, labor laws, supervision, youth clubs, coordination visits, and evaluation processes (Lynch, 1975). These quality control factors give structure to the program and insure that the goals of cooperative-plan distributive education will be achieved.

Cooperative-plan distributive education programs can be classified according to the degree of structure inherent in program design. Programs that feature most or all of these quality control

factors are considered highly structured in program design. Programs which feature few or none of the quality control factors are unstructured in program design. The training sponsors' acceptance of quality control factors plays a vital role in the achievement of structure in cooperative-plan distributive education program design.

QUALITY CONTROL FACTORS FOR THE COORDINATION
PHASE OF COOPERATIVE-PLAN
DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION

Several studies in distributive education and other vocational areas which were applicable to this study have provided information regarding the development of the 15 quality control factors for cooperative-plan distributive education. These studies have been reviewed in chronological order to illustrate their contributions to the identification and formulation of those quality control factors which relate to the coordination phase of program operation.

John E. Gradoni (1957) in a study of distributive education programs in New York state, found that distributive education graduates and training sponsors recommended the following coordination procedures to maintain quality control in the coordination phase of program operation: (1) advisory committees should be used to achieve better coordination between program activities and community needs; (2) time allotted for coordination duties should be devoted to this work; (3) school officials should require written reports of coordination activities; and (4) written training agreements should be used to avoid problems with training sponsors.

Galen V. Jones (1957) found that Pennsylvania high school principals indicated that teacher-coordinators and student contacts with training sponsors were important elements in improving public relations with the business community. These two public relations activities were identified as important quality control factors in the coordination phase of program operation.

Roman F. Warmke (1960) conducted the first study about issues in distributive education. The purpose of his study was to analyze the opinions of distributive education leaders concerning current issues in determining effective operating procedures in distributive education. Warmke's study included several items pertaining to teacher-coordinator roles, advisory committee roles, placement activities, and student responsibilities in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Statements concerning these four areas had such a significant degree of agreement among the respondents that they have become a basis for the identification of principles or quality control factors for cooperative-plan distributive education program operation.

Dorr (1962) surveyed the 50 state departments of education to identify major areas of weaknesses in teacher-coordinators of cooperative-plan distributive education programs and identified weaknesses in the coordination phase. Forty-one cases were received of which 27 dealt with the high school cooperative program, and 60 percent involved weaknesses in use of time allocated for coordination of the program. The major weaknesses identified in the coordination

category were: (1) lack of planned coordination calls, (2) lack of ability to develop a good working relationship with the training sponsor in the coordination phase of program operation, (3) lack of orientation of training sponsors regarding their responsibilities, (4) permitting students to find their own training sponsors; (5) acceptance of inferior training stations, and (6) ineffective screening of students. The weaknesses in coordination practices identified in this study focused on areas where specific guidelines for coordination were needed. Each of these guidelines suggested areas to be emphasized as quality control factors of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Reno S. Knouse (1962), in the first professional bulletin for the Council for Distributive Teacher Education, identified two aspects of teacher education programs which needed attention in order to prepare teacher-coordinators to maintain quality control factors in the coordination phase of program operation. These aspects included: (1) placing more emphasis on experience in coordination activities during practice teaching, and (2) arranging for a college-industry internship experience.

Samson (1964) used the critical incident technique to identify 127 critical requirements for the performance of teacher-coordinator activities. The 127 critical requirements were derived from a larger group of requirements reported by students, supervising school administrators, faculty members, teacher-coordinators, and training sponsors associated with 31 distributive education programs in the Iowa public schools. The performance requirements were classified into six areas.

Coordination was one of the six areas and ranked high in importance as a critical requirement for the performance of teacher-coordinator activities. The critical requirements contained in the coordination area suggest guidelines for the formulation of quality control factors in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

E. Edward Harris (1965) utilized an adaptation of the critical incident technique to determine the critical requirements of job activities for experienced Illinois office education and distributive education teacher-coordinators. An analysis and classification of the critical incidents resulted in the formulation of eight major categories of job activities of secondary distributive education teacher-coordinators. Five of the eight categories identified areas where quality control is needed for the coordination phase of program operation. The five categories included: (1) selection of training station and placement activities, (2) selection and evaluation of students, (3) adjusting student training station performance problems (employer suggested), (4) direction of in-school learning activities, and (5) development of program promotion.

Crawford (1967) published the first comprehensive national distributive education philosophy which included agreed-upon beliefs about coordination and several other areas of distributive education. Statements of basic beliefs were synthesized from literature and research in distributive education and vocational education, from speeches at national conferences and professional meetings, from conferences with selected leaders, and from the personal experience

of the investigator. The final list of beliefs was validated by more than 90 percent of state supervisors, assistant area and/or district supervisors, and teacher educators of distributive education as listed in the 1967 United States Office of Education Directory. The statements of basic beliefs concerning the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education have provided a philosophical foundation for the formulation and identification of quality control factors for the coordination of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Statements of basic beliefs concerning the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education were validated again by Crawford (1975) when the Committee on Professional Standards requested that they be included in the Philosophy of Distributive Education for 1975. An additional belief statement was added that emphasized the importance of the use of training plans as a quality control factor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. This basic belief statement specified that each student should have an individualized training plan which outlines competencies to be learned on the job and/or in the classroom-laboratory. The training plan was to be cooperatively constructed by the teacher-coordinator, the training sponsor, and the student if quality control was to be maintained in program operation.

Harris (1971) surveyed teacher-coordinators and asked them to review their activities and estimate the proportion of total coordination time devoted to selected activities. The results indicated that the highest percentage of coordinators devoted less than ten percent

of their time to the following coordination activities: (1) working with training sponsors in implementing an on-the-job training plan, (2) working with training sponsors to solve student's on-the-job problems, (3) establishing and maintaining good working relationships with personnel of the firm, and (4) working on public relations activities in the community. Each of these coordination activities have been identified as quality control factors for the coordination of cooperative-plan distributive education. The recommendation was made that more time be devoted to the performance of each of these activities if quality control is to be maintained in the coordination phase of program operation.

Cotrell (1972) identified 47 performance requirements for teacher-coordinators in the coordination phase of program operation. The "Coordination" category of Cotrell's study suggested specific quality control factors which would assist in developing and maintaining a sound working relationship between all the parties involved in the learning process of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Weatherford (1972) analyzed the opinions of distributive education leaders about issues in distributive education and ascertained their opinions on the importance of these issues in determining effective operating procedures in distributive education. Eight issues were identified and ranked as critical for the coordination phase of program operation. These issue statements identified and emphasized the use of training plans, training agreements, student placement procedures, and teacher-coordinator's role as critical quality control

factors for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Jacobs (1973) analyzed teacher-coordinator and training sponsor perceptions of cooperative education programs in Arizona and found differences in perceptions regarding the following aspects of the coordination phase of program operation: reason for training sponsor participation in cooperative education programs, the manner in which students are scheduled for their on-the-job training, characteristics of cooperative education students as they enter the program, priorities given to activities in cooperative education programs, and the value of coordination contacts. Jacobs recommended that each of these areas be scrutinized on an individual program basis to determine how each could be upgraded and generally improved to meet the expectations of the training sponsors. This study emphasized the importance of training sponsor input into the identification of quality control factors for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Hutt (1975) undertook a study to provide data on training sponsor perceptions that would be of assistance to educators in the effective development, operation, and evaluation of cooperative programs. The case study form of descriptive research was used and information was gathered from semistructured group interviews. Transcripts were typed from the audio tapes and analyzed for content. Hutt's study revealed that the training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education have a limited understanding of many quality

control factors. A recommendation was made that formal seminars be conducted to educate training sponsors concerning the quality control factors for the coordination phase of program operation.

This section of the review of literature has synthesized the major research efforts which have provided information to assist in identifying quality control factors for the coordination of cooperative-plan distributive education. Discrepancies have also been noted in what has been perceived by leaders and training sponsors in distributive education regarding the coordination phase of program operation. Literature supports the need for research efforts to further identify training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

METHODS TO DETERMINE PERCEPTIONS

The literature reviewed in this section provided a theoretical framework for the methodology to be used to determine training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Literature which related specifically to perception, case study research, interview procedures, and content analysis has been reviewed.

Perception

Training sponsor perceptions indicate a belief held by training sponsors regarding aspects of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. The perception is obtained through observation interpreted in light of their experience as a training sponsor. The

perception is identified by the training sponsor's ability to recognize or identify directly or intuitively through the use of intelligent discernment, appreciation, or insight his or her beliefs or values concerning the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education (Bartley, 1958; and Lynch, 1973).

Groves and Kahalas (1975) explained that beliefs or values can be organized into unified systems which situationally direct behavior. The individual's overt behavior is a partial indicator of his or her values, cognitions, feelings, and action tendencies towards various objects. These three elements of value are mutually interdependent. Therefore, training sponsor's perceptions can be viewed in terms of cognitions, feelings, and action tendencies toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

The cognitive component of a value or belief is the knowledge about an object (person or thing). Knowledge of the world is selectively organized into a unified system according to the principles of learning and stimulus organization. The feeling component of a value or belief is the emotion connected with an object. The feeling component gives values their motivational character. The action tendency component of a value or belief is the behavioral readiness associated with a value (habit or learned behavior) and is the result of an individual's experiences in trying to satisfy his desires. If an individual's experiences are generally favorable, he or she will be predisposed to support the object, and if they are unfavorable, he or she will be predisposed to oppose it (Groves and Kahalas, 1975).

A training sponsor's cognitions, feelings, and action tendencies interact to form a highly interrelated, complex value system which situationally directs behavior regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Training sponsor perceptions indicate the beliefs or values held by the employer serving as a training sponsor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

In the identification of training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education, the interest is not in the actual measurement or observance of coordination activities but in how the elements of the coordination phase appear to the training sponsor. The task is to account for training sponsor impressions; whether the training sponsor impression is veridical (i.e., truthfully reflecting the objective state of affairs) or illusory (i.e., not in accord with objective state of affairs) does not affect its status as a fact of perception requiring explanation (Rock, 1975).

Case Study Research

The case study form of descriptive research is an appropriate method to determine the perceptions that training sponsors have toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Isaac and Michael (1972) described descriptive research as the accumulation of data that is solely descriptive. This research approach does not seek to explain relationships, test hypotheses, make

predictions, or get at meanings and implications, although research aimed at these more powerful purposes may incorporate descriptive methods. The case study form of descriptive research achieves an in-depth investigation of a given social unit resulting in a complete, well organized picture of that unit.

A limited number of cases or training sponsors is a necessary condition in the case study approach to descriptive research. According to Hill (1967) case study research describes and interprets all pertinent data from a particular case or limited number of cases. The case study research approach makes possible the description and interpretation of pertinent data concerning training sponsor perceptions from a limited number of cases or training sponsors. In referring to the case study based on interview data, Goldman (1962) indicated that the focus is on understanding the motives of behavior rather than cataloging the number of individuals who behave in a particular way.

The assessment of training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education should focus on understanding the motives of behavior rather than cataloging the number of training sponsors who behave in a particular way.

Interview Procedures

Although more commonly used, the mail questionnaire limits the kinds of questions that can be asked and the kinds of answers that are obtained. Personally sensitive and revealing information or answers to indirect, non specific questions that represent probes are also difficult to obtain with the mail questionnaire (Tuckman, 1972).

The oral interview is used by the researcher when the nature of the area being studied is sensitive, such as an area dealing with an individual's perceptions or basic beliefs. Interviewing tends to be an excellent collection medium in identifying perceptions because most people find greater ease in talking than in writing about their perceptions; consequently, interviewing generates more information (Tuckman, 1972).

Green and Tull (1975) indicated that while the personal interview is substantially more expensive on a per-completed-interview basis, the personal interview as a collection medium has several advantages relative to mail questionnaires. The advantages are as follows: (1) provides an opportunity to obtain a better sample since all sample units can be reached and nonresponse can be held to a minimum, (2) provides an opportunity to obtain more information since the interview can be greater in length than a telephone interview or mail questionnaire, and (3) permits greater flexibility in adapting and interpreting questions as the situation requires.

Additional advantages that the personal interview has over the mail questionnaire have been summarized by Isaac and Michael (1972) and include the following: (1) permits greater depth, (2) permits probing to obtain more complete data, (3) makes it possible to establish and maintain rapport with the respondent and to at least determine when rapport has not been established, and (4) provides a means of checking and assuring the effectiveness of communication between the respondent and the interviewer.

In offering support for the interview method of data collection, Oppenheim (1966) commented:

There remains the undisputed advantage that the richness and spontaneity of information collected by interviewers is higher than that which a mailed questionnaire can hope to obtain. The researcher may also feel a sense of security due to the fact that all the data were collected in face-to-face situations (p. 32).

Interviewing the business people who hire, supervise, and assist in the training of cooperative-plan distributive education students is believed to produce more revealing data than can be obtained by a mail questionnaire. The personal interview provides an opportunity to detect the subtle reasons for the training sponsor's participation in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education (Hutt, 1975).

The semistructured interview is designed to be flexible in the proportion of time devoted to each topic or question. Open-ended questions posed by the interviewer are intended to focus the respondent's attention on the topic under investigation, to raise specific points that are to be covered in the interview session, and to keep the interview moving (Hutt, 1975). Isaac and Michael (1972) define a semistructured interview as one that is:

. . . built around a core of structured questions from which the interviewer branches off to explore in depth. Again, accurate and complete information is desired with the additional opportunity to probe for underlying factors or relationships which are too complex or elusive to encompass in more straightforward questions (p. 96).

Groves and Kahalas (1975) recommended that the majority of the questions used during the semistructured interview be of the open-ended

variety. Even though there have been many comments about the methodological limitations of open-ended interviewing, many of the biases can be eliminated. To reduce the biases in open-ended interviewing, the following points were stressed by Groves and Kahalas: (1) the interview should be conducted in a nonobtrusive environment to reduce reactive error, (2) the interviewer should obtain commitment and relate to this commitment to extract information on a relevant basis to reduce semantic confusion, and (3) a need exists for improvement in interviewing skills through correction by insight.

Gorden (1969) indicated that the interview should be conducted in a private office in or near the business firm. An office interview has the obvious advantage of providing an opportunity for quiet and freedom from distractions.

Garrett (1972) explained that the time and place of the interview should maximize the respondent's physical comfort as well as the interviewer's with temperature, humidity, light, and odors conducive to comfort. No visual or auditory distractions should be present that make concentration difficult for the interviewer and respondent. Interruptions and telephone calls should be reduced to a minimum.

The length of the interview depends upon the purpose of the interview, thus, no optimum period of time can be fixed. In general, the interview should not last more than an hour. Establishing a certain amount of time by appointment is recommended to let the participant know in advance the time frame in which the interview will take place (Garrett, 1972).

Some researchers have recommended that responses be recorded exactly as given by the interviewee when using open-ended questions (Babbie, 1973). The tape recorder is the best tool available for gathering information in an exact and original form. The use of a tape recorder makes possible the examination and common defining of the responses (Groves and Kahalas, 1975). As a tool for gathering information, the tape recorder eliminates unconscious selection of data by the interviewer, makes possible the review of data a number of times, and minimizes the need for extensive note taking (Borg and Gall, 1971).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. The transcripts from audio tapes recorded during an interview represent the source data for content analysis procedures.

According to Holsti (1969) coding is the process whereby the raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics. The rules by which this transformation is accomplished serve as the operational link between the investigator's data and the theory and hypothesis. Coding rules are thus a central part of the research design, and in preparing them, the analyst makes the following decisions: (1) How is the research problem defined in terms of categories? (2) What unit of content is to be classified? and (3) What system of enumeration will be used?

The first step of content analysis is to define the universe of the content that is to be analyzed. The universe for this study consisted of all replies from training sponsors to the questions dealing with their perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

Categorization of the universe is perhaps the most important part of content analysis because it is a direct reflection of the theory and the problems of the study. Holsti (1969) provided five general principles to direct category construction. Included were the following: (1) Categories should reflect the purpose of the research, (2) Categories should be exhaustive, (3) Categories should be mutually exclusive, (4) Categories should be independent, and (5) Categories should be derived from a single classification principle. Categories adequately reflect the investigator's research question when conceptual and operational definitions have been defined. Categories are considered exhaustive when all relevant items in the sample of transcripts under study are capable of being placed into a category. Categories are mutually exclusive when no content datum can be placed in more than a single category cell. Categories are independent when the assignment of any datum into a category does not affect the classification of other data. Categories are derived from a single classification principle when conceptually different levels of analysis have been kept separate. Appropriate categories must be defined before content analysis can become operational.

In deciding how to analyze the data and present the findings, the researcher chooses both the unit (theme) in terms of which quantification is to be performed, and the system of enumeration that will be used. The recording unit and the unit of enumeration may be identical.

The most widely used method of measuring characteristics of content is frequency, in which every occurrence of a given theme is tallied. Holsti (1969) indicated that two related assumptions are incorporated into the research design. First, the investigator assumes that the frequency with which a perception appears in the transcripts is a valid indicator of concern, focus of attention, intensity, value, importance, and so on. Second, the investigator assumes that each unit of content--word, theme, character, or item--should be given equal weight, permitting aggregation or direct comparison. In a frequency count, a theme is coded as one unit regardless of the number of words used to express it (Hutt, 1975).

Jackson (1974) described content analysis as a very effective tool when attempting to find out what people think about a particular issue because it allows the investigator to deal with open-ended responses rather than scalar judgments or yes-no answers to questions.

A literature search indicated that content analysis procedures have been used to process data in a number of research areas ranging from education to personnel management and marketing. Brief descriptions of selected studies were included to illustrate how the methodology has been applied.

Borg and Gall (1971) cited examples of educational research studies in which content analysis procedures were deemed appropriate. Some studies utilized simple frequency counts of such variables as spelling errors, grammatical errors, or number of words used to analyze data while others utilized content analysis procedures to develop statements of objectives for courses offered at universities.

Open-ended responses from interviews lend themselves to quantification by content analysis. Jackson (1974) used the technique to provide legal evidence for a company under investigation by the Federal Trade Commission because of alleged misleading statements in a television advertisement. According to Jackson, the respondents were asked whether or not they had viewed a particular commercial and what they remembered about the advertisement. The open-ended responses to the questions were content analyzed to determine whether they supported the Federal Trade Commission's allegations. The responses were classified as yes or no to determine which of the allegations was supported by each response. A case was made to support the dismissal of charges based on evidence provided through content analysis procedures.

Hutt (1975) conducted a study to obtain data on training sponsor perceptions of distributive education that would assist educators in the effective development, operation, and evaluation of cooperative programs. Information for the study was collected by means of a semistructured group interview. An interview guide listing the open-ended questions to be asked in their proper sequence was used in each

group meeting. Respondent's answers, comments, and recommendations were recorded on tape during the interview and then transcribed. These transcripts served as the source material for the content analysis portion of the study. The unit of analysis selected for the study was the theme, which was a concept or idea expressed in one or more words. The themes were summarized and formed the basis for the reported perceptions of training sponsors regarding cooperative distributive education programs at the secondary level in Michigan.

Content analysis procedures have been used to process data in a number of research areas ranging from educational to personnel management and marketing. Open-ended responses from interviews lend themselves to quantification by content analysis.

The approach suggested by psychologists and educational researchers for identification of perceptions has been utilized in various forms in the studies cited in this chapter. Training sponsor perceptions of coordination can be identified by asking the training sponsors what they see as being the objectives of coordination, their role in coordination, and ways they see that coordination could be improved. As the verbal reports are content analyzed, training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education can be identified.

SUMMARY

This chapter provided a basis for conducting a study to determine perceptions of training sponsors regarding the coordination

phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education. The literature related to the study revealed that:

1. Coordination has been defined as the administrative procedure in cooperative-plan distributive education which places in a harmonious or reciprocal relationship the three-way partnership between the student, the training sponsor, and the teacher-coordinator. An awareness of training sponsor perceptions is important in order to maintain a harmonious or reciprocal relation in the partnership.

2. Training agreements, training plans, evaluation visits, related classroom instruction, and advisory committees have been identified as quality control factors for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Training sponsor's acceptance of quality control factors plays a vital role in the achievement of structure in cooperative-plan distributive education program design.

3. Training sponsor's understanding of the quality control factors should be scrutinized on an individual program basis to determine how they can be upgraded and generally improved.

4. The coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education is recognized as a means for establishing training sponsor perceptions of the quality control factors in program operation; yet, coordination activities received the lesser portion of teacher-coordinator's time and effort.

5. Training sponsor perceptions can be identified by conducting semistructured interviews where the training sponsor is allowed to express personal experiences and feelings regarding experiences with the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

6. The case study form of descriptive research provides an opportunity for in-depth investigation of training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

7. Semistructured interviewing is an effective collection medium for identifying training sponsor perceptions because participants find greater ease in talking than in writing about their perceptions and consequently generates more information.

8. Guidelines for interview techniques were described and included the following: (a) The use of an interview guide achieves standardization in the questions to be asked and the sequence in which they should be presented during the semistructured interview; (b) Thirty to 60 minutes provides adequate time to conduct the semistructured interview; and (c) The use of a tape recorder provides the opportunity to gather information in an exact and original form and makes possible the examining and common defining of the responses.

9. Content analysis procedures are useful in processing data in a number of research areas ranging from education to personnel management and marketing. Training sponsor's verbal reports can be content analyzed and perceptions can be identified based on the experiences of the training sponsors regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research procedures and methods used to determine the perceptions that training sponsors have toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education are described in this chapter and are categorized as follows: (1) Statement of the Problem, (2) Research Method, (3) Sample Selection Process, (4) Instrumentation, (5) Interview Procedures, (6) Validation of Interview Data, (7) Analysis of Data, (8) Accuracy of Transcripts and Content Analysis, and (9) Summary.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The central problem of this study was to identify training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education. Specifically, training sponsors from four United States Office of Education codes and classifications (04.08 General Merchandise, 04.07 Food Service, 04.06 Food Distribution, and 04.02 Apparel and Accessories) for secondary cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, were interviewed. The purpose of each interview was to identify perceptions regarding objectives, training sponsor roles, training agreements, training plans, training sponsor benefits, and

recommendations for improvement of the coordination phase of program operation.

The following research questions were stated to provide objectives for the study and a guideline for determining training sponsor perceptions:

1. What are the objectives of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education as perceived by training sponsors?
2. What do training sponsors perceive to be their role in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs?
3. What are training sponsor experiences with the training agreement as a quality control factor for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education?
4. What are training sponsor experiences with the training plan as a quality control factor for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education?
5. What are the benefits which motivate training sponsors to participate in cooperative-plan distributive education?
6. What recommendations for improving the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs are offered by training sponsors?

RESEARCH METHOD

The case study form of descriptive research was chosen as an appropriate method to determine the perceptions of training sponsors

toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. The case study form of descriptive research was utilized to achieve an in-depth investigation of the perceptions of training sponsors in Roanoke City and County.

Semistructured interviews utilizing open-ended questions on an interview guide were used as the data collection medium in the study. This approach invited the respondents to reply in their own words, rather than limit them to responses of predetermined, narrow categories found in a mail questionnaire survey instrument. Semistructured interviews permitted greater depth and probing to obtain more complete data necessary for a comprehensive understanding of training sponsor perceptions.

SAMPLE SELECTION PROCESS

Training sponsors serving cooperative-plan distributive education programs are classified by the United States Office of Education under specific codes and classifications. The State Department of Education in Richmond, Virginia (1976) reported that in 1975-76, 46 percent of the 6,063 training sponsors in Virginia were located within the following United States Office of Education codes and classifications: 04.08 General Merchandise, 18 percent; 04.07 Food Service, 11 percent; 04.06 Food Distribution, 11 percent; and 04.02 Apparel and Accessories, 6 percent.

The majority of training sponsors are located in the more populated areas of the state of Virginia. Roanoke City and County is one of these populated areas in the state that has a large number of

education programs. The case study form of descriptive research was utilized to achieve an in-depth investigation of the perceptions of training sponsors in Roanoke City and County.

Semistructured interviews utilizing open-ended questions on an interview guide were used as the data collection medium in the study. This approach invited the respondents to reply in their own words, rather than limit them to responses of predetermined, narrow categories found in a mail questionnaire survey instrument. Semistructured interviews permitted greater depth and probing to obtain more complete data necessary for a comprehensive understanding of training sponsor perceptions.

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The majority of training sponsors are located in the more populated areas of the state of Virginia. Roanoke City and County is one of these populated areas in the state that has a large number of

cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Kidd and Brown (1976) reported that 118 of the training sponsors serving cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County were found in these same four United States Office of Education codes and classifications. A slight variation was noticed in the specific percentage breakdowns as follows: 04.08 General Merchandise, 18 percent; 04.06 Food Distribution, 13 percent; 04.02 Apparel and Accessories, 13 percent; and 04.07 Food Services, 12 percent.

All of the cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County are under the direction of local supervisors. Permission was obtained from these supervisors to conduct the research. (The letters are included in Appendix A). The purpose and procedures of the study were presented by the investigator to teacher-coordinators of cooperative-plan distributive education programs at William Fleming, William Byrd, North Side, Patrick Henry, Cave Springs, Andrew Lewis, and Glenvar high schools. Teacher-coordinators were contacted by the researcher through on-site visitations to each school to explain the purpose of the study and the procedures that would be used to select the participants for the study.

With the assistance of the teacher-coordinators, a master list of training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County was developed. Information on the list included the training sponsor's name, address, telephone number, United States Office of Education code, and number of years served as a direct supervisor to distributive education students. Direct

supervision referred to the situation whereby the student was supervised and evaluated by the training sponsor on a regular basis.

The 118 training sponsors identified by Kidd and Brown were placed on the master list which was then analyzed to eliminate the names of those training sponsors who had not served as a direct supervisor to cooperative distributive education students for two of the past three consecutive years. This process reduced the total number of training sponsors on the master list to 96. The information concerning each training sponsor was then transferred on to three-by-five index cards, and each card was examined to identify training sponsor names that appeared more than once. When a training sponsor name was listed more than once, a single card was developed that included the basic information about the training sponsor and the names of each high school for which he/she served as a training sponsor. This process reduced the total number of training sponsors in the sample to 82.

The cards containing the information regarding the 82 training sponsors were then alphabetized and each training sponsor was assigned a number from one to 82. A table of random numbers was used to select 20 training sponsors to participate in the study. A second random selection of 20 was made to be used if a training sponsor in the original selection was unable to participate in the study.

The 20 training sponsors selected to participate in this study represented 24 percent of the 82 training sponsors that made up the population. This particular number of training sponsors was considered to be an adequate sample for purposes of case study research.

A letter was then developed that invited each of the participants to take part in the research effort. (The letter is included in Appendix B). Each letter was delivered in person to the training sponsor by the researcher or a teacher-coordinator from one of the high schools. Thank you letters were sent to each teacher-coordinator who assisted in delivering the letters of invitation to the selected training sponsors. (The letter is included in Appendix B). Each training sponsor was informed that the interviews would be conducted by the researcher and that an appointment would be made by phone for a date, place, and time for the interview. All 20 agreed to participate in the study. Appointments were made and the training sponsor interviews were conducted.

INSTRUMENTATION

An interview guide was used as the data collection instrument in the study. This instrument listed the questions that were asked and the sequence in which they were presented during the interview. A degree of standardization was added to the study by using the interview guide (Borg and Gall, 1971).

The interview guide was developed by a jury of experts consisting of training sponsors, local distributive education supervisors, distributive education teacher educators, research specialists, and a review of literature relevant to the topic. (The list of the jury of experts, the interview guide, and the follow-up probes are included

in Appendix C). Open-ended questions and follow-up probes were selected to elicit responses pertinent to training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. The questions dealt with the following topics: (1) Objectives of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education; (2) Role of the training sponsor; (3) Experience with training agreements; (4) Experience with training plans; (5) Benefits from training sponsor participation; and (6) Recommendations for ways to improve the coordination of cooperative-plan distributive education.

An additional instrument, a brief questionnaire, was prepared to obtain information on the background of the participants. Data from this questionnaire was used to develop a descriptive profile for the case report. (The questionnaire is included in Appendix C).

The interview guide and questionnaire were pilot tested by three training sponsors, randomly selected from the 62 training sponsors who had not been chosen to participate in the case study. (The list of pilot test participants is included in Appendix D.) The pilot test participants were asked to review the clarity of questions used in both the interview guide and background information questionnaire. Suggestions for improvement were solicited and appropriate revisions were made.

One revision concerned the structure of the interview guide. The suggestion was made that the interview guide be organized into a flip chart. Thus, the interview guide was printed on 8½ by 11 inch pages. Each page contained in large print one of the six open-ended

questions. The flip chart assisted in focusing the attention of the interviewee upon each question and provided a guide for the same sequence of questions in each interview. In addition to an interview guide, special questions were developed to be used as probes to explore in depth. The probe questions were developed by the jury of experts and appear in Appendix D.

The interview guide and probe questions were used during the interviews to enhance the possibility of discovering not only the perceptions of training sponsors toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education, but also the circumstances or incidents that brought the perceptions into being.

Social science and marketing researchers have supported the use of interview techniques when depth in the level of information is desired. Green and Tull (1975) report that there has been a growing use of the semistructured interview in marketing research to explore the underlying predispositions, needs, desires, feelings, and emotions of the consumer toward products and services. The interviewer attempted by skillful probing to learn what was important to the respondent. The use of an interview guide permitted greater depth and probing to obtain more complete data necessary for the comprehensive understanding of training sponsor perceptions toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

Identical procedures were followed in conducting each interview. Specific procedures used can be classified and explained in four

categories: (1) Role of the Interviewer, (2) Method for Recording the Data, (3) Location and Setting for Interviews, and (4) Interview Format.

The Role of the Interviewer

The researcher served as the interviewer for each semistructured interview. Semistructured interviews built around a core of structured questions from which the interviewer branched off to explore depth were conducted.

Recording the Data

An audio tape recorder was used in each interview to record answers to questions, comments, and reactions of respondents. Researchers recommended that answers be recorded exactly as given when open-ended questions are used (Babbie, 1973). A Panasonic cassette recorder model RQ-212DS was used in each interview. Each interview was recorded on a separate cassette tape. At the conclusion of each interview, the tape was tested to verify the clarity of the recording. It was not necessary to repeat any of the interview sessions because all tapes were found to be audible.

Location and Setting for Interviews

Each interview was conducted in an office in or near the establishment. An office interview had obvious advantages because it provided a quiet setting free from distraction. An attempt was made to maximize the respondent's physical comfort as well as that of the interviewer. Temperature, humidity, light, and odors

conducive to comfort were sought when the time and place of the interviews were confirmed. Attempts were also made to avoid visual or auditory distractions which would make concentration difficult for the interviewer and respondent. Coffee or soft drinks were provided at the location of the interview.

The interview length varied and no optimum period of time was fixed. However, a time range of 30 to 60 minutes was established by appointment. The appointment had the advantage of letting the participant know in advance the time frame in which the interview would take place (Garrett, 1972).

Individual arrangements were made with each respondent to assure an adequate setting and time for the semistructured interview. Interview information was obtained on the basis of a pledge that names of individuals, business firms, and schools would remain anonymous. A coding procedure was developed that permitted participants to remain anonymous. Each training sponsor has been assigned an alphabetical letter for purposes of identification, and these letters have been used when referring to direct quotes or comments made by the training sponsor.

Interview Format

The following items were included in the interview agenda to get each interview effectively under way.

1. Explanation of purpose. It was explained to interviewees that their perceptions of the coordination phase of cooperative-

plan distributive education were of interest to educators who plan, develop, implement, and manage such programs. Emphasis was placed on their perceptions and actual experience. The interviewee was informed that the results would remain confidential.

2. Defining roles of interviewer and respondent. The interviewer encouraged the respondent to freely express both positive and negative opinions. Free and open responses were necessary in order to ascertain the actual perceptions of training sponsors regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

3. Explanation of interview validation summary. Each interviewee was told that an interview validation summary would be sent. The summary would outline the interview and provide an opportunity to verify the main points.

VALIDATION OF INTERVIEW DATA

Validity is concerned with the extent to which the investigator is able to observe or measure that which is to be observed or measured (Gorden, 1969). Subsequent to the interview session, an interview validation summary and thank you letter were developed. (The letter and an example of the validation summary are included in Appendix E). Both items were mailed to each participant to validate the interview data. The instrument consisted of a summary of the responses from each interview. Each participant was asked to review the summary and to be prepared to react in a forthcoming telephone interview by indicating agreement, disagreement, or by adding ideas which had been missed in

transcribing the tape of the interview. All 20 participants responded. Two participants made minor additions to clarify points that were made in the summary. Eighteen participants indicated complete agreement with the interview summaries.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Transcripts were typed from the audio tapes recorded during each interview. Approximately 2½ hours were required to transcribe each tape. The transcripts, therefore, represented the source data for the content analysis procedures that were used. Content analysis was selected because of its appropriateness for processing data derived from open-ended questions, such as those used in a semistructured interview (Hutt, 1975).

A coding process was selected whereby the raw data was systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permitted precise description of relevant content characteristics. The rules by which this transformation was accomplished served as the operational link between the investigator's data and the research questions. Coding rules were thus a central part of the research design; and in preparing them, the analyst made the following decisions: (1) The research problem was defined in terms of six topic areas which corresponded to the six questions asked during the interview. These were further defined to include 72 theme categories; (2) The theme was selected as the unit of content to be used to classify the data; and (3) A frequency count of themes was chosen as the method of

measuring the characteristics of the content. Every occurrence of a given theme was tallied.

The universe of the content that was analyzed consisted of all replies from training sponsors to the questions dealing with their perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia. Seventy-two theme categories were defined following Holstis' (1969) principles for category construction. Each theme category reflected the purpose of the research, was exhaustive, was mutually exclusive, was independent, and was derived from a single classification principle. An example of a theme category selected for use in this study can be illustrated by the topic of training plans. One theme category was used for those responses that indicated the theme that training plans had been used; another theme category was developed for the responses that indicated the theme that training plans had not been used.

The unit of content selected for this study was the theme. A theme was identified as a sentence, or an assertion about the subject matter. The theme may have been expressed in one or many words. For example, one interviewee used 60 words in stating that an objective of the coordinator's visit to the firm was to complete an evaluation of the student's progress; another interviewee used only 20 words in describing the same objective. In content analyzing the two responses, both interviewees were credited with eliciting the same theme, that of completing an evaluation on the student's progress, even though one response contained many more words than the other.

The method of measuring the characteristics of the content chosen for this study was the frequency count. The investigator assumed that the frequency with which the perception appeared in the transcripts was a valid indicator of concern, focus of attention, intensity, value, and importance. The investigator also assumed that each theme should be given equal weight, permitting aggregation or direct comparison. In a frequency count, the theme was coded as one unit regardless of the number of words used to express it.

In the present study, theme categories were derived from the responses of interview participants to six questions on the interview guide in Appendix C. The number of themes in a theme category was determined by the number of responses included in that category. Responses were content analyzed according to the following topics:

1: Objectives of the coordinator's visit to the store.

- a. Each theme representing a different objective was coded as one category.
- b. A frequency count of the total number of responses in each category was indicated.
- c. The percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated.
- d. The number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
- e. The percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.

2. Role of the training sponsor.
 - a. Each theme representing a different role function of the training sponsor was coded as one category.
 - b. A frequency count for each category was indicated.
 - c. The percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated.
 - d. The number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
 - e. The percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
3. Experience with training agreements.
 - a. Each theme representing a different experience was coded as one category.
 - b. A frequency count for each category was indicated.
 - c. The percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated.
 - d. The number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
 - e. The percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
4. Experiences with training plans.
 - a. Each theme representing a different experience was coded as one category.
 - b. A frequency count for each category was indicated.

- c. The percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated.
 - d. The number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
 - e. The percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
5. Benefits to the training sponsor.
- a. Each theme representing a different benefit was coded as one category.
 - b. A frequency count for each category was indicated.
 - c. The percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated.
 - d. The number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
 - e. The percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.
6. Recommendations for improvement.
- a. Each theme representing a different recommendation for improving the distributive education program was coded as one category.
 - b. A frequency count for each category was indicated.
 - c. The percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated.
 - d. The number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.

- e. The percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated.

The purpose of this study was to find out what training sponsors perceive regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Content analysis allowed the investigator to deal with open-ended responses obtained through semistructured interviews. Content analysis was selected because of its appropriateness for data derived from open-ended questions such as those used in a semistructured interview.

ACCURACY OF TRANSCRIPTS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

Accuracy of transcripts and content analysis was measured by three individuals who were all experienced teacher-coordinators of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Each individual randomly selected three of the 20 tapes, listened to the tapes, and reviewed the transcripts. From the transcripts each judge then completed content analysis of the interview. The content analysis completed by each judge was then compared to the content analysis completed by the investigator. Letters reporting conclusions regarding the accuracy of the interview data were written by each judge. (The list of judges and their letters are included in Appendix F).

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the research procedures and methods used to determine the perceptions that distributive education training

sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, have toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. This chapter reported that:

1. The case study form of descriptive research was chosen as an appropriate method to determine the perceptions of training sponsors toward the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

2. Semistructured interviews utilizing open-ended questions on an interview guide were used as the data collection medium in the study.

3. Twenty distributive education training sponsors from four United States Office of Education codes and classifications were randomly selected from 82. These training sponsors had directly supervised distributive education students for two of the past three consecutive years.

4. An interview guide was developed by a jury of experts in the form of a flip chart. The interview guide was used as the data collection instrument in the study.

5. Identical procedures were followed in conducting 20 semistructured interviews. These procedures described the role of the interviewer, method for recording the data, location and setting for the interviews, and interview format.

6. An interview validation summary was developed to validate the interview data. Telephone interviews were conducted with all 20 participants.

7. Content analysis procedures were utilized to analyze the data from transcripts typed from audio tapes recorded during each interview.

8. Accuracy of the transcripts and content analysis was measured by three individuals who were experienced teacher-coordinators of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The central problem of this study was to identify training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia. More specifically, 20 training sponsors from four United States Office of Education codes and classifications (04.08 General Merchandise, 04.07 Food Service, 04.06 Food Distribution, and 04.02 Apparel and Accessories) were randomly selected for the focus of a case study. Semistructured interviews were conducted with the 20 training sponsors, and content analysis procedures were used to analyze the data.

The analysis of the data is presented in this chapter as a case study. The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section consists of a profile of training sponsors participating as respondents in the case study. The following six sections contain a presentation of the theme categories which were derived through content analysis from the responses of interview participants to six questions on the interview guide. The number of themes in a theme category was determined by the number of responses in each category.

PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The background characteristics of participants in the case study include: (1) An identification of the distributive education program area (type of distributive business) represented by each training sponsor, (2) the number of years of experience as a cooperative-plan distributive education training sponsor, (3) the number of distributive education students directly supervised, and (4) the total number of part-time employees in each establishment.

United States Office of Education Code

The information in Table 1 shows the distribution of randomly selected training sponsors according to the United States Office of Education instructional program classification and code number. Seven training sponsors represented the apparel and accessories classification; two of these held management positions in large department stores, two were managers of specialty apparel stores, two were personnel managers for large department stores, and one was a personnel manager and training director for a large department store. The food service area was represented by three managers of franchised fast-food outlets and one manager of a limited-menu family restaurant. The food distribution category was represented by three managers of large supermarket chain operated stores, and one manager of an independent supermarket. The general merchandise classification was represented by two managers of large variety merchandise chain operated stores, one manager of a drug chain operated store, and one manager of a small specialty shop.

Table 1
BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Training Sponsor	USOE Code	Type of Establishment	Years As Training Sponsor	Number of DE Students Directly Supervised	Number of Part-time Employees in Establishment
A	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	14	40	30
B	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	3	10	8
C	04.08	General Merchandise	3	5	4
D	04.07	Food Services	3	8	27
E	04.08	General Merchandise	2	2	3
F	04.08	General Merchandise	3	4	12
G	04.06	Food Distribution	15	20	6
H	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	4	35	80
I	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	10	10	5
J	04.08	General Merchandise	20	8	160
K	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	14	72	7
L	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	2	8	35
M	04.07	Food Services	2	13	10

Table 1. Continued

Training Sponsor	USOE Code	Type of Establishment	Years As Training Sponsor	Number of DE Students Directly Supervised	Number of Part-time Employees in Establishment
N	04.07	Food Services	2	11	15
O	04.07	Food Services	5	15	5
P	04.06	Food Distribution	15	30	16
Q	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	13	50	4
R	04.06	Food Distribution	5	15	12
S	04.08	General Merchandise	15	25	2
T	04.06	Food Distribution	11	70	18

Number of Years as a Distributive Education Training Supervisor

As shown in Table 1, the amount of experience that participants had as training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education students ranged from two years to 20 years. The information in Table 2 indicates the average number of years each individual served as a training sponsor for each type of establishment. The training sponsors that participated in this case study served an average of eight years in this capacity.

Number of Students Directly Supervised

A further indication of each training sponsor's past involvement with cooperative-plan distributive education is given in Table 1 where the number of students directly supervised at the actual time the study was conducted is presented. Direct supervision referred to that situation where the training sponsor directly assigned work to the employee and regularly evaluated the employee's performance. The number of students directly supervised by the training sponsors in this case study ranged from two to 72.

Number of Part-Time Employees in the Establishment

As shown in Table 1, the 20 respondents represented different store-size categories based on the number of part-time employees in each establishment. The number of part-time employees in each establishment ranged from two to 160.

Table 2

SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS
OF RESPONDENTS BY BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT

Number of Training Sponsors	USOE Code	Type of Establishment	Average Number of Years as DE Training Sponsor	Average Number of DE Students Directly Supervised	Average Number of Part-Time Employees in Establishment
5	04.08	General Merchandise	8.60	8.80	36.20
4	04.07	Food Services	3.00	11.75	14.25
4	04.06	Food Distribution	11.50	33.75	13.00
7	04.02	Apparel & Accessories	8.51	32.14	24.42

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis procedures made it possible to describe a group of interviewees in terms of the relative importance placed on their responses to the open-ended questions on the interview guide (Appendix C). The degree of emphasis devoted to each of the six questions by case study participants is shown in Table 3.

The open-ended question which generated the most response dealt with suggestions to improve the distributive education program. Twenty-two percent of the themes elicited from interviewees had reference to that topic. The question which pertained to the objectives of the coordinator's visit to the store accounted for 19 percent of the themes, while the role of the training sponsor and benefits to the training sponsor each accounted for 18 percent. Experiences with training plans accounted for 13 percent of the total number of responses, while experiences with training agreements received 11 percent of the themes elicited as shown in Table 3.

Objectives of the Coordinator's
Visit to the Store

In opening the interview on the topic of objectives, the following open-ended question was asked: What do you feel are the major purposes for the coordinator's visit to your store? Content analysis procedures revealed that 142 themes were introduced during the interview. The themes were further classified into 13 theme categories. These results are presented in Table 4.

Table 3
NUMBER OF THEMES PER TOPIC AREA

Topic Area	Number of Theme Categories	Number of Themes	Percent of Total Themes [*]
Objectives of the Coordinator's Visit to the Store	13	142	19
Role of the Training Sponsor	11	134	18
Experience with Training Agreements	8	86	11
Experience with Training Plans	10	100	13
Benefits to the Training Sponsor	14	134	18
Recommendations for Improvement	16	168	22
TOTAL	72	764	100

* Percent figures rounded to nearest integer.

Table 4

THEMES REGARDING OBJECTIVES OF THE
COORDINATOR'S VISIT TO THE STORE

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Rate the factors on the evaluation form and discuss a grade assignment for the student's performance	32	23	20	100
Identify and help solve problems associated with the student's work	28	20	20	100
Review student's progress on the job	21	15	15	75
Procure information or personal services of the training sponsor for use in the distributive education classroom or other related program activities	11	8	7	35
Develop public relations with training sponsors	8	6	8	40
Evaluate the performance of the training sponsors	7	5	7	35
Promote adult education programs and survey areas for needed adult programs	7	5	7	35
Develop and follow-up on training plans	7	5	7	35
Identify prospective openings for student placement	6	4	6	30
Purchase merchandise or services	5	4	5	25
Provide specific assistance to training sponsor	4	3	4	20
Observe student on the job	3	2	3	15
Evaluate student's suitability to the career	3	2	3	15

Rate Factors on Evaluation Form and Discuss Grade Assignment.

In discussing objectives of the coordinator's visit to the store, 32 themes placed emphasis on completing the evaluation form. Training Sponsor E, manager of a general merchandise specialty shop, stated the objective of the coordinator's visit to the store as follows, "Of course, she brings an evaluation sheet, you know, every six weeks. I have to fill it out and give or send it back to her in order for the girl to get a grade." Additional responses on the theme of evaluation and grading were provided by Training Sponsor M and Training Sponsor P. The former commented, "I think he comes in to talk to me about feelings I have that won't be written on the evaluation form," while the latter stated, "We try to note improvement in weak areas from the last evaluation." Training sponsor F added a dimension to the theme by stating, ". . . he wants a report to see how the student is, and wants to know what kind of problems, if any, are developing." The majority of training sponsors indicated the objective for the coordinator's visit to the store was to rate the factors on the evaluation form and discuss a grade assignment for the student's performance.

Identify and Help Solve Problems Associated with the Student's Work. Another theme category derived from the case study was concerned with identifying and helping solve problems associated with the student's work. An objective of the coordinator's visit to the store according to Training Sponsor A was described in the following manner:

Well, sometimes we have problems and they come to try to solve the problem. Like too much absenteeism, lateness, why they're not selling much, their productivity is not high while the selling cost is too high, and it [reason for coordinator's visit] varies at different times.

Several training sponsors mentioned that the coordinator visited more frequently when a student was having a problem. Other training sponsors stated that the teacher-coordinator was a key factor in solving the problems because the coordinator goes back and discusses with the student the problems the manager has identified. Training Sponsor P indicated another dimension of this theme category when he stated, "Many times the coordinator will visit when the student is having problems in the classroom to see if the problem is related to work."

Review Student's Progress on the Job. Several training sponsors indicated that the coordinator comes to the store to review the student's progress. Training Sponsor L, manager of a large department store, stated, "Basically the coordinator comes to get a general idea of exactly how the student is performing in his job--feedback from our end here." Training Sponsor S, manager of a small drug store, commented, "They want to know how the student is doing, and how I react." The purpose of the coordinator's visit was described by the majority of training sponsors as being to review the student's progress on the job.

Procure Information or Personal Services of the Training Sponsor for the Distributive Education Classroom or Other Related Activities.

Eight of the responses in this theme category made direct reference to visits for the purpose of procuring information for the distributive

education classroom. The type of information generally sought included: hints in what to teach, requests to speak or conduct interviews, discussions of projects and assignments that could be done, approaches to straighten out work problems in the class, and other general ways to improve the student through the classroom. Training Sponsor N, manager of a fast-food outlet, said, "He'll come in to visit me to see if I'd like to help out judging contests. I'm grateful enough to him for helping me with my problems that I'm more than glad to." Another aspect of this theme category was identified by Training Sponsor T, manager of a large grocery chain store, who indicated that another purpose for visiting the store was to invite merchants to participate on the advisory committee.

Develop Public Relations with Training Sponsors. Eight training sponsors indicated public relations activities were a purpose for the coordinator's visit to their stores. Among the types of public relations activities mentioned were employer-employee banquets and special visits to establish friendships. Training Sponsor B, manager of a department store, stated, "The visit is usually a friendship type deal, you know. They are very friendly." The general consensus of the responses appeared to be one which encouraged activities that would improve the working relationship between school and employer.

Evaluate the Performance of the Training Sponsor. Seven training sponsors identified evaluation of training sponsor performance as a purpose of the coordinator's visit to the store. Training Sponsor S, manager of a small drug store, stated, "But I always feel, particularly

with new coordinators that don't know me too well, that they are evaluating me as a training sponsor." Other dimensions of this theme were expressed by Training Sponsor O and Training Sponsor D. The former stated, "They come to make sure I'm handling their people right. The latter commented, "The employee might say, she's really a meany; she treats us like this, and the coordinator's got to find out for himself."

Promote Adult Education Programs and Survey Areas for Needed Adult Programs. Another theme category derived from this case study focused on adult education programs. This theme can be illustrated by the comments of Training Sponsor F, manager of a variety store. He stated:

Well, he comes by and he says that he [coordinator] has programs at the high school or other places where the retailer or the merchant himself can get involved, such as an advertising class that's every Tuesday night.

Other training sponsors made reference to seminars and workshops in which they had participated. These included shoplifting, bad checks, and courtesy workshops. Training Sponsor G, manager of a large variety store, stated, "They ask us if there is anything they can do to help us with special business problems." Seven responses were made that identified the theme category of adult program development as a purpose for the coordinator's visit to the store.

Develop and Follow-up on Training Plans. Seven training sponsors identified development and follow-up on training plans as a purpose for the coordinator's visit to the store. Training Sponsor B stated, "One major purpose is to set up training plans to help the

student along." Other responses included such ideas as: determine if the student is ready to be transferred to another area in the store, determine if the coordinator can assist in the training process, and improve the student's educational experience.

Identify Prospective Openings for Student Placement. Six training sponsors suggested that one of the purposes of the coordinator's visit to the store was to identify prospective openings for student placement. Training Sponsor L, manager of a department store, expressed the theme in this way, "They come or call occasionally to find out if we have openings, or if we can place persons on a periodic basis."

Purchase Merchandise or Services. Five training sponsors indicated that the coordinator's visit to the store was to have lunch or purchase merchandise. Training Sponsor N, manager of a fast-food outlet said, "They come in and eat, and they're asking just generally how the individual [student] is doing."

Provide Specific Assistance to Training Sponsor. Another theme receiving four responses suggested that the coordinator visits the store to provide specific assistance to the training sponsor. Training Sponsor O, manager of a family fast-food outlet, expressed the theme this way. "The coordinators want to know if there's anything they can do to help me--which means a lot."

Observe Student On-the-Job. Observance of the student while working was identified by three training sponsors as a reason the coordinator visits the store. Two training sponsors indicated that

observing the student shows the student that the coordinator is interested and cares about him/her.

Evaluate Student's Suitability to the Career. Three training sponsors indicated that another purpose for the coordinator's visit was to determine if the student was suited for a career in retailing. Training Sponsor M, manager of a fast-food outlet, stated, "The coordinator comes to help the student find a place in life in the business that he wants."

Role of the Training Sponsor

Effective operation of the cooperative-plan distributive education program depends upon the performance of specific functions by each partner in the relationship. The following question was asked in each interview to provide a basis for describing how training sponsors view their role as participants in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education: What do you consider to be your responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee? Reactions of individual training sponsors to the question were content analyzed and summarized. Information contained in Table 5 shows a list of 11 theme categories containing 134 themes from that summary.

Provide Counsel and Advice to Student. Themes or responses that described the training sponsor's role as being one of counseling and advising were grouped into one category. One training sponsor succinctly expressed her view of the training sponsor role as being to, ". . . counsel and provide guidance to the student." Training Sponsor G commented:

Table 5
THEMES REGARDING ROLE OF
THE TRAINING SPONSOR

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Provide counsel and advice to students	23	17	11	55
Supervise and train the students	20	15	11	55
Teach business policy and procedure	18	13	11	55
Provide practical experience with subjects being taught in class	17	13	12	60
Teach character traits	9	7	5	25
Be impartial in treatment of distributive education student-trainee	9	7	7	35
Evaluate student performance	9	7	7	35
Teach proper work habits	8	6	7	35
Help the student prepare for advancement and promotion	8	6	7	35
Set a proper example for the student	7	5	5	25
Teach human relation skills	6	4	3	15

I think the student looks to you for guidance, as well as he would a counselor in his school. We hope that they feel free to confide in us their problems . . . maybe not just with their job, but other problems they have in life.

Training Sponsor O described his role as being a chaplain or counselor. He stated, "I try to be their chaplain and everything else because they're children and they do need help and guidance a lot of times." In addition to helping the student mold his life, mold his attitudes, set goals, and solve personal problems, another training sponsor described his role in this way:

I've always felt that my biggest one [role] was proving to them that the older generation really does have confidence in them and believe in them and is interested in helping.

Eleven training sponsors identified counseling and advising as a role of the training sponsor.

Supervise and Train Students. Further examination of Table 5 shows that 20 themes expressed by training sponsors indicated that supervising and training students were considered to be major roles. Training Sponsor G stated, "I feel our responsibility to the DE student . . . is to help him further his education as well as to supervise his work." Training Sponsor F indicated that, "I want to make sure they learn and enjoy their work, and make it as happy and as knowledgeable as possible as long as they stay here." In describing the training role, other training sponsors explained that the responsibility for providing initial training experiences rests with the supervisor.

Teach Business Policy and Procedure. Eleven training sponsors responded with 18 themes regarding the role of teaching business policy

and procedure. Training Sponsor K described this role when he said, "I think the student should try to learn and be taught as many aspects of retailing, business management, or what have you, as we can possibly teach him." Training Sponsor B described this role in the following manner, "I guess my largest responsibility is to give them experience and to teach them the total function of the store." Among the specific business procedures mentioned were operating a register; making change; handling checks, Mastercharge, and Bank-america; and working with phases of cost and purchasing. Other training sponsors recommended that students be allowed to learn new things regarding company policy so as to prepare them for management positions.

Provide Practical Experience with Subjects Taught in the Classroom. Twelve training sponsors expressed 17 themes dealing with the responsibility to provide practical application on the job of concepts learned in the classroom. Training Sponsor A illustrated this theme when she said:

We see that they do follow through everything that they have learned in the classroom: how to approach the customer, how to sell, how to suggestive sell, and every aspect of the job from the lowest job--the cleaning and straightening--clear up through the final way to finish a sale.

Training Sponsor Q supported this theme by saying, "I feel like I should work as closely as I can with what they are teaching in school so that they can . . . become better managers." One final dimension of this theme was expressed by training sponsors who described assistance they provided to students in completing class projects.

Teach Character Traits. Nine responses of training sponsors focused on the roles of teaching specific character traits. Among the character traits specifically identified as important were honesty, responsibility, self-improvement, goal setting, and cleanliness. Training Sponsor S described his role as one of, "teaching the student that this is more than a job; that the experience is forming a base for career development."

Be Impartial in Treatment of Distributive Education Student-Trainee. Seven training sponsors stressed the responsibility to treat distributive education students the same as other employees. Training Sponsor J, manager of a large variety store, expressed the theme in the following manner:

We consider our responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee the same as to any other employee; and, of course, we give these trainees the same kind of training we give our other employees. They get the same salaries, the same salary reviews, the same employee review, and the same employee rating.

Training Sponsor D, manager for a fast-food outlet, expressed the theme this way:

Well, I tell you, I don't feel any different towards DE students than any other employee I have. They all have to learn the same things the same way. Just because it's a class for them, I can't give them any special attention.

Evaluate Student Performance. Evaluation of student performance on the job was described as a role of the training sponsor by seven interviewees. Training Sponsor R, manager of a large super-market, put the theme in these words, "My responsibility is to always let them know how they stand." Training Sponsor C, manager of a large

drug store, stated the theme in these words, "I think she expects the manager to tell her when she [student] has done something wrong, and she expects a pat on the back when she has done something right." Two training sponsors indicated the determination of a grade for the student as a part of their evaluation responsibility.

Teach the Student Proper Work Habits. The role of teaching the student proper work habits was expressed in eight themes by seven training sponsors. Among the work habits identified were keeping busy, doing one's best, following established rules, and doing things correctly the first time.

Set a Proper Example for the Student. Eight themes identified the responsibility of the training sponsor to help the student prepare for advancement and promotion. Training Sponsor A explained the theme in these words:

I think every store is different and every job is different, and the students expect us [training sponsors] to help them so they can better themselves so they can go into a high field and get promotions, which DE students can do.

Other training sponsors indicated they have the responsibility to help the student prepare for management positions, develop themselves as a member of the business community, and further their education in business.

Set a Proper Example for the Student. Seven themes focused on the responsibility of the training sponsor to set a proper example for the student. Training Sponsor F expressed the theme in this manner:

Well, the student expects me to be an example. I expect them to follow in my footsteps, not footstep for footstep, but if I go by the book, I expect them to go by the book. I don't cut corners.

Other training sponsors indicated that leadership, fairness, honesty, and self-expression were characteristics that could be taught by setting a proper example for the student.

Teach the Student Human Relations Skills. In the final theme category, six themes identified the training sponsor's responsibility to teach the student human relations skills. Included among these skills were empathizing with people, getting along with people, meeting people, and approaching the customer.

Experience with Training Agreements

The purpose of this phase of the semistructured interview was to identify those themes and ideas specifically related to training agreements. The attempt was, therefore, to observe and record those responses provided by training sponsors as being descriptive of their experiences with training agreements.

The following question, included on the interview guide in Appendix C, was used to shift the focus of the interview to the topic at hand: Describe your experience with training agreements. Reactions of individual training sponsors to the question were content analyzed and summarized. The information in Table 6 shows a list of eight theme categories from that summary.

Identifies Responsibilities of Teacher-Coordinator, Parent, Student, and Training Sponsor. Fifteen training sponsors described 28 themes associated with the identification of responsibilities of the

Table 6
 THEMES REGARDING EXPERIENCE
 WITH TRAINING AGREEMENTS

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Identifies the responsibilities of the teacher-coordinator, parent, student, and training sponsor	28	33	15	75
Signed by the participating parties	16	19	12	60
Need exists for training agreements	12	14	8	40
Not familiar with the term	9	10	5	25
Could work just as well without training agreements	7	8	6	30
Students do not take commitments seriously	7	8	6	30
Coordinator has responsibility for enforcement of rules	5	5	4	20
Achieves parental understanding of the program	2	2	2	10

teacher-coordinator, parent, student, and training sponsor in the training agreement. Training Sponsor Q described his experience in this manner, "Actually, we set it up in three parts, and I think there was one for teacher-coordinators, one for students, and one for parents." Training Sponsor S explained that the training agreement, "Spells out what the employer will do." Among the specific responsibilities which were included in training agreements were: the student was to work 15 hours a week, the student was not to come to work if not in school on any given day, and the coordinator was to be called if a student came to work when having been absent from school. In discussing the clause requiring the student to miss work when school was missed, Training Sponsor J commented, ". . . a lot of students, once they get out starting to make a little money, would like to drop out of school. I think that clause is probably the best clause they have in it." Training Sponsor H, personnel manager of a large department store, expressed this reaction to the clause, "I feel you are penalizing the employer, not the student." Several training sponsors described the training agreement as the means by which the rules and regulations of the distributive education program were explained to the business person serving as a training sponsor.

Signed by the Participating Parties. Twelve training sponsors described their experience with training agreements by indicating that they had signed the agreement. Reference was made to the fact that this was usually done at the beginning of the year. Three training sponsors indicated that they may have signed the agreement but were

not sure. Training Sponsor H introduced another dimension to this theme category when she stated, "We do honor them as much as we can, but we don't want to be held as far as signing that piece of paper. There's no legal contract for us."

Need Exists for Training Agreements. Eight training sponsors expressed 12 themes that focused on the need for training agreements. Training Sponsor S expressed the theme in these terms, "I think it [training agreement] is sort of a necessity . . . it gives you a position with the student of knowing that you've got responsibilities to him." Training Sponsor K stated, "Training agreements should be continued or the program would go helter skelter." An additional dimension was added to this theme category by Training Sponsor R when he said:

In other words, you feel you've got an obligation where you have got to keep them on the payroll whether they're doing a job or not, when other employees--say a part-time employee- you wouldn't.

Familiarity with Term. Five training sponsors indicated that they were not familiar with the term "training agreement." Seven themes focused on experiences which indicated a general lack of familiarity with training agreements. Training Sponsor E described her experience in this way, "You mean, is that the little paper I signed at the beginning? I never read it. That's honest. I just took their word." Training Sponsor C expressed the theme this way, "I can't recall that I did [read or signed it]. Maybe I did, but I don't remember it."

Could Work Just as Well Without Training Agreement. Six training sponsors expressed the theme that they would work just as well without the training agreement. Training Sponsor L commented, "I have no purpose for them personally. I assume they serve some function there, but it really is nothing we use here in the store." Training Sponsor J stated, "Our training agreement means very little to us." A major reason for lack of support for the use of training agreements by training sponsors can be illustrated in the comments of Training Sponsor T who stated that the training agreement:

. . . hasn't helped very much because, as a rule, if the employee wants out, he gets out; and it doesn't do any good. No matter what you want, when he [student] decides he wants out, he's gone; and the training agreement really doesn't help us--at least not that I can tell.

Students Do Not Take Commitments Seriously. The theme that students do not take commitments seriously was expressed by six training sponsors in seven themes. All of the themes originated from experiences where students had been suspected of being dishonest, or had quit the job, and thus, ignored the provisions of the training agreement. Another dimension of this theme category was described by Training Sponsor K when he commented, "There are some students that, unfortunately, will take DE to get out of school early and use it as such."

Coordinator Has Responsibility for Enforcement of Rules. Four training sponsors expressed a theme indicating that the teacher-coordinator has the responsibility for enforcing the rules of the training agreement. Training Sponsor T described this theme when he

said, ". . . the coordinator told me they don't go strictly by those rules."

Achieves Parental Understanding of the Program. Training sponsors described the training agreement as a means to help parents understand the provisions of the distributive education program. Training Sponsor Q explained that the training agreement is, ". . . definitely needed because otherwise you've got students going from job to job and the parents wouldn't understand." Parental understanding of these provisions of the training agreement was described by training sponsors as being important to the function of the distributive education program.

Experience with Training Plans

The purpose of this phase of the semistructured interview was to identify the themes specifically related to training plans. An attempt was made to observe and record those responses provided by training sponsors as being descriptive of their experiences with training plans.

The following question was used to focus the interview on this topic: Describe your experience with training plans. Reactions of training sponsors to the question were content analyzed and summarized. The information in Table 7 shows a list of ten theme categories from that summary.

Training Plans Are Not Used. Training plans were not being used by 15 of the training sponsors interviewed in this study. Training Sponsor L stated the theme in this way, "The one [training plan]

Table 7
THEMES REGARDING EXPERIENCE
WITH TRAINING PLANS

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Training plans are not used	31	31	15	75
Training plans could improve performance of student, coordinator, and training sponsor	25	25	20	100
Are not familiar with the term	10	10	9	45
Presently use training plans	7	7	5	25
Used to evaluate student progress on the job	7	7	5	25
Outlines specific duties and responsibilities of student on the job	6	6	5	25
Establishes time table for accomplishment of goals	5	5	5	25
Provides a system to move student throughout the store	3	3	3	15
Assists in identifying strengths and weaknesses in job performance	3	3	3	15
Training plans should be initiated by teacher-coordinator	3	3	3	15

the DE people use, I believe, is on the back of the evaluation; but we generally evaluate them [students] and that's it. We don't get into training plans." Various explanations were given as to why training plans were not used. Training Sponsor D stated that he didn't, ". . . see the coordinator enough to sit down with him and outline anything for the student." Training Sponsor J said, ". . . this [training plan] doesn't usually work, and it always just interrupts our business." Among other reasons for not using training plans were: they tended to be too time consuming, unadaptable to present operation, in conflict with an existing training program, impossible to work in certain types of stores, and in conflict with company policy which prohibits the student to move into other departments of the store. Training Sponsor T described his experience with training plans in these terms, "We kind of set up a time table for each employee in the store; this is what we want them to have done and accomplished . . . each quarter. I don't know how much [follow-up] was done on it [training plan]."

Training Plans Could Improve Performance of Student, Coordinator, and Training Sponsor/ Although only five of 20 training sponsors indicated that training plans were in use in their firms, all of the training sponsors expressed themes to support the use of training plans. Twenty-five themes were identified which suggested that the training plan could improve performance of the student, coordinator, and training sponsor.

Twelve of the 25 themes suggested how training plans could improve the performance of the training sponsor. Training Sponsor K expressed the theme in these words, "I think it [training plan] would pin it [training] down a little more than what it is now." Training Sponsor M stated the theme in this way, ". . . this [training plan] is something I'd like to see more of. I think everybody has to have goals. They've got to set goals for themselves; the younger they start, the better off they're going to be." Training Sponsor Q indicated his support of training plans when he suggested that it would give the training sponsor a guideline for some of the things the student should learn. Other suggestions for how training plans could improve the training included: allows the assignment of more advanced tasks than normally would be assigned, provides motivation, and strengthens the program.

Eleven of 25 themes suggested how training plans could improve student performance. Training Sponsor H indicated, ". . . a tremendous improvement rate with the students that have these [training plans], and in fact, they have taken on more responsibility; they know a lot more about their department." Other improvements mentioned were: provided more direction through planning, gave the student an opportunity to advance, helped the student meet goals, and greatly improved student performance.

Themes describing improvements in coordinator performance included the ideas that the coordinator would know more of what the student was doing, the student would become better trained, and training plans would put a little more direction into the program.

Are Not Familiar with the Term. Nine training sponsors indicated unfamiliarity with the term "training plan." When asked the open-ended question, "Describe your experience with training plans," responses included, "I have to say they are new on my part;" "I am not familiar with the term [training plan];" and "I am not real sure what the training plan is." Training Sponsor H expressed this theme in these words, "This is the first year that we have had what I would call a legitimate training plan with the DE coordinators or students."

Presently Use Training Plans. Five training sponsors indicated that training plans were presently in use. Training Sponsor Q stated the theme in these words:

Well, as I said before, I think that the one [training plan] they have is about as good as you can do. I don't see where it can be improved any. As I said, it's got some very strong advantages if you've got five or six students you are trying to work with.

Used to Evaluate Student Progress on the Job. Seven themes centered around the use of the training plan to evaluate student progress on the job. Training Sponsor N stated:

I evaluate the tasks they've done, say where they are strong and where they are weak, list the things upcoming we look for next grading period--what tasks they are going to perform, and the circle continues in evaluating that the next time around.

Other themes focused on the fact that the training plan was reviewed every six weeks and that the coordinator brought the training plan with him when he visited the training station.

Outlines Specific Duties and Responsibilities of the Student

On the Job. Five themes focused on using the training plan to outline specific duties and responsibilities of the student on the job. Training Sponsor T stated that the training plan is, ". . . what we've been trying to work for anyway--but they just never had it written down in black and white." Training Sponsor H described the plan as being individually developed for each student and progressing with the student's ability.

Establishes a Time Table for Accomplishment of Goals. Five themes discussed establishing time tables for the accomplishment of goals. Training Sponsor B expressed the theme in these words:

We sit down and we plan out what the student will learn and whatever time is involved. Sometimes it's the year. We have an overall plan and you break that down into a smaller plan so there are a lot of different goals.

Provides a System to Move Student Throughout the Store. Three themes identified the training plan as a means to move the student throughout the store. Training Sponsor C described this theme when he said, "We do have designated jobs for them to do in structured zones or work areas, and the student also has specific work assignments that are required of them."

Assists in Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses in Job Performance. Three themes focused on the use of training plans to identify strengths and weaknesses in job performance. Training Sponsor I indicated that the training plan identified areas that needed improvement. These areas then become goals for the next period of time.

Training Plan Should Be Initiated by the Coordinator. Three themes stressed the role of the coordinator as the individual responsible for initiating the training plan. Training Sponsor L stated, "Coordinators must use judgment as to whether the use [of training plans] is appropriate or not." Other themes described the need for adaptability in the training plan and for the coordinator to follow-up on the training plan.

Benefits to the Training Sponsor

The purpose of this section was to ascertain the benefits training sponsors receive in return for various functions they perform. Fourteen theme categories were identified from 134 themes.

The following question was used to focus the attention of the interviewee on this topic: What are the benefits to you and the store from hiring distributive education students? The responses were content analyzed and summarized. The information in Table 8 shows a list of 14 theme categories from that summary.

Distributive Education Students Possess Good Work Habits.

Twenty-three themes were obtained from 12 different training sponsors in this theme category. Among the work traits identified were aggressiveness, dependability, willingness to work, conscientiousness, cooperativeness, reliability, and confidence. Training Sponsor H described this theme in these words, ". . . usually the DE student will not be caught with his hands in his pockets, just standing around, elbows on the cash register. They know better than that." Training

Table 8

THEMES REGARDING BENEFITS TO
THE TRAINING SPONSOR

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Distributive education students possess good work habits	23	17	12	60
Distributive education students are preferred over regular high school students	20	15	12	60
Distributive education students show more interest in the job	19	14	12	60
Distributive education students are pre-trained in school	14	10	7	35
Distributive education students are a good source of part-time help	12	9	8	40
Distributive education students are motivated by credit and grade for working	11	8	9	45
Distributive education students are career-minded employees	10	7	6	30
Distributive education coordinator assists in solving work problems	10	7	8	40
Provides public relations benefits	6	4	4	20
Distributive education students are available to work hours when we need them	4	3	4	20
Provides an opportunity to work with young people	2	1	2	10
Provides a source of young ideas for the businesses	1	.7	1	5

Table 8. Continued

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Distributive education program has broadened our knowledge	1	.7	1	5
Distributive education students fair as well as part-time people with no experience	1	.7	1	5

Sponsor G expressed the theme in this way, ". . . the student doesn't have to be told once they are shown things; and when they become acquainted with their jobs, they follow through without further instruction." Training Sponsor K indicated that distributive education student's productivity is above average when compared to other employees.

Distributive Education Students Are Preferred Over Regular High School Students. When describing the benefits to the training sponsor from hiring distributive education students, 12 training sponsors expressed 20 themes which described a preference for distributive education students over regular high school students. Training Sponsor A stated the theme in this way, "We don't make a practice of hiring high school students at all with the exception of DE students." Training Sponsor P explained his preference for distributive education students in these comments, "In most cases I've got a little lever there that I can prod them with or whatever you want to call it." Training Sponsor S added, ". . . it's a whole lot better for the store to have a DE student."

Distributive Education Students Show More Interest in the Job. Twelve training sponsors mentioned 19 themes describing the distributive education student as showing more interest in the job. In explaining how students show more interest, Training Sponsor M commented that, "They seem to cooperate more with me than the rest of the employees-- interest over and beyond the call, so to speak." Training Sponsor A commended, "Well, if they are really interested in their job . . . then they work hard at it and they work better than somebody who is just working." Training Sponsor F expressed the theme in these words, "The

DE student seems like he or she is more interested; they want to get more involved. They're not here to just put in eight to ten hours and go home."

Distributive Education Students Are Pre-Trained in School.

Fourteen themes expressed by seven training sponsors indicated that they benefit from hiring distributive education students because the students receive training in school prior to coming on the job. Training Sponsor Q expressed the theme in these comments, "Well, your DE students when they come in go to work--they're the same as having an employee that's been here for two or three years." Training Sponsor R added, "They are willing to train plus the fact . . . a large number of DE students go full-time; plus they're already trained when they're full time. They fit in real good." Among the areas mentioned by training sponsors where pre-training had been noted were: techniques in applying for jobs, characteristics of good physical appearance, techniques on selling, techniques in customer relations, and general principles of retailing.

Distributive Education Students Are A Good Source of Part-Time Help. Twelve themes described the distributive education student as a good source of part-time help. Training Sponsor G expressed the theme when he stated, "Well, DE students fill a void in our business for part-time help at a time that there is a real need for it in our business." Another dimension of the theme was expressed by Training Sponsor J when she said, "Normally, DE students will stay with us longer than young students that you pick up off the street." Training Sponsor P added this dimension to the theme:

Of course one of the main benefits is that when you hire a student like this you're getting people who can work the hours you need them in most cases, and you don't have all the extra expense you have if you have to hire full-time help.

Training Sponsor E indicated that a part-time distributive education student provides the business with an employee for the entire school year.

Distributive Education Students Are Motivated by Credit and Grade for Working. One of the benefits to training sponsors was expressed in 11 themes describing student motivation for receiving a grade and school credit for working at regular pay. Training Sponsor P stated, ". . . in most cases, by taking DE as a credit course, they know they have to pass the course, so they usually do a real good job for us." Training Sponsor D expressed the theme in these words:

The DE student is going after something more than just pay. They're going after a grade as well, and they know a certain amount is expected from them, and they should perform up to that because they are going to be graded.

Distributive Education Students Are Career Minded Employees.

Ten themes were related to the career mindedness of distributive education students. Training Sponsor T expressed the theme in these terms, "You get people that you know are going to be interested in a retail career." Training Sponsor N indicated that he liked the idea of getting an employee who had expressed a desire to work at his particular firm. The training sponsors that commented on this theme identified the following benefits from hiring career-minded students: they stay with the company, they make good full time employees later, and they are capable of going on to supervisory positions.

Distributive Education Coordinator Assists in Solving Work Problems. The assistance that the teacher-coordinator gives the training sponsor in solving work problems was identified as another benefit to the business from hiring distributive education students. Training Sponsor I stated, "I feel more secure with DE students because I know I have the backup of the coordinator." Training Sponsor K indicated that the students are more motivated because they have to answer to two people. Training Sponsor R explained that the coordinator brought him student feedback on job activities and problems. Training Sponsor J summed up the experiences of many others by explaining that a major benefit from hiring a distributive education student became evident when a problem developed with the student on the job. The teacher-coordinator provides the viewpoint and assistance of a third person to help find solutions to job problems.

Provides Public Relations Benefits. Four training sponsors indicated that public relations benefits were received from hiring distributive education students. Training Sponsor H commented:

First of all, it's a tremendous amount of public relations as far as the DE students are concerned. We like to have high school students as employees whether or not they are DE students because they work here and shop here and their friends come in, their parents, and it gets us around in the community.

Training Sponsor M summed up the reactions of others with this comment, ". . .well, from working with them [coordinators and students] I've made a lot of friends through the school."

Distributive Education Students Are Available to Work Hours We Need Them. Four training sponsors introduced the benefit of distribu-

tive education student availability to work the hours they need them. Training Sponsor P expressed the theme in these words, ". . . when you hire a student like this, you're getting people who can work the hours you need them." Other training sponsors indicated that in special cases they had been able to get the student out of school to come to work earlier than normal.

Provides An Opportunity to Work with Young People. This theme was expressed through the experiences of two training sponsors. Training Sponsor M indicated that participation as a judge for the competitive events contests sponsored by the Distributive Education Clubs of America brought much personal satisfaction and an opportunity to work with young people. Training Sponsor O stated, "I just like to help the young people myself, personally."

Provides A Source of Young Ideas for Business. This theme was introduced by the comments of Training Sponsor E. This manager stated, "It's interesting when a young person comes in, to see their view, their ideas on things." Distributive education students are viewed as a source of young ideas for the business.

Distributive Education Program Has Broadened Our Knowledge. This theme was described by the comments of Training Sponsor M when she stated, "I am more aware of the DE program which has broadened my knowledge."

Distributive Education Students Fair as Well as Part-Time People with No Experience. The last category in this topic area was introduced in the comments of the manager of a women's fashion store. Training Sponsor A stated:

The DE students that I have working for me right now, I would say, fare just as well as my other part-time people that have had no more experience than they [the DE students] have had.

In this situation the training sponsor was comparing the young distributive education student with no experience with older part-time employees with no experience. Distributive education students were viewed as performing just as well as older part-time employees.

Recommendations for Improvement

The purpose of this final section is to present the results of the open-ended question that generated the most response from the training sponsors in the case study. One hundred and sixty eight themes in 16 categories were elicited by interviewees. The following question was asked in each interview to provide a basis for the identification of ways to improve the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education: Can you suggest ways to improve the distributive education program? Reactions were content analyzed and summarized. The results are presented in Table 9.

Thorough Screening of Students. Twenty-three themes were identified that referred to the need for more thorough screening of students in distributive education. Training Sponsor H, personnel director and training manager for a large department store, described the theme in these words:

I feel that the counselors in the high schools should screen the students properly to go into the DE programs. Sometimes they use it as their garbage can for students who are having trouble, whether it's emotional trouble or the fact that they have home problems--the whole thing--juvenile delinquents and stuff like that There's just too many kids in there that don't belong.

Table 9
THEMES REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Theme Category	Responses		Training Sponsor	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Thorough screening of students	23	14	20	100
Specific skills in math, customer relations, and personal appearance	19	11	11	55
Frequency of coordinator visits	15	9	12	60
Appointments	14	8	14	70
Utilization of coordination time	14	8	5	25
Evaluations	14	8	8	40
Training plans	10	6	6	30
Training sponsor awareness of classroom topics	9	5	7	35
Placement activities	9	5	7	35
Student attitudes	9	5	7	35
Program promotion	8	5	5	25
Training agreements	7	4	5	25
Distributive Education Clubs of America Competitive Events	5	3	4	20
School administration support	5	3	4	20
Advisory committees	4	2	3	15
Curriculum	3	2	3	15

Another training sponsor suggested that the coordinators should be allowed to screen and select students who will be in the distributive education program. Training Sponsor T remarked:

. . . the principal ought to back them [coordinators] up more when it comes to having to take a certain student and put him [the student] in the program. If they [coordinators] have decided that that student wouldn't be good for the program, that ought to be that. They [coordinators] ought to be the ones to decide it.

Another training sponsor introduced the aspect that counselors do not understand the type of student that is needed in retailing. Training Sponsor B phrased the theme this way, "I think it should be put in their [counselors'] minds that these people [students] could be college bound, and it wouldn't hurt if they were; it takes that kind of intelligence."

Several of the themes in the category emerged from statements that described characteristics of students that should not be in cooperative-plan distributive education. Among the most frequently mentioned were: students who just want a job to get money, students who just want a job to get out of school, students who just want a job to buy a car, students with drug problems, students who have had encounters with the law, students with shoplifting records, students that are not well groomed, students with poor attendance records, and students with problems in interpersonal relationships.

A major criteria to be used in screening students for cooperative-plan distributive education was related to student attitude. Training Sponsor K summarized the theme in these words, ". . . a good general interest in DE or retailing in general is the basis of the

whole thing." Training Sponsor A suggested the use of applications and interviews to improve the screening process. This person commented:

They should have a form to fill out, an application and all the different things to be gone over with them. They [coordinator] should tell them [students] the pros and cons of working, and what's expected of them. It would improve it a lot.

Specific Skills in Math, Customer Relations, and Personal

Appearance. Eleven training sponsors identified specific skills that needed to be stressed in order to improve the distributive education student. Training Sponsor P mentioned specific math skills when he stated, ". . . most of the DE students could use a little more simple addition and subtraction in their classroom." Training Sponsor Q noted the same weakness and added, ". . . they could really improve on basic math and change making."

Customer relations were stressed by others as an area that needs improvement. Training Sponsor N illustrates this theme in his statement:

Oh, I'd say, first and foremost probably get them [the student] more into the customer and more aware of that guy that pays you . . . make them [the student] more aware that they are not working for a grade and a paycheck.

Training Sponsor O supported this theme with these comments, "They [coordinators] should stress the importance of courtesy and that type of thing a little more in their classrooms." Personal appearance was added as a dimension of this category by other training sponsors. Neatness in appearance was stressed as needing more attention.

Frequency of Coordinator Visits. The frequency of the coordinator's visit surfaced as a theme from 12 training sponsors. Nine train-

ing sponsors indicated that a monthly visit was adequate for each student. Training Sponsor L summarized this theme in these words, "I'd say a minimum of once a month unless you have problems in between; but I'd say once a month would probably be sufficient." Two other training sponsors indicated that the coordinator ought to visit at least twice a month. Training Sponsor N remarked, "I think for my needs, twice a month is good. I'd say anything over and above twice a month is going to be very beneficial." Training Sponsor B commented, "Well, I'd like to see them twice a month. . . . I'm sure that there's a lot of them [coordinators] that don't get out like they should." One final dimension to this theme category was illustrated by the statement of Training Sponsor Q. He said, "Stress to the coordinator to make more visits. That is one thing they were more relaxed on at first. Some of the coordinators weren't making good station visits like they should."

Appointments. The need to make appointments prior to the visit was mentioned by 14 training sponsors. Typical of this theme were the comments of Training Sponsor H:

I like them to make appointments. That is my concern because many times they come and want and need my time and I just can't give it to them, and I just hate to say I'm sorry I won't be able to do as an effective a job for the student because the DE coordinator didn't make an appointment and I had to squeeze them in and give them 10 or 20 minutes when I really needed to see them for about 45 because we were having problems with the student.

Training Sponsor G explained that making an appointment would save the coordinator's time. He remarked:

It would probably save them [coordinators] some time. But as you know, our time is not really our own, and sometimes, we keep them waiting; where if we had known in advance, we'd have made an appointment for them when we could make it.

Training Sponsor J indicated that an appointment was necessary to handle special business. She stated:

If they [coordinators] really want to handle business they call ahead, but if they are in the store, they just pop by and say hi--is everything ok--which is fine with me, but if they need to sit down and talk, they should call ahead.

Four of 14 training sponsors contributing to this theme category indicated that an appointment was not necessary prior to visiting the store. The comments of Training Sponsor N indicated that he preferred that the coordinator would not make an appointment. Training Sponsors O and S indicated that unannounced visits had the advantage of allowing the coordinator to see things as they really were and not as people often want them to see things. Unannounced visits were encouraged by four of the 14 training sponsors who made comments regarding this theme category.

Utilization of Coordination Time. Fourteen themes were identified that related to specific recommendations for improvement in the utilization of coordination time. A general theme was expressed which indicated that coordinators needed to spend more time on coordination. Training Sponsor A remarked, "I mean some of them [coordinators] you don't see nearly as often as you should." This training sponsor went on to explain that the teacher-coordinators should work closer with the training sponsors. In offering suggestions on how to achieve a closer working relationship, Training Sponsor L commented:

If the coordinators could spend, I would say, not maybe a visit, but perhaps phone conversation follow-ups . . . I personally feel like a phone call conversation follow-up would be the simplest way for them to make periodic checks. I think that they should be done on a regular basis.

Two training sponsors recommended that one way to make possible better utilization of coordination time would be to limit the number of students that the distributive education teacher-coordinator had to coordinate. Training Sponsor H stated:

Well, my first suggestion is to limit the number of students that the DE coordinator has to tackle. I feel that this is one reason why the DE program has not been as effective in the Roanoke Valley . . . because the coordinators have too many students to get around to be effective to teach the student anything.

Training Sponsor B supported this theme and mentioned that overcrowded classes made it difficult for the coordinator to find time to get around as often as they needed to visit the training station.

One of the recommendations for better utilization of coordination time focused on a need for more teacher-coordinator communication with the training sponsor. The theme was illustrated in the remarks made by Training Sponsor G. He stated, "I'm sure there are things we [training sponsors] could do to help the program if we were told about it. We'd be able to help in some manner we're not aware of." Another suggestion made by four training sponsors recommended that coordinators use coordination time to visit and observe the student working. This theme was illustrated in the comments of Training Sponsor E who indicated that even though it's difficult to observe without the student being aware of the teacher-coordinator's presence, the teacher-coordinator should observe the student on the job.

Evaluations. Fourteen themes reported ways to improve the evaluation process. Four training sponsors suggested that the evaluation of student performance be done in the presence of the student, teacher-coordinator, and training sponsor. Training sponsor D remarked, "I think that the manager should get together with the student and talk. I think we should all get together to hear each others' points of view. I think this would help." Other training sponsors also emphasized the importance of the student being present when the grade was determined. Training Sponsor K commented, "I think it would be good when they [coordinators] evaluate, that the student be there and know why he's getting the grade." Additional responses included the following suggestions for improvement: evaluations should not be sent with students, evaluations should be done every nine weeks, and training sponsors should be given the forms far enough in advance that they have adequate time to review and complete them. Training Sponsor H recommended that the evaluation form be revised to include measurable, realistic criteria which define each of the areas to be evaluated.

Training Plans. Ten themes indentified ways the training plan could be improved. Training Sponsor B and K suggested that the training plan be developed with the student, coordinator, and supervisor present and reflect the ideas of all three parties. Training Sponsors O and P indicated that the use of training plans would improve programs that do not currently use training plans. Training Sponsors B and K also recommended that a copy of the training plan should be left for employer reference.

Training Sponsor Awareness of Classroom Topics. Nine themes introduced by seven training sponsors suggested that more effort should be made by coordinators to inform training sponsors of what was being taught in the classroom. Training Sponsor E remarked, "I don't know if they teach them [students] the register or anything like that in the classroom. Like I said, I'm not up on it." Training Sponsor E also added that it would be helpful if the coordinator would show the employer what is being taught because training sponsors don't really know what coordinators are teaching. Training Sponsor P suggested that having a copy of the course outline would influence the type of activities they assigned to students on the job.

Placement Activities. Eight training sponsors generated nine themes suggesting ways to improve student placement activities. Recommendations focused around three major areas: time of placement, student readiness for placement, and recruitment of training stations. Training Sponsor H suggested the coordinator begin placement activities in the spring rather than in August and September. She stated:

I've stressed with coordinators that if they want to get their students in here for fall, because we are such a seasonal business in this department store, that we hire a lot of juniors now for next year. . . . If they wait until August there won't be any positions.

In discussing student readiness for work, Training Sponsor J recommended that distributive education students be in their second year before they begin on the job. Training Sponsor D requested that more background information on students be given the training sponsor before students are hired. Background information was especially

requested in cases where the students were known to have learning disabilities.

Four training sponsors reported that more businesses would hire distributive education students if they were approached. Training Sponsor F remarked:

. . . you can get a whole lot more students involved if the DE coordinators could get out and convince the merchants that it can be profitable and they [training sponsors] will come out ahead in many different ways A lot of them [coordinators] don't get involved that much.

Training Sponsor B suggested that even though coordinators from other schools don't have students placed in some stores they should visit those stores and become acquainted with the employers to increase the possibility of student placement.

Student Attitudes. Nine themes suggested by seven training sponsors made reference to the need to improve the student's attitude toward the distributive education program. Training Sponsor B commented:

Of course I know it's that time in their life that they are kind of immature and mature; but when it comes to some serious things, which I think are serious . . . I don't think their hearts are really in the program.

Other training sponsors described attitudes which should be improved. Typical of these attitudes were: students felt that a job was just for money, fun, and games; students were in the program to avoid other regular courses at school; and students were in the program to get out of school early.

Program Promotion. The comments of five training sponsors generated eight themes related to ways to improve program promotion.

Training Sponsor S remarked:

There must be some way to get more retailers involved. The DE program does an excellent job with the stores already in the program. Which is the old story, the preacher preaches to the people in the church, and they don't need it; it's the ones at home you've got to get . . . and this is the thing here. Some way we've got to get to other retailers. I don't know, from the national level maybe. We need to go to home offices more to get the chains.

Training Sponsor Q recommended coordinators more actively sell the program to school boards as well as to other business people. Training Sponsor F phrased it this way:

I think the DE people should meet with the merchants at least once a year I think there is room for a whole lot more [students] if the DE coordinator can get involved with the merchants and the employers themselves.

Training Agreements. Seven themes focused on ways to improve training agreements. Of major concern to many training sponsors was the provision in the training agreement that outlines the minimum number of hours to be worked each week. Training Sponsor H recommended that this provision of the training agreement be explained more thoroughly to the students and parents. She shared this experience:

It's like, for instance, the 15 hours a week is a requirement for this school system. The students think because the training agreement says 15 hours a week that we're going to work them 15 hours a week. We can't make that commitment, and they can't understand that until we have to take the time to explain that to them. I feel that this is something that should be thoroughly explained to the parents and to the students. Even parents sometimes have gotten involved in this thing. They worry about Susie Q getting her grade for her credit for DE because she's not working enough hours.

Other training sponsors emphasized the need to impress upon the student the serious nature and provisions of the signed training agreement. They placed the responsibility for enforcing the rules directly upon the coordinator.

Distributive Education Clubs of America Competitive Events.

Recommendations for improvement in the Distributive Education Clubs of America competitive events emerged in five themes from four training sponsors. Training Sponsor Q felt that more time was needed to allow the judges an opportunity to sit down and explain to the student what he/she did wrong and help the student improve. Training Sponsor M, manager of a fast-food outlet, suggested that the contests in fast-food be revised. She related the following experience:

I know this year they have included fast-food into the state contests. Now there were a lot of things they [students] had to perform for us that you could obviously tell was not taught in the school. In some schools it was, but in order to be fair to all students, it would have to be incorporated into all schools. The biggest thing was counting money back and They had a daily report, ending the evening with counting the money out of the register and getting the deposit; this was completely unnecessary because hourly's don't do this, this is only done by management.

Another training sponsor indicated that attendance at work becomes a problem immediately after the conference is over and recommended that something be done in this area.

School Administration. Five themes dealt specifically with areas where school administrative support to the distributive education program needs to be improved. The following were among the recommendations noted: principals need to back the coordinator when disciplinary

action is needed for a student; administration should not contact businesses for placement of special students without going through the distributive education coordinator; more flexible scheduling should be considered allowing students to work when needed; and the distributive education department should not be treated like a dumping ground for discipline problems.

Advisory Committees. Four themes focused on the role of the advisory committee and ways the advisory committee could be used to improve the program. Training Sponsor Q suggested that the advisory committee should be used to solve problems with the program. Training Sponsor S identified a problem with the minimum wage and suggested that the advisory committee give immediate attention to finding a solution. He described the problem in this way:

If they keep raising the minimum wage, you're going to find less students. This minimum wage thing is going to be the cut off of all working young people. You can't afford to pay the prices that are there and put extra time in with the students You've got to get smack into the political ring. Somewhere along the line in doing your work, you already have retail people supporting this program, and they're some of the best lobbyists that you have.

Curriculum. Three themes introduced by training sponsors recommended changes in the distributive education curriculum. Two themes suggested that the curriculum needed to become more specialized. Training Sponsor B described the need in these terms:

I don't know if this would be possible or not, but since we have fashion merchandising, and that type of class, maybe we could break it [curriculum] open a little more to other specialization.

Training Sponsors N and D suggested specialization of curriculum for fast-food outlets. They recommended that all students should not be together in the same class. Restaurant students ought to be in a separate class to study the problems unique to restaurants.

One additional recommendation for improvement in the distributive education curriculum involved the third year class. Training Sponsor J stated:

I have had so many fine students this year that have tried to drop out of third year DE feeling like they're bored. I don't know how long the class is in the third year. I think by the time they get to seniors they're bored with DE. I don't know what the last year's class is, and it's not just coming from one school; it's coming from all over--they feel like they are not getting a thing out of the third year. . . . Something is wrong, but I don't know exactly what it is.

This training sponsor further recommended that action be taken to correct this situation or consideration be given to eliminating the third year of distributive education in high school.

SUMMARY

The analysis of data has been presented in this chapter as a case study. The first section consisted of a profile of the training sponsors participating as respondents in the case study. The second section contained a presentation of the theme categories which were derived from content analysis of the responses of interview participants to the following six questions on the interview guide.

1. What do you feel are the major purposes for the coordinator's visit to your store?

2. What do you consider to be your responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee?

3. Describe your experience with training agreements.

4. Describe your experience with training plans.

5. What are the benefits to you and the store from hiring distributive education students?

6. Can you suggest ways to improve the distributive education program?

Seventy-two theme categories have been identified from 764 themes. Under the six topic areas, the theme categories have been listed, a frequency count of the total number of responses in each category was indicated, the percent of responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated, the number of training sponsors that responded in each category was indicated, the percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated, and a report of findings has been made in the narrative form in order to summarize the perceptions of the respondents. Verbatim comments have been included in this chapter.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with a summary of the study, including the background of the problem, statement of the problem, research procedures, and analysis of the data. Second, the findings of the study are reported. Third, conclusions for the study are presented based upon the findings. Finally, recommendations for use of the study by distributive education personnel, and recommendations for further study are discussed. Because the procedures utilized in this study are relatively new to research in distributive education, suggested guidelines to assist future research efforts are included in Appendix G of the study.

SUMMARY

Cooperative-plan distributive education is one of many secondary vocational education programs that has utilized the world of work to achieve educational goals. Typical of the quality control factors featured in cooperative-plan distributive education are in-school instruction which is directly related to the student's work, a training agreement which outlines the commitment various persons bring to the program, a training plan which details a listing of

educational experiences to be learned on the job, and employment directly related to the student's career goals and interests.

Cooperative-plan distributive education as well as other cooperative education programs is based on a three-way partnership between the student, the training sponsor, and the teacher-coordinator who represents the school. This relationship is established by the teacher-coordinator, and the quality control factors are maintained through the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Perceptions of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education held by educational leaders, administrators, and teacher-coordinators have been examined in previous research. Very little formal research has been conducted which examines training sponsor perceptions of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

Individuals responsible for the development and administration of programs in cooperative-plan distributive education are concerned with training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of program operation. Training sponsor perceptions provide information which is helpful in formulating guidelines to facilitate training sponsor development, to improve the cooperative working relationship between training sponsor, student, and teacher-coordinator, and to encourage the use of quality control factors in the coordination of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

Statement of the Problem

The central problem of this study was to identify training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education. Specifically, training sponsors from business firms representing four United States Office of Education codes and classifications (04.08 General Merchandise, 04.07 Food Service, 04.06 Food Distribution, and 04.02 Apparel and Accessories) for secondary cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia were interviewed. The purpose of each interview was to identify training sponsor perceptions regarding objectives, training sponsor roles, training agreements, training plans, training sponsor benefits, and recommendations for improvement of the coordination phase of program operation. Specifically, this study sought to answer questions which were developed to provide objectives for the study:

1. What are the objectives of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education as perceived by training sponsors?
2. What do training sponsors perceive as their role in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs?
3. What are training sponsor experiences with the training agreement as a quality control factor for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education?

4. What are training sponsor experiences with the training plan as a quality control factor for the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education?

5. What are the benefits which motivate training sponsors to participate in cooperative-plan distributive education?

6. What recommendations for improving the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education are offered by training sponsors?

Research Procedures

The research procedures for this study have been divided into seven areas: (1) Research Method, (2) Sample Selection Process, (3) Instrumentation, (4) Interview Procedures, (5) Validation of Interview Data, (6) Analysis, and (7) Accuracy of Transcripts and Content Analysis.

Research Method. The case study form of descriptive research was used in the study to achieve an in-depth investigation of the perceptions of training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia. Semistructured interviews utilizing open-ended questions on an interview guide were used as the data collection medium in the study. This approach allowed the respondents to reply in their own words, rather than limit them to responses of predetermined, narrow categories found in a mail questionnaire survey instrument. Semistructured interviews also permitted greater depth and probing to obtain more complete data necessary for a comprehensive understanding of training sponsor perceptions.

Sample Selection Process. One hundred eighteen of the training sponsors serving cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County were classified into four United States Office of Education code categories. Eighty-two of the training sponsors directly supervised cooperative-plan distributive education students for two of the last three years. Twenty training sponsors were randomly selected to participate in the case study. The selection included five training sponsors from 04.08 General Merchandise, four from 04.07 Food Service, four from 04.06 Food Distribution, and seven from 04.02 Apparel and Accessories. The 20 training sponsors selected to participate in the study represented 24 percent of the 82 training sponsors that made up the sample for this study.

Instrumentation. An interview guide was developed by a jury of experts consisting of training sponsors, local distributive education supervisors, distributive education teacher educators, and vocational and technical education research specialists. The interview guide listed the questions that were used and the sequence in which they were presented during the interview. The interview guide was used as the data collection instrument in the study.

Interview Procedures. The researcher served as the interviewer for 20 semistructured interviews which were conducted. Each semistructured interview was conducted in a room which assured privacy and freedom from distractions. Efforts were made to maximize the respondents' physical comfort by avoiding visual or auditory distractions. An audio tape recorder was used in each interview to record answers to questions, comments, and reactions of respondents.

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer explained the purpose of the interview and defined his role and that of the respondent. Each respondent was informed that an interview validation summary would be utilized to provide verification of the main points of their interview. Each interviewee was assured that their comments would remain confidential. An interview guide was developed by a jury of experts and organized into a flip chart. A degree of standardization was added to the study by using the flip chart.

Validation of Interview Data. Subsequent to the interview session, an interview validation summary was developed and mailed to each participant. Each instrument consisted of a summary of the responses from the interview. Each participant was asked to review the summary and react in a forthcoming telephone interview by indicating agreement, disagreement, or by adding ideas which had been missed in the transcription of the tapes from the interview. All 20 participants responded by indicating complete agreement with the interview summary. Two participants made minor additions to clarify points that were made in the summary.

Analysis. Transcripts were typed from audio tapes recorded during each interview. The transcripts, therefore, represented the source data for the content analysis procedures that were used. Content analysis was selected because of its appropriateness for processing data from open-ended questions.

A coding process was selected whereby the raw data was systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permitted

precise description of relevant content characteristics. The rules by which this transformation was accomplished, served as the operational link between the investigator's data and the research questions. Coding rules were a central part of the research design, and in preparing them, the analyst made the following decisions: (1) The research problem was defined in terms of six topic areas which corresponded to the six questions asked during the interview. These were further defined to include 72 theme categories; (2) The theme was selected as the unit of content to be used to classify the data; (3) A frequency count of themes was chosen as the method of measuring the characteristics of the content. Every occurrence of a given theme was tallied.

The universe of the content that was analyzed consisted of all replies from training sponsors to six questions dealing with their perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia. Seventy-two theme categories were defined following Holstis' (1969) principles for category construction. Each theme category reflected the purpose of the research, was exhaustive, was mutually exclusive, was independent, and was derived from a single classification principle.

The unit of content selected for this study was the theme. The theme was determined to be the most useful unit of content analysis because it took the form in which issues, attitudes, and perceptions were usually discussed.

The system of enumeration selected to measure the characteristics of the content was a frequency count of the themes. In the

frequency count, each theme was coded as one unit regardless of the number of words used to express it.

In this study, theme categories were derived from the responses of interview participants to six open-ended questions regarding training sponsor perceptions concerning the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Responses were content analyzed according to the following topics: (1) Objectives of the coordinator's visit to the store, (2) Role of the training sponsor, (3) Experience with training agreements, (4) Experience with training plans, (5) Benefits to the training sponsor, and (6) Recommendations for improvement. Under each of the six topics, every theme representing a different perception was coded as one category; a frequency count for each theme category was indicated; the percent of training sponsor responses for each theme category in the topic area was indicated; the number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated; and the percent of the total number of training sponsors that responded in each theme category was indicated. Portions of the report of findings were in the narrative form in order to summarize the perceptions of respondents. Verbatim comments were included in the report.

Accuracy of Transcripts and Content Analysis. Accuracy of transcripts and content analysis was measured by three individuals, all of which were experienced teacher-coordinators of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Each individual randomly selected three tapes from the 20 tapes and reviewed the transcripts. From the transcripts each individual completed content analysis of the interview.

The content analysis completed by each individual was then compared to the content analysis completed by the investigator. Each individual confirmed the accuracy of transcripts of the interview and content analysis used in the study.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in three sections: Profile of the Participants, Identification of Training Sponsor Perceptions, and Research Procedures.

Profile of the Participants

A profile of the respondents in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, indicated that:

1. Seven training sponsors were employed in Apparel and Accessories, five in General Merchandise, four in Food Service, and four in Food Distribution, according to the United States Office of Education instructional program classification.

2. The amount of experience that participants had as training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education students ranged from two to 20 years. Training sponsors that participated in this case study served an average of eight years in this capacity.

3. The number of cooperative-plan distributive education students directly supervised by training sponsors in this case study ranged from two to 72 with an average of 22.55 students.

4. The number of part-time employees in each establishment in this case study ranged from two to 160 with an average of 22.95 part-time employees.

Identification of Training Sponsor Perceptions

Content analysis of the responses from the training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education programs resulted in 72 theme categories and 764 themes under the six topic areas. Under each of the six topic areas, the theme category has been listed, the number of themes recorded, and the number of training sponsors expressing the themes identified. Therefore, the findings were reflected in each of the six topic areas as follows:

1. Concerning the "Objectives of the coordinator's visit to the store," 13 theme categories were identified which indicated training sponsor perceptions. The objectives were as follows:
 - a. Rate the factors on the evaluation form and discuss a grade for the student's performance (32 themes, 20 training sponsors).
 - b. Identify and help solve problems associated with the student's work (28 themes, 20 training sponsors).
 - c. Review the student's progress on the job (21 themes, 15 training sponsors).
 - d. Procure information or personal services of the training sponsor for use in the distributive education classroom or other related program activities (11 themes, 7 training sponsors).
 - e. Develop public relations with training sponsors (8 themes, 7 training sponsors).

f. Evaluate the performance of the training sponsor (7 themes, 7 training sponsors).

g. Promote adult education programs and survey areas for needed adult programs (7 themes, 7 training sponsors).

h. Develop and follow-up on training plans (7 themes, 7 training sponsors).

i. Identify prospective openings for student placement (6 themes, 6 training sponsors).

j. Purchase merchandise or services (5 themes, 5 training sponsors).

k. Provide specific assistance to training sponsors (4 themes, 4 training sponsors).

l. Observe the student on the job (3 themes, 3 training sponsors).

m. Evaluate student's suitability to the career (3 themes, 3 training sponsors).

2. Concerning the "Role of the training sponsor," 11 theme categories were identified which reflected training sponsor perceptions. The roles were as follows:

a. Provide counsel and advice to students (23 themes, 11 training sponsors).

b. Supervise and train the students (20 themes, 11 training sponsors).

c. Teach business policy and procedure (18 themes, 11 training sponsors).

- d. Provide practical experience with subjects taught in class (17 themes, 12 training sponsors).
 - e. Teach character traits (9 themes, 5 training sponsors).
 - f. Be impartial in treatment of distributive education student-trainee (9 themes, 7 training sponsors).
 - g. Evaluate student performance (9 themes, 7 training sponsors).
 - h. Teach proper work habits (9 themes, 7 training sponsors).
 - i. Help the student prepare for advancement and promotion (8 themes, 7 training sponsors).
 - j. Set proper example for the student (7 themes, 5 training sponsors).
 - k. Teach human relations skills (6 themes, 3 training sponsors).
3. Concerning "Experience with training agreements," eight theme categories were identified which reflected training sponsor perceptions. Their experiences were as follows:
- a. Identifies the responsibilities of the teacher-coordinator, parent, student, and training sponsor (28 themes, 15 training sponsors).
 - b. Signed by the participating parties (16 themes, 12 training sponsors).
 - c. Need exists for training agreements (12 themes, 8 training sponsors).
 - d. Not familiar with the term (9 themes, 5 training sponsors).
 - e. Could work just as well without training agreement (7 themes, 6 training sponsors).

f. Students do not take commitments seriously (7 themes, 6 training sponsors).

g. Coordinator has responsibility for enforcement of rules (5 themes, 4 training sponsors).

h. Achieve parental understanding of the program (2 themes, 2 training sponsors).

4. Concerning "Experience with training plans," ten theme categories were identified which indicated training sponsor perceptions.

Their experiences were as follows:

a. Training plans not used (31 themes, 15 training sponsors).

b. Training plans could improve performance of student, teacher-coordinator, and training sponsor (25 themes, 20 training sponsors).

c. Are not familiar with the term (10 themes, 9 training sponsors).

d. Presently use training plans (7 themes, 5 training sponsors).

e. Used to evaluate student progress on the job (7 themes, 5 training sponsors).

f. Outlines specific duties and responsibilities of student on the job (6 themes, 5 training sponsors).

g. Establishes time table for accomplishment of goals (5 themes, 5 training sponsors).

h. Provides a system to move students throughout the store (3 themes, 3 training sponsors).

i. Assists in identifying strengths and weaknesses in job performance (3 themes, 3 training sponsors).

j. Initiated by teacher-coordinator (3 themes, 3 training sponsors).

5. Concerning "Benefits to the training sponsor," 14 theme categories were identified which indicated training sponsor perceptions. The benefits were as follows:

a. Distributive education students possess good work traits (23 themes, 12 training sponsors).

b. Distributive education students are preferred over regular high school students (20 themes, 12 training sponsors).

c. Distributive education students show more interest in the job (19 themes, 12 training sponsors).

d. Distributive education students are pretrained in school (14 themes, 7 training sponsors).

e. Distributive education students are a good source of part-time help (12 themes, 8 training sponsors).

f. Distributive education students are motivated by credit and grade for working (11 themes, 9 training sponsors).

g. Distributive education students are career-minded employees (10 themes, 6 training sponsors).

h. Distributive education coordinator assists in solving work problems (10 themes, 8 training sponsors).

i. Provides public relations benefits to the store (6 themes, 4 training sponsors).

j. Distributive education students are available to work hours we need them (4 themes, 4 training sponsors).

k. Provides an opportunity to work with young people (2 themes, 2 training sponsors).

l. Provides a source of young ideas for the business (1 theme, 1 training sponsor).

m. Distributive education program has broadened our knowledge (1 theme, 1 training sponsor).

n. Distributive education students fair just as well as part-time people with no experience (1 theme, 1 training sponsor).

6. Concerning "Recommendations for improvement," 16 theme categories were identified which indicated training sponsor perceptions. The recommendations were as follows:

a. Thorough screening of students (23 themes, 20 training sponsors).

b. Specific skills in math, customer relations, and personal appearance (19 themes, 11 training sponsors).

c. Frequency of coordinator visits (15 themes, 12 training sponsors).

d. Appointments (14 themes, 14 training sponsors).

e. Utilization of coordination time (14 themes, 5 training sponsors).

f. Evaluations (14 themes, 8 training sponsors).

g. Training plans (10 themes, 6 training sponsors).

h. Training sponsor awareness of classroom topics (9 themes, 7 training sponsors).

i. Placement activities (9 themes, 7 training sponsors).

- j. Student attitudes (9 themes, 7 training sponsors).
- k. Program promotion (8 themes, 5 training sponsors).
- l. Training agreements (7 themes, 5 training sponsors).
- m. Distributive Education Clubs of America competitive events (5 themes, 4 training sponsors).
- n. School administration support (5 themes, 4 training sponsors).
- o. Advisory committees (4 themes, 2 training sponsors).
- p. Curriculum (3 themes, 3 training sponsors).

Research Procedures

The research procedures utilized in this study indicated that:

1. The case study form of descriptive research provided an opportunity for an in-depth investigation of training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

2. Semistructured interviewing provided the means to collect information concerning training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

3. The use of an interview guide achieved standardization in the questions that were asked and the sequence in which they were presented during the semistructured interview.

4. Thirty to 60 minutes provided adequate time to conduct the semistructured interview.

5. The use of a tape recorder provided an opportunity to gather information in an exact and original form and made possible the examining and common defining of the responses.

6. Transcripts of the participants' verbal reports were content analyzed and provided the opportunity to identify perceptions based on the experience of the training sponsors.

CONCLUSIONS

Content analysis of the transcripts of interviews with 20 training sponsors from Roanoke City and County, Virginia, regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education identified 72 theme categories consisting of 764 themes. The following conclusions are suggested based upon the analysis of responses of training sponsors.

1. Since the majority of training sponsors described the objectives of the coordinator's visit as rating the factors on the evaluation form, identifying and solving problems associated with the student's work, and discussing a grade assignment, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive these three objectives as the major purposes for the coordinator's visit to the business firm. Additional objectives indicated by less than a majority of training sponsors included: soliciting training sponsor participation in related program activities, developing public relations, promoting adult education, developing and following up on training plans, placing students, observing students at work, and purchasing merchandise or services.

2. Since the majority of training sponsors described the roles of the training sponsor as providing counsel and advice to students, supervising and training students, teaching business policy and procedure, and providing practical experience with business subjects taught in the classroom, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceived these four as being the roles of the training sponsor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Additional roles of the training sponsor indicated by less than a majority of training sponsors include: Teaching character traits, being impartial in the treatment of distributive education students, evaluating student performance, teaching proper work habits, helping the student prepare for advancement and promotion, setting a proper example, and teaching human relations skills.

3. Since the majority of training sponsors indicated that the training agreement identifies the responsibilities of the teacher-coordinator, parent, student, and training sponsor, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive the training agreement as a quality control factor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education which identifies and communicates the responsibilities of the program to those individuals that make up the cooperative partnership.

4. Since a majority of training sponsors indicated that students are complying with the provisions of the training agreement and the teacher-coordinators are enforcing compliance with the provisions of the training agreement, it may be concluded that these distributive educa-

cation training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive the current use of the training arereement as adequate for quality control in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs. However, when students do not comply with the training agreement provisions, or when these provisions are not enforced by the teacher-coordinator, the training agreement is considered as inadequate for a quality control factor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs by these training sponsors.

5. Since the majority of training sponsors were not involved in the joint development of training plans, yet described the training plan as having the potential to improve the performance of students, teacher-coordinators, and training sponsors, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive the training plan as being an essential quality control factor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

6. Since the majority of training sponsors indicated that the distributive education student was preferred over regular high school students because they possess good work habits, show more interest in the job, are pretrained in school, are motivated by credit and grade for working, are career-minded employees, and are a good source of part-time help, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia,

prefer to hire distributive education students in their business firms.

7. Since the majority of training sponsors identified the need for more thorough screening of students in the selection process to facilitate the enrollment of students with a genuine career interest in cooperative-plan distributive education, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive that more thorough screening of the students enrolling in distributive education would improve the quality of the program.

8. Since the majority of training sponsors identified a need for improvement in student skills in math, customer relations, and personal appearance, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, are concerned about the skills that distributive education students demonstrate and indicated a need for improvement in these areas.

9. Since the majority of training sponsors suggested that the guidelines for scheduling coordination visits be revised to include more frequent coordination visits (9 recommended one visit per month and 3 recommended two visits per month), it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive more frequent coordination visits to the training station as being an important quality control factor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

10. Since the majority of training sponsors suggested that teacher-coordinators schedule appointments before making coordination

visits to the business firm, it may be concluded that distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceive scheduling appointments before making coordination visits to the business firm as a necessary quality control factor in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are presented in two sections: Use of Study by Distributive Education Personnel, and Recommendations for Further Study.

Use of Study by Distributive Education Personnel

1. This investigation revealed Roanoke City and County distributive education training sponsor perceptions of the objectives of the coordinator's visit to the business firm. It is recommended that teacher-coordinators, state and local supervisors, and teacher educators for distributive education compare these findings with their own perceptions of the objectives of the coordinator's visit. Results of this comparison should be helpful in identifying possible differences in perceptions of training sponsors, teacher-coordinators, teacher educators, and state and local supervisors.

2. This study found that Roanoke City and County distributive education training sponsors were most familiar with rating the factors on the evaluation form, identifying and solving problems associated

with the student's work, and discussing a grade assignment as being the objectives of the coordinator's visit to the business firm. Little awareness of other objectives such as soliciting training sponsor participation in related program activities, developing and following up on training plans, placing students, and observing students at work was indicated. It is recommended that training sessions be conducted for training sponsors and teacher-coordinators to educate them concerning all aspects of the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. Recognition in the form of a certificate should be given to those who complete the instructional program.

3. This study found that Roanoke City and County distributive education training sponsors perceived providing counsel and advice to students, supervising and training students, teaching business policy and procedure, and providing practical experience with subjects taught in the classroom as the training sponsor's role. It is recommended that training sessions be conducted for training sponsors and teacher-coordinators to educate them concerning the many roles of the training sponsor. Special emphasis should be given to those roles identified by the training sponsors in this study. Recognition in the form of a certificate should be given to those who complete the instructional program.

4. Distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceived the training agreement as an important quality control factor in the operation of cooperative-plan distributive education. However, some indicated that the training agreement

was less effective as a quality control factor because students are not complying with the provisions, and teacher-coordinators are not enforcing compliance with the provisions. It is recommended that steps be taken to insure student compliance with the provisions of the training agreement, and that the provisions of the training agreement be honored by all parties and enforced by the teacher-coordinator.

5. Most distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County were not involved in the joint development of the training plan as a quality control factor in program operation. However, they perceived the training plan as having the potential to improve the performance of students, teacher-coordinators, and training sponsors. It is recommended that training sessions be conducted to instruct teacher-coordinators in the use of the training plan concept. Emphasis should be placed on how training plans achieve quality control in the operation of cooperative-plan distributive education programs, how to develop a training plan, and how to promote the use of training plans with training sponsors. Teacher-coordinators should initiate the use of training plans with all cooperative-plan distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

6. Statements concerning the benefits from hiring distributive education students identified by distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, should be used by teacher-coordinators in tailoring promotional programs to business and

professional organizations, trade associations, and individual businesses for the purposes of recruiting new training sponsors.

7. A number of proposals for improving the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, were revealed in the study. The majority of recommendations were for changes in the existing coordination practices of: screening and selection of distributive education students; improving student skills in math, customer relations, and personal appearance; visiting the training station on a more frequent basis; scheduling appointments; evaluating student performance; placing students on the job; using advisory committees; informing training sponsors of classroom topics; and improving the curriculum. It is recommended that:

a. Distributive education teacher-coordinators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, assume the role of career counselor and assist with screening of students who apply for enrollment in distributive education. This would facilitate the enrollment of students with a sincere career interest in cooperative-plan distributive education.

b. Guidelines for scheduling coordination visits be revised to include more frequent coordination visits. At least twice a month was suggested as most desirable with one visit a month as a minimum number of coordination visits.

c. The development of skills in math, customer relations, and personal appearance be given more emphasis in the related class by teacher-coordinators.

d. Distributive education teacher-coordinators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, schedule appointments before making coordination visits to the training sponsors.

e. Distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia be given more opportunity to provide suggestions for improvement of student placement procedures, evaluation processes, and utilization of advisory committees.

f. Distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, be consulted on a regular basis to evaluate the curriculum. An additional recommendation was that distributive education teacher-coordinators inform training sponsors of related classroom topics.

8. Distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, expressed the desire for more personal communication with teacher-coordinators. Teacher-coordinators can facilitate the communication process by visiting business firms often and encouraging training sponsors to frequently visit the classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for this study, the following recommendations for additional research are presented:

1. A study to determine the perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education held by training sponsors employed in occupations in other United States Office

of Education codes and classifications which exist in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

2. A study to identify differences and similarities between the perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education held by training sponsors from the United States Office of Education codes and classifications which exist in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

3. A study to compare the perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education held by training sponsors in Roanoke City and County with training sponsors from other regions in the State of Virginia, and other states.

4. A study to compare the perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education expressed by training sponsors in Roanoke City and County with perceptions of other groups (i.e., students, teacher-coordinators, school administrators) involved in the coordination phase of program operation.

5. A study to compare training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of other cooperative vocational education programs in Roanoke City and County (i.e., business and office education, trade and industrial education, agricultural education, etc.) with those expressed by training sponsors of cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

6. A study to identify the perceptions of employers in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, who have been approached to serve as training sponsors for cooperative-plan distributive education but have declined to employ distributive education students.

7. A longitudinal study to determine if distributive education training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, change as a result of their participation in a series of training sessions for training sponsors.

8. A study to identify barriers which prevent teacher-coordinators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, from utilizing the quality control factors in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education. This study identified two quality control factors that were preferred by distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, yet not employed in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION
TO CONDUCT THE STUDY



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

March 8, 1977

Mr. Garland J. Kidd
Supervisor
Distributive Education
Roanoke County Public Schools

Dear Mr. Kidd:

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct research with selected training sponsors from the cooperative-plan distributive education programs in your supervisory area.

My doctoral committee recently approved a proposal to complete a case study of the perceptions of training sponsors regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education programs. Roanoke City and County was suggested as the focus for the research effort because of the high quality of DE programs in the area.

I would like to work with the teacher-coordinators in identifying training sponsors who have directly supervised students for two out of the last three years. These training sponsors would be selected from OE codes 04.08, 04.07, 04.06, and 04.02. Once the list is developed, 20 training sponsors will be randomly selected for participation in the research. Semistructured interviews will then be conducted with these training sponsors to identify their perceptions concerning: (1) objectives of the coordination visit, (2) role of the training sponsor, (3) training sponsor benefits, (4) familiarity with quality control factors (i.e., training agreements, training plans, evaluation visits) for coordination, and (5) suggestions for improvement of the coordination effort.

I will be working under the direct supervision of Dr. Barry L. Reece and Dr. Richard L. Lynch of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Your cooperation will be deeply appreciated and we feel that the results of this effort will be of great value to you and the coordinators of your area.

Sincerely,

C. Daniel Litchford
Doctoral Student



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

March 8, 1977

Mr. Hugh E. Brown, Jr.
Supervisor
Distributive Education
Roanoke City Schools

Dear Mr. Brown:

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Sincerely,

C. Daniel Litchford
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B

LETTERS SENT TO SELECTED TRAINING SPONSORS
AND TEACHER-COORDINATORS



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

March 22, 1977

May we take this opportunity to express our appreciation to you and your firm for the many years of service to distributive education students in Roanoke City and County. You are one of 96 training sponsors who have consistently employed DE students throughout the past several years.

We also want to congratulate you for having been selected as one of 20 Roanoke City and County merchants to receive a special invitation to participate in a research effort sponsored by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. In an effort to better serve you, an attempt will be made to identify your perceptions of distributive education. We invite you to meet with a doctoral student from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to discuss your experiences with DE students and teacher coordinators. Mr. C. Daniel Litchford will be directing the research project and will contact you personally for an appointment.

We appreciate the service you provide to the youth of this valley and feel that this project will produce needed information to help us find additional ways to better serve you. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely

Garland J. Kidd	Hugh E. Brown, Jr.	Dr. Barry L. Reece
Supervisor	Supervisor	Advisor
Distributive Education	Distributive Education	Virginia Polytechnic
Roanoke County Public Schools	Roanoke City Schools	Institute and State
		University



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

March 28, 1977

Dear

Thank you again for taking the time to introduce me to your training sponsors who were selected to participate in my research project.

I am now in the process of scheduling the interviews and I've found that your introductions have really opened the door.

Thanks again.

C. Daniel Litchford

APPENDIX C

MEMBER LIST OF JURY OF EXPERTS, INTERVIEW GUIDE,
FOLLOW-UP PROBES, AND BACKGROUND
INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

JURY OF EXPERTS

Dr. L. L. McCluskey
Research Office
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Dr. Marion Asche
General Voc. Tech. Educa.
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Mr. John Henderson
Graduate Research Assistant
Distributive Education
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Mr. Clifton L. Smith
Teacher Educator
Distributive Education
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Mr. Hugh E. Brown, Jr.
Supervisor
Distributive Education
Roanoke City Schools
P. O. Box 13145
Roanoke, Virginia 24031

Mr. Garland J. Kidd
Supervisor
Distributive Education
Roanoke County Schools
526 College Avenue
Salem, Virginia 24153

Mr. Neal Maddox
Regional Manager
Miller and Rhoads #44
Roanoke, Virginia 24007

Mrs. Mary Wingfield
Personnel Director
Miller and Rhoads #44
Roanoke, Virginia 24007

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What do you feel are the major purposes for the coordinator's visit to your store?
2. What do you consider to be your responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee?
3. Describe your experience with training agreements.
4. Describe your experience with training plans.
5. What are the benefits to you and the store from hiring distributive education students?
6. Can you suggest ways to improve the distributive education program?

FOLLOW-UP PROBES

1. What do you feel are the major purposes for the coordinator's visit to your store?
 - a. Why does the teacher-coordinator visit you?
 - b. What does he/she do when he/she visits you?
 - c. Can you give an example of what you mean?
 - d. Does the purpose vary from one visit to another?
2. What do you consider to be your responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee?
 - a. What does the student expect you to do?
 - b. What does the teacher-coordinator expect you to do?
 - c. What does your manager expect you to do?
3. Describe your experience with training agreements.
 - a. Why do you use/or not use one?
 - b. What do you do to outline duties and responsibilities?
4. Describe your experience with training plans.
 - a. Why do you use/or not use one?
 - b. What do you do to outline duties and responsibilities?
5. What are the benefits to you and the store from hiring distributive education students?
 - a. Why do you prefer distributive education students over regular students?
 - b. What do you like about the distributive education students?
 - c. What don't you like about the distributive education students?
 - d. How do distributive education students compare to other part-time employees?
6. Can you suggest ways to improve the distributive education program?
 - a. What could the coordinator do to improve?
 - b. What could the student do to improve?
 - c. What could the school do to improve?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Name of store or firm _____

Address and phone number _____

1. Including the current school year, how many years have you served as a training sponsor to a distributive education student?

2. How many distributive education students have you directly supervised? _____

3. What is your present position and title? _____

4. How many part-time employees are in your establishment? _____

APPENDIX D

PILOT TEST PARTICIPANTS

PILOT TEST PARTICIPANTS

Mrs. Mary Parsons
Personnel Manager
Heironimus S H Co., Inc.
Downtown Roanoke, Virginia
24012

Mr. Norman Hudson
Manager
Mick-or-Mack
Towers Mall
Roanoke, Virginia
24015

Mrs. Vicki Hogan
Manager
McDonalds
West Main Street
Salem, Virginia 24153

APPENDIX E

LETTER AND INTERVIEW VALIDATION SUMMARY



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

April 9, 1977

I would like to thank you again for participating in the interview that I conducted to collect information about cooperative-plan distributive education programs in the Roanoke City and County high schools.

The interview phase of the research study is now completed. I have summarized the comments you made in the interview and have enclosed a copy of the summary for your information.

Because I am interested in your perceptions, I will contact you by telephone within the next ten days to determine if you agree or disagree with the summarized information. In addition, I will also welcome any further comments you have concerning the topics on the enclosed summary.

Sincerely,

C. Daniel Litchford
Graduate Student
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW
TRAINING SPONSOR H
04.02 APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

You were asked to answer six questions in the interview. A list of statements representing your answer is presented below.

I will contact you within the next ten days to determine your comments about this summary.

QUESTION #1: What do you feel are the major purposes for the coordinator's visit to your store?

ANSWER: You stated the following purposes:

- a. Find out what the employer expects of the student and how well the student has done in reaching the objective
- b. Identify problems and the causes of problems
- c. Improve the student's educational experience
- d. Complete an evaluation form on the student's progress
- e. Determine if class projects are beneficial to the student in class as well as on the job
- f. Find prospective openings

Concerning question #1, do you feel that these statements are descriptive of your perceptions of the purposes for the coordinator's visit to your store? Do you have additional comments?

QUESTION #2: What do you consider to be your responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee?

ANSWER: You described the following responsibilities:

- a. Provide as much of a learning experience as possible for the students who will put forth an extra effort
- b. Give the student room to learn
- c. Provide initial training experiences
- d. Include students in all training done for regular store employees

- e. Answer student questions concerning the business
- f. Communicate that more is expected of a DE student than a regular high school student
- g. Assist the coordinator in correcting student job problems
- h. Provide information to the coordinator to assist in solving student problems
- i. Develop an interest in the student in the intangible rewards of business as well as the tangible rewards

Concerning question #2, do you feel that these statements are descriptive of your perceptions of your responsibilities to the distributive education student-trainee? Do you have additional comments?

QUESTION #3: Describe your experience with training agreements.

ANSWER: You described the following experiences:

- a. Have not had bad experience with the training agreement
- b. Honor them as much as we can, but don't want to be held as far as signing that piece of paper
- c. Training agreement is no legal contract with our firm
- d. Impossible to commit for 15 hours each week
- e. Clause that forbids the student to come to work when he misses school penalizes the employer
- f. Students do not take the commitments seriously enough
- g. Parents do not appear to understand the business point of view on number of hours a student will work

Concerning question #3, do you feel that these statements are descriptive of your perceptions of your experience with training agreements? Do you have additional comments?

QUESTION #4: Describe your experience with training plans.

ANSWER: You described the following experiences:

- a. Present year was first experience with a legitimate training plan
- b. Plan is individually developed for each student and progresses with the student's ability

- c. Training plans have brought about a tremendous improvement rate with the students that have them
- d. Training plans allow the student to take on more responsibility and students learn more about the departments
- e. A time table makes possible the progressing from one area to another and the student moves as he demonstrates success
- f. If a DE student is going to learn anything, a training plan is the best way to do it

Concerning question #4, do you feel that these statements are descriptive of your perceptions of your experience with training plans? Do you have additional comments?

QUESTION #5: What are the benefits to you and the store from hiring DE students?

ANSWER: You described the following benefits:

- a. Provides a tremendous amount of public relations
- b. Students want to learn about the company and how we operate
- c. Provides a communication channel to get the company's image into the high schools to other students who are potential shoppers
- d. Students in DE are better than regular students because they are being graded and checked on by the coordinator
- e. Students in DE come in with a desire to work and understand why we are doing something
- f. Production is about the same as other students, but their effectiveness is a step above other students
- g. Students in DE assume responsibility and go ahead and do things where other students won't
- h. DE students will not be caught with their hands in their pockets just standing around, or with their elbows on the register

Concerning question #5, do you feel that these statements are descriptive of your perceptions of the benefits to you and the store from hiring DE students? Do you have additional comments?

QUESTION #6: Can you suggest ways to improve the DE program?

ANSWER: You stated the following suggestions:

- a. Have the coordinators make appointments and respect retailers' time
- b. Begin student placement activities in the spring rather than in August and September
- c. Explain the provisions of the training agreement more thoroughly to parents, especially the provision concerning the number of hours to be worked each week
- d. Impress upon the student the serious nature of the signed training agreement and its provisions
- e. Limit the number of students that the DE coordinator has to coordinate
- f. Have counselors more carefully screen students that go into the DE program and stop using the program as their garbage can for students with emotional and other home problems
- g. Keep students out of the program who just want to get a job to get out of school and buy mag wheels for their car
- h. Have the coordinator visit the store once or twice a month
- i. Do not send evaluations with students
- j. Motivate the coordinators who have been out of school for a long time to upgrade their coordination practices
- k. Revise the rating sheet with measurable, realistic criteria which defines each of the areas to be evaluated

Concerning question #6, do you feel that these statements are descriptive of your perceptions of ways to improve the DE program? Do you have additional comments?

APPENDIX F

LIST OF INDIVIDUALS FOR ACCURACY OF
TRANSCRIPTS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

ACCURACY OF TRANSCRIPTS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

INDIVIDUALS

Mr. William G. Neal
Graduate Research Assistant
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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION

May 16, 1977

To Whom It May Concern:

This will verify that I, the undersigned, have reviewed three of the interview tapes, examined the transcripts, and completed content analysis procedures.

After having compared my content analysis with that which was completed by the original investigator of this study, I conclude that the content analysis as conducted by the original investigator is an accurate representation of the interview contents. Based upon this conclusion, I feel that the original analysis meets the criteria of reliability.

Sincerely,

Jerry Randolph Kirkley



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

May 24, 1977

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that I participated in a verification of the content analysis completed by the principal investigator. My participation included reading three randomly selected interview transcripts, content analyzing them according to established procedure, and comparing my analysis with Mr. Litchford's.

The comparison indicated a very thorough and accurate analysis on the part of the researcher. Since the researcher's analysis was found to reflect the training sponsors' comments and were verified by the training sponsors themselves, it is my opinion that they should provide useful data to be utilized for further analysis.

Sincerely

William G. Neal
Graduate Research Assistant



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

May 25, 1977

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that I participated in a verification of the content analysis completed by the principal investigator. My participation included listening to three randomly selected tapes, reading three randomly selected interview transcripts, content analyzing them according to established procedure, and comparing my analysis with Mr. Litchford's.

The comparison indicated a thorough and accurate analysis on the part of the researcher. I conclude that the content analysis as conducted by the original investigator is an accurate representation of the interview contents. Based upon this conclusion, I feel that the original analysis meets the criteria of reliability.

Sincerely,

Eric Pellegrino
Graduate Research Associate

APPENDIX G

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST FUTURE
RESEARCH EFFORTS

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST FUTURE RESEARCH EFFORTS

Conclusions and recommendations for research procedures utilized are beyond the scope of this study. Because semistructured interviewing and content analysis procedures are relatively new to research in distributive education, suggested guidelines based upon the experience of this investigator have been included.

1. The review of literature, which indicated that the case study form of descriptive research was appropriate for in-depth investigation of perceptions, was supported in this study. It is suggested that those responsible for the development and administration of programs in cooperative-plan distributive education use this form of descriptive research for periodic evaluation of local programs.

2. The review of literature, which indicated that the semi-structured interview technique was appropriate for collecting research data, was supported in this study. It is suggested that those responsible for the development and administration of programs in cooperative-plan distributive education use this procedure to collect information for periodic evaluation of local programs. A guide or manual for interviewers should be prepared to orient distributive education personnel to the use of the technique. In addition, teacher educators should consider training teacher-coordinators to use semi-structured interview techniques.

3. The review of literature, which indicated that the use of an interview guide achieves standardization in the questions asked and the sequence in which they are presented during the semi-structured interview, was supported in this study. It is suggested that those conducting semistructured interviews utilize an interview guide. It is further suggested that the interview guide be produced in the form of a flip chart presentation of the questions to be asked during the interview.

4. The review of literature, which indicated that 30 to 60 minutes provides adequate time to conduct the semistructured interview, was supported in this study. It is suggested that semistructured interviews be scheduled for a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes.

5. The review of literature, which indicated that the use of a tape recorder provides an opportunity to gather information in an exact and original form and makes possible the examination and common defining of the responses, was supported in this study. It is suggested that a tape recorder be used to gather information in an exact and original form when the semistructured interview technique is being used to collect research data.

6. The experience of this investigator revealed that approximately two and one-half hours were required to transcribe one 45 minute audio tape. It is suggested that future researchers consider this time requirement when selecting the semistructured interview as the data collecting technique.

7. The experience of this investigator revealed that manual content analysis techniques require an extensive amount of time and effort to complete. It is suggested that future researchers evaluate these requirements when selecting a research problem which requires manual content analysis techniques.

8. The review of literature, which indicated that content analysis techniques are appropriate for processing data derived from open-ended questions such as those used in semistructured interviews, was supported in this study. It is suggested that those responsible for the development and administration of programs in cooperative-plan distributive education use this research method to analyze data collected from semistructured interviews. A guide or manual for content analysis in distributive education should be prepared to orient distributive education personnel to the use of the research technique.

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the scanned document**

A CASE STUDY OF TRAINING SPONSOR PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE
COORDINATION PHASE OF SECONDARY COOPERATIVE-PLAN
DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN
ROANOKE CITY AND COUNTY,
VIRGINIA

by

Charles Daniel Litchford, Jr.

(ABSTRACT)

Statement of the Problem

The central problem of this study was to identify training sponsor perceptions regarding the coordination phase of secondary cooperative-plan distributive education. Specifically, training sponsors from four United States Office of Education codes and classifications for secondary cooperative-plan distributive education programs in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, were interviewed. The purpose of each interview was to identify perceptions regarding objectives, training sponsor roles, training agreements, training plans, training sponsor benefits, and recommendations for improvement of the coordination phase of program operation.

Research Procedures

The case study form of descriptive research was used. Twenty training sponsors were randomly selected to participate in the case study.

The researcher served as the interviewer for semistructured interviews utilizing open-ended questions on an interview guide. Respondents' answers, comments, and recommendations were recorded on audio tape during each interview and then transcribed. An interview validation summary which contained a summary of each interview was developed and mailed to each participant. Telephone interviews were conducted to validate the interview summaries. Interview transcripts served as the source material for the content analysis portion of the study. The theme was the unit of analysis selected, and a frequency count of themes was the system of enumeration used to measure the characteristics of the content. Every theme representing a different perception was coded as one category for which a frequency count was indicated. Accuracy of transcripts and content analysis was measured by three experienced teacher-coordinators for cooperative-plan distributive education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, perceived the current use of the training agreement as adequate for quality control in the coordination phase of cooperative-plan distributive education program operation. It was recommended that steps be taken to insure student compliance with the provisions of the training agreement and that the provisions of the training agreement be honored by all parties and enforced by the teacher-coordinator.

2. The majority of distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia were not involved in the joint development of training plans, but perceived the training plan as having

potential to improve the performance of students, teacher-coordinators, and training sponsors. It was recommended that training sessions be conducted to instruct teacher-coordinators in the use of the training plan concept. Emphasis should be placed on how training plans achieve quality control in the operation of cooperative-plan distributive education programs, how to develop a training plan, and how to promote the use of training plans with training sponsors. Teacher-coordinators should initiate the use of training plans with all cooperative distributive education training sponsors in Roanoke City and County, Virginia.

3. It was recommended that distributive education teacher-coordinators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, assume the role of career counselor and assist with screening of students who apply for enrollment in distributive education. This would facilitate the enrollment of students with a genuine career interest in cooperative-plan distributive education.

4. It was recommended that distributive education teacher-coordinators in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, schedule appointments, and make more frequent coordination visits. At least twice a month was suggested as most desirable with one visit a month as a minimum of coordination visits.

5. The majority of recommendations for improvement of the coordination phase of program operation in Roanoke City and County, Virginia, were proposals that would be acted on by distributive education teacher-coordinators and would not require additional financial resources.