

A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF VOCATIONAL PARTICIPATION
OF STUDENTS AT NATURAL BRIDGE
JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL CENTER

by

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

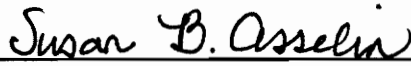
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

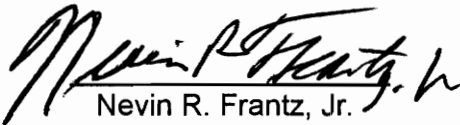
in

Vocational and Technical Education

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Summer, 1996
Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: Vocational Education, Correctional Education, Follow-up,
Juvenile Justice, Virginia

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(ABSTRACT)

In an attempt to evaluate the impact of vocational education programming on post-release performance, a study was conducted to gather follow-up data on students who were released from the Department of Correctional Education School at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years. The population for this descriptive study consisted of 167 males age 17 to 21. Data were successfully collected on 137 members of the population.

Findings from the study were as follows:

1. Nearly half of the total study group were employed.
2. Approximately one fourth of the total study group continued their education.
3. Students who earned a vocational education certificate of completion were more likely to be employed than students who earned a lesser vocational certificate of credit or no vocational certificate at all.
4. Students who earned a vocational certificate of completion and a General Education Development (GED) certificate were more likely to be employed than all other NBJCC students.

5. Less than half of all vocational program completors were employed in a field related to their vocational training.
6. Nearly half of all vocational program completors were employed in food service. (Not a field of vocational training at NBJCC)

Based on the findings and conclusions in this study, recommendations for policy practice and research in vocational education are provided.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to those individuals whose support and encouragement has contributed to the successful completion of this degree program.

Gratitude is sincerely expressed to Dr. Susan B. Asselin, graduate committee chair, for her support, leadership, and guidance. The author would also like to recognize the other members of the committee, Dr. Nevin Frantz, Jr. and Dr. Daisy Stewart, for their encouragement and support. Thank you for all you did.

The author wishes to further express his gratitude to Mr. Bob Slaughter, Virginia Department of Correctional Education Transition Coordinator, Dr. Helen Williams, Virginia Department of Correctional Education Director of Academic Programs, and Mr. Nick Ferguson, Virginia Department of Correctional Education Computer Specialist, for creating and designing the computerized transition follow-up database program.

Additionally, the author is indebted to both Dr. Sandra A. Ratcliff of Virginia Commonwealth University and Dr. John Mesinger of the University of Virginia who gave generously of their time, advice, and expertise.

Above all, the author expresses deepest appreciation to April Mazingo and his family whose encouragement, love, and support have made it possible for him to pursue this degree. The author appreciates the sacrifices they have made in order for him to devote his time and energies to his studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Juveniles who are incarcerated have not had the opportunity and, in many instances, the learning environment, to successfully acquire skills necessary to gain employment (New York State Division For Youth, 1990). One can assume that without employment, these youth will be more likely to rely on government assistance and resort to a life of crime. Vocational training is an important part of an incarcerated youth's rehabilitative process. It is the responsibility of the correctional system to provide vocational training. This training can be the key to obtaining and keeping employment, therefore reducing repeat offenses.

For years, professional practitioners in the criminal justice system have pointed to vocational education as an integral component of the rehabilitative process (Schaeffer & Shannon, 1983). At the time of commitment to an institution, records show that most juveniles have experienced a lack of stable employment and unemployment. Rarely do incarcerated youth have formal trade-related or vocational training upon commitment (New York State Division For Youth, 1990). For these reasons, vocational training has become a part of state-wide education programming in Virginia's juvenile correctional centers. This effort was based on the assumption that juveniles who complete formal vocational training programs while incarcerated may acquire jobs more readily and face

a reduced likelihood of recidivating (Shaeffer & Shannon, 1983; Harvey, 1990; New York State Division For Youth, 1990; Woodin, 1983).

The Commonwealth of Virginia has operated juvenile correctional facilities since 1890 when Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center was initially opened for operation. The establishment of a juvenile correctional facility within Virginia paralleled a broader establishment of juvenile correctional institutions across the United States (Cahalan, 1979; Cahalan, 1986; Jarvis, 1978). The creation of juvenile correctional facilities was an outgrowth of the progressive prison reform movement of the late nineteenth century (Schlossman, 1977). The philosophical premise underlying their creation was that juvenile offenders were malleable and could be rehabilitated (Empy, 1978).

The Code of Virginia has historically reflected the fact that juvenile offenders are not to be viewed as hardened criminals, but rather are to be viewed as juveniles who have committed crimes resulting from a poor upbringing devoid of appropriate guidance and structure during their formative years (Platt, 1969). Subsequently, juvenile offenders were committed to the care of that agency within the Commonwealth's executive branch that was charged with housing and reforming the behavior of juvenile offenders. Indeed, juvenile offenders were, and continue to be, committed as wards of the state rather than sentenced as criminals (Commonwealth of Virginia (COV), 1994, Section 16.1-278.8; COV, 1994, Section 66-3; COV, 1994, Section 66-13).

Through the years various models have been utilized for dealing with juvenile offenders. Initially, the basic model was the cottage/farming model whereby juvenile offenders were placed within juvenile facilities for the purpose of reform and guidance

(Jarvis, 1978). Facilities were built along the model of a farm industry designed to instill work ethics and to cause committed youths to perceive the error of their ways. This model continued until the mid to late 1960s when a philosophical shift occurred within juvenile corrections. During this time period, a shift occurred from the reform model to the treatment/medical model which is predicated upon the idea that behavior is caused and does have definite etiology (Hirschi, 1969). Because of this belief, Virginia's juvenile correctional programs shifted from one designed to promote work ethics and social values to one designed to identify etiology of negative behaviors and to treat or modify behavior. These programs operated from a variety of philosophical frameworks, but all possessed the common elements of a treatment model (Street, Vinter & Perrow, 1966).

The current programs operated by the Department of Youth and Family Services within the Commonwealth's six juvenile correctional centers are squarely predicated upon the treatment model. The philosophical shift toward a treatment model incorporated a need for educating the youth committed to the correctional environment, as it was and continues to be generally perceived that education may be the most significant element of any treatment program (Muth & Gering, 1986). This was and is felt a valid philosophical tenet because education is viewed as the most viable means for not only modifying behavior but also is the most effective mechanism for providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to live as productive citizens.

In 1966, the Department of Welfare and Institutions began the process of staffing the Commonwealth juvenile facilities with instructional personnel. Initially vocational training was emphasized and academic training was included only to support the

acquisition of vocational skills. With the passage of time, it came to be realized that the level of academic thrust was inadequate and that academic instruction needed to be strengthened to an equal level with the vocational instructional format. In 1974, this line of thought ultimately resulted in the state legislature's creation of the Rehabilitative School Authority. This agency was created by statute with a specific mandate to provide not only committed juveniles, but also incarcerated adults, with an appropriate academic and vocational education (Commonwealth of Virginia (COV), 1994, Section 22.1-342; COV, 1994, Section 22.1-343). Ultimately in July 1985, the Rehabilitative School Authority was renamed the Department of Correctional Education (COV, 1994, Section 22.1-340).

Thus, since the mid 1960s the Commonwealth has operated significant academic and vocational education programs within the juvenile correctional centers. These educational programs were designed with a dual purpose in mind. Incarcerated youth were to be prepared for return to public school and for entry into the adult labor market if public school return was deemed inappropriate (Virginia Department of Correctional Education Policy and Procedure Manual, Mission Statement, 1990). For the past twenty-two years, the Department of Correctional Education (DCE) has discharged this mandate.

Need for the Study

Innovative program development, design, implementation, and evaluation have long been essential components of vocational education programming (Muth & Gering, 1986). Follow-up studies on the status of program completors are imperative in this

process. The data can provide a baseline for subsequent evaluations of programming efforts and a measure of their effectiveness. Additionally, this information can lead to modifications and restructuring efforts which will make the program more efficient.

It is the goal of the DCE Youth School at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) to provide students with the necessary vocational skills to gain employment upon release. This study serves as an internal evaluation of vocational education programming at NBJCC and helps to fill the knowledge void in the field of vocational education programming in correctional centers within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Although limited research can be found on the vocational training and follow-up for incarcerated youth, none has been reported from Virginia. Therefore, it is not known if vocational programs operated by the Virginia DCE have the same effectiveness as other states. With this in mind, the director of the DCE mandated follow-up tracking to occur at all juvenile centers within the Commonwealth. A computerized follow-up database was created by the DCE. The structured follow-up database was maintained by the transition specialist at each JCC. The follow-up database was the first of its kind in the Commonwealth of Virginia and was easily maintained. Developing a structured follow-up data management system for others to replicate and adding to the research base on vocational training for incarcerated youth in Virginia may be helpful to the future vocational programmers and development of new programs.

For purposes of this study, the impact of vocational education programming on the employment status for incarcerated males six months subsequent to release was

investigated. Using follow-up data gathered during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years, the investigator attempted to determine if the completion of a vocational education program at NBJCC had a positive effect on the employment status of the juvenile males after release. The investigator also attempted to determine if specific vocational training had a positive impact on obtaining employment in the vocational field of training for released juveniles, if released juveniles were more likely to continue their education than to find employment, and if released juveniles who had completed a vocational education program and had earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate were more likely to be employed than all other students.

Statement of the Problem

Are juveniles who complete a vocational education program while incarcerated better prepared to enter the job market upon release? Will juveniles who complete a vocational education program obtain employment in the field of vocational training? Will a combination of vocational program completion and a GED increase the students chances of obtaining employment? Will the students continue their education upon release? To answer these questions, post-release performance for juvenile offenders at NBJCC was investigated six months subsequent to release.

The population for this follow-up study consisted of males age 17 to 21 who were released from NBJCC during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years. A list of 167 individuals was generated by the investigator. The investigator surveyed the probation officers of the 167 juveniles using existing DCE follow-up questions (designed by the investigator in 1992) to collect the data on the population. Of those 167, data was

successfully collected on 137 individuals.

Research Questions

To address the problem of the study, the following specific research questions were answered.

1. Is there a greater incidence of employment among students who complete a vocational education program?
2. Are students who complete a vocational education program likely to be employed in areas of their vocational training?
3. Are students more likely to continue their education than to find employment?
4. Are students who complete a vocational education program and earn a General Education Development (GED) certificate more likely to be employed than all other NBJCC students?

Definitions of Terms

Several terms are used throughout this study. To aid in reader understanding, the following definitions are provided.

Vocational education programs- The vocational field of training chosen by the student provided by the juvenile correctional center to the students (auto servicing, woodworking, brick masonry, and building maintenance are offered at Natural Bridge).

Completion of vocational education programs- Completion of all competencies listed for the chosen vocational education program.

Certificate of credit- Completion of one-half of the competencies listed for the chosen vocational education program. This is a lesser accomplishment than completion, but does indicate that the student has successfully completed one-half of the skills necessary for completion.

Incarcerated juveniles- Youth who have been declared wards of the state and placed at a juvenile correctional center for a set length of stay because of a criminal conviction.

Department of Correctional Education (DCE)- The agency that provides educational services for incarcerated youth and adults.

Juvenile Correctional Center (JCC)- A facility operated by the Department of Youth and Family Services to house incarcerated juveniles.

Rehabilitative process- A combination of counseling and education provided to the youth during incarceration.

Commitment- The act of a judge declaring a youth a ward of the state and placing the youth at a juvenile correctional center.

Recidivate- An act of being placed in a correctional center more than once.

Follow-up database- A computerized system of organizing information collected on released juveniles.

Transition specialist- An individual employed by the Virginia Department of Correctional Education who is responsible for post-release follow-up of juveniles. Also responsible for academic and vocational counseling and guidance of incarcerated juveniles while at the correctional center.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study are related to the population and data collection. More specifically:

1. Only committed juveniles from Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) who were released during the calendar years 1993 and 1994 were included in the study.
2. Findings and results can not be generalized to other populations because of purposive sampling technique.

Summary

Are vocational programs offered at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) beneficial for students who are returning to the community? It is the goal of the Department of Correctional Education (DCE) Youth School at NBJCC to provide students with the necessary vocational skills to gain employment upon release. Evaluating employment outcomes may be the most effective way to determine the impact of vocational education programs at NBJCC.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to better understand the impacts of vocational education programs, it was necessary to review the literature available from other locations at other times. The review of the literature provided valuable information regarding vocational education in a correctional setting, effectiveness of vocational education in a correctional setting, effectiveness of vocational education programming in a public school setting and the need for follow-up studies.

Vocational Education in a Correctional Setting

The Ohio State Council on Vocational Education (1990) provided some insight to the vocational programs in a correctional setting by answering the following questions. What are vocational education programs like in a correctional setting? Are they similar to vocational education programs in a public school setting?

Vocational programs in a correctional setting operate under state standards similar to public schools. Classes must be taught by teachers who have completed the same certification requirements as public school teachers. Beyond these semblances, few similarities exist between vocational education in a correctional setting and a public school. They differ in personnel, equipment, funding, facilities, enrollment, and program length (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990).

Facilities

There are great differences in facilities and equipment among vocational education programs in a public school and a correctional facility. Space for vocational classes is a major concern in a correctional setting. Universally, these centers are overcrowded. A vocational education program may have to be shut down because of the need for more dormitory space. If the need for dormitory space occurs, the institutional superintendent has little choice but to order beds to be set up in the vocational classes. After space, money is the next issue. Programs are frequently equipped with only basic equipment that may be outdated. Alternative methods for securing equipment have to be explored. Often older equipment from public schools or state surplus supply equipment is obtained by correctional centers. The lack of money for correctional centers has caused administrators to become very resourceful. Networks need to be established that can help secure equipment and supplies (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990).

Program

Enrollment and program length are other areas where vocational education programs in a correctional setting and a public school differ. Most vocational programs operate on a split shift. Teachers will have a group of students in the morning for approximately three hours and a different group of students in the afternoon. The students are enrolled in academic classes during the other half day. Rising population and rapid turnover has caused the number of students in vocational programs to increase. Working in small classrooms with larger numbers of youthful offenders who

are aggressive and disruptive puts the instructor in a volatile, even dangerous, situation (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990).

The rapid turnover of students creates problems for vocational educators in a correctional setting that public schools do not have. All vocational programs in a correctional setting are open entry/open exit. This means that all available space in a vocational class is filled as soon as it opens. Open entry/open exit creates a problem for the educators, who must instruct students of all levels at all times. This situation accounts for a notable gap between program enrollees and program completors (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990).

Programs are usually fully enrolled as a result of the open-entry policy. However short lengths of stay by students are not compatible with in-depth skill training. This is discouraging for the vocational educators who believe that this may be the last formal education these students will receive. Vocational educators in a correctional setting never get to see a group complete a course together. In fact, they see few students finish their classes (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990).

Mission

What is the mission of vocational education programs in a correctional setting? Most correctional centers would answer this question by stating that they attempt to provide vocational training that will help their students find jobs upon release. With the problems regarding equipment, space, and enrollment facing correctional educators, just how effective is vocational education in a correctional setting?

Effectiveness of Vocational Education Programs in a Correctional Setting

Limited research has been conducted regarding the effectiveness of vocational education in a correctional setting (Schaeffer & Shannon, 1983; Harvey, 1990; Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990). In these studies, vocational education appears to have a positive effect on employability. Juveniles who completed a vocational education program while incarcerated were likely to secure employment upon release. Most of these studies also suggested that juveniles who completed a vocational education program while incarcerated would secure employment relatively quickly (within 4 to 6 months) after release. Also, juveniles who completed a vocational education program demonstrated a low incidence of recidivating.

Although the research suggested that completion of a vocational education program enhanced employability after release, many states do not have a stable follow-up program to track the employment of released juveniles (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990). Follow-up would provide internal investigation into specific vocational education programming and valuable statistics for further study and research.

Building on the need for student follow-up in Ohio, Schaeffer and Shannon (1983) conducted a study to gather follow-up data on students who had graduated from the vocational education programs in the Ohio Central School System in 1979. In an attempt to determine the impact of vocational education programming, Schaeffer and Shannon studied parole records of 650 students who successfully completed vocational education programs while incarcerated.

After six months of investigation, Schaeffer and Shannon had gained useable information on 589 of the 650 students who completed the vocational programs in the Ohio Central School System. The researchers used frequencies and percentages to present their data in this descriptive study. Results of their research determined that 73% of the graduates were employed. Seventy percent of those who found employment in their field of training were listed as maintaining steady employment. Only 43% of those employed in jobs other than their field of training maintained steady employment. Overall, 75% of the graduates successfully completed parole. Based on these findings, Schaeffer and Shannon concluded that vocational education appears to have a positive effect on the employability of paroled students. Additionally, Schaeffer and Shannon concluded that vocational graduates seem to demonstrate a low incidence of recidivism.

In a related study, Harvey (1990) conducted a follow-up study on delinquent youth who graduated from Lewiston Alternative Vocational Center (LAVC) in Maine. He investigated the long-term effect that vocational programming had on occupational and employment status of the graduates. Twenty-one 1989 graduates who agreed to participate from the Lewiston Alternative Vocational Center were questioned by telephone and via mail surveys. A participation rate of 100% was recorded.

Results of this study suggested that vocational programming had a positive effect on employment status of the LAVC graduates one year after graduation. Harvey found that 52% of the graduates were employed one year after graduation. Thirty-eight percent were involved in postsecondary educational training. Fifty-three percent were

in educational and/or occupational area directly related to their programs at Lewiston Alternative Vocational Center. Fourteen percent were looking for employment. Overall, the results suggested that the vocational programming that occurred at Lewiston Alternative Vocational Center was successful in promoting employment and postsecondary training (Harvey, 1990).

Other studies have investigated the effectiveness of vocational education in reducing recidivism. Throughout the review of the literature, it seemed correctional centers needed to provide their clients with adequate job training in order to reduce repeat offenses.

The Ohio State Council on Vocational Education (1990) produced a report explaining how they believe the cycle of recidivism begins. They stated that a person, either an adult or a juvenile, lacking adequate employment skills and education to be competitive in the job market doesn't have a good chance of obtaining entry level employment. If this person committed a crime and was not offered vocational or academic training while incarcerated, the chances of gaining employment upon release would not improve. As a result, the individual would resort back to a life of crime. "This is where the insidious recidivism cycle begins: another botched crime, another arrest, another conviction, and another sentence" (p. 6). They concluded that the actual effects of vocational education programs for incarcerated youths and adults are hard to determine because of the lack of systematic follow-up (Ohio State Council on Vocational Education, 1990).

The needs of juvenile delinquents seemed to fall uniquely within the realm of vocational education (Oklahoma Vocational Rehabilitation Service, 1964). A need for

vocational guidance, training, placement, and follow-up was noted in working with juvenile delinquents in order to reduce recidivism and to provide an adequate chance for employment.

Effectiveness of Vocational Education Programs in a Public School Setting

How many high school students in vocational education programs find employment after graduation? How many find jobs in related fields? Some secondary students focus their school preparation for college, others on job preparation, while others have no focus. Evaluating employment outcomes may be the most effective way to evaluate vocational education programs in the public school setting.

The Carl D. Perkins Act calls for assessment of the academic and employment outcomes of vocational education students. In an attempt to evaluate the employment outcomes of secondary students, the U.S. Department of Education (1994) produced the National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE) report. According to the NAVE report, overall employment rates and economic returns were no higher for secondary school vocational education graduates than their counterparts with general degrees. The lack of positive overall returns on vocational education can be attributed to the low proportion of students who found jobs related to their vocational training. Less than half of the high school graduates with occupational training obtained jobs in fields related to their training. However, students who found jobs related to their vocational training earned more money than those who did not. Students who concentrated their coursework in a vocational field earned more in training-related jobs,

were more likely to find training-related jobs, and were less likely to be unemployed. Additionally, the NAVE report suggested that vocational education programs in secondary schools helped reduce the student dropout rate. Students with low academic achievement seemed to welcome vocational education as a alternative to traditional classroom learning. Graduation rates for at-risk students appeared to increase for those who took a concentration of vocational courses (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

In addition to the NAVE report, the Virginia Department of Education (1995) studied the employment outcomes of high school vocational education students. The data in this report were collected on 1993 and 1994 graduates from secondary schools throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Education found that approximately three-fourths of their vocational program completors were employed. They also found that more than half were continuing their education in vocational training schools or community colleges (Virginia Department of Education, 1995).

Additional research efforts have been conducted to gain follow-up information on the effectiveness of vocational education programs in a public school setting (Lewis & Burrows, 1984; Iowa, 1987). In these studies, vocational education appeared to have a positive impact on employment outcomes for secondary school graduates.

In an attempt to gain follow-up information on secondary vocational education students, Iowa (1987) mailed follow-up surveys to 1,945 students who had participated in secondary vocational education programs during the 1984-85 school year. Data were collected on 599 students.

Iowa (1987) reported that 43% of the vocational program completers were employed as compared to 34% of the non-completers. Twenty-seven percent of the completers were employed in a field related to their vocational training as compared to 10% of the non-completers. Roughly 42% of all respondents (completers and non-completers) reported that they were pursuing continuing education. The completion of a vocational education program appeared to have a positive impact on employment outcomes for secondary vocational program completers (Iowa, 1987).

In a related study, Lewis and Burrows (1984) conducted a follow-up study to provide information on the educational and employment status of 1976-1980 vocational program completers in Pennsylvania. Data were collected on 2,669 persons who had graduated from area vocational and technical schools. The findings revealed that the unemployment rate was 25% less for vocational program completers than the rate for similar age group persons in the state in 1982. Twenty-five percent of the vocational completers were enrolled in continuing education related to the secondary field of vocational training. More than half of the vocational program completers were employed in a field related to their secondary vocational training. They associated the high rate of employment for students in fields related to their training with the extensive on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs in the area. Based upon their findings, the completion of a vocational education program appeared to have a positive impact on the employment outcomes for secondary students (Lewis & Burrows, 1984).

The Need for Follow-up Study

Evaluation is a necessary component in the provision of quality education and training to ensure that students will meet the needs of employers. Demographic shifts,

changing skill requirements, and changes in the needs of the employer make evaluation an ongoing process (Schuman, 1967). A number of deficiencies have been noted in vocational education follow-up systems. Previous efforts to improve student follow-up in the vocational education area on a national level have not been successful (Schuman, 1967).

Prior to making recommendations for improvement in vocational education student follow-up, it is essential to establish a baseline. It is necessary to gather information that will determine strengths and weaknesses. The Dallas Community College District (1991) conducted a study to determine strengths and weaknesses in the area of vocational and technical education follow-up. Surveys were sent via mail to all public community colleges and technical institutes in Texas. Of the 52 surveys mailed, 40 were completed. Only eleven of the institutions reported that they identified whether their students participated in high school vocational education programs. Twelve schools reported that they had tech-prep articulation agreements with high schools. Of these twelve, only two reported that they collected follow-up data on their tech-prep students after graduation. This small number indicated that little is being done to evaluate the effectiveness of the tech-prep programs. In order to determine whether improvements needed to be made and what these improvements might have been, these institutions needed to implement procedures to collect follow-up data for the students who participated in these programs (Dallas Community College District, 1991).

The Dallas Community College District (1991) found that few institutions collected follow-up data for articulation students. Also, the study noted that the information that

was collected was primarily regarding educational goals. The study concluded that more emphasis should be placed on the follow-up of vocational education students. Several recommendations were made to improve student follow-up. They were as follows:

1. Guidelines should be created to insure the collection of reliable data.
 - a. Establish common methods to be used by institutions in order to collect comparable data.
 - b. Determine a standard method for calculating results.
 - c. Standardize sampling procedures.
 - d. Develop better measures that control for reliability and validity.
2. Develop a cooperative environment on each campus regarding the collection of student outcome information since a number of areas have responsibility for collecting and reporting information.
3. Determine feasibility of computer software with available forms for printout to save time and decrease error in reporting data.
4. Provide information to a coordinating board in a format in which reentry of information is unnecessary.
5. Conduct workshops for postsecondary personnel who have responsibility for collecting follow-up data for vocational students to increase their skill levels enabling them to use available technologies.

Summary

All literature reviewed in the field of vocational programming for incarcerated youths and adults concluded that the lack of follow-up was a major problem in

determining the effectiveness of the programs. The ability to evaluate and restructure programs is reduced because the follow-up data do not exist. There was a definite need, in all states, to develop a structured follow-up data management system to provide correctional educators with the information necessary to develop efficient programs. The literature also noted that vocational education is a vital part of the rehabilitation process for delinquent juveniles.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of vocational education programs in a juvenile correctional facility as it relates to employment six months subsequent to release. This chapter describes the population, the data collection procedures, the instrument, and the study research design.

The Population

The population for this follow-up study consisted of 167 males age 17 to 21 who were released from Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) during the calendar years 1993 and 1994. Students age 17 to 21 were selected as the population for this study because they represented the group of students who were of working age at the time of release. The juvenile offenders committed to the facility were court ordered placements for criminal behavior. They were typically below-grade-level students who had very limited if any employment experience. The youths' length of stay at NBJCC varied from one month to several years according to the severity of the crime and previous criminal history.

Each student received academic and vocational education programming during his commitment. The academic programming enabled the student to earn credits for public school return and to prepare or take the General Education Development (GED) test. The vocational education programs were designed to provide necessary job

training and job acquisition skills to the incarcerated juveniles. These programs were chosen by the students based on their career interests. The vocational education programs at NBJCC were limited to auto servicing, brick masonry, woodworking, and building maintenance. Completion of these vocational programs was based on the student's proficiency in required competencies. The youth's length of stay impacted his chances to complete a vocational education program.

Data Collection

School transcripts from NBJCC were used to collect the data for student demographics and student DCE information. The investigator reviewed the transcripts for each member of the population prior to release. Information from the transcripts were entered into the computerized follow-up database management system. Student follow-up information was collected using the follow-up survey. The probation officers of the 167 juveniles were surveyed six months subsequent to their clients' release. Data were successfully collected on 137 juveniles. Data for each student were recorded in the computerized database management system.

Instrument

In 1992, the Department of Correctional Education (DCE) mandated student follow-up to begin at each juvenile correctional center within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The creation of a structured follow-up system provided data necessary to determine the impact of academic and vocational programming provided by the DCE. With the follow-up data, the DCE can make policy and procedural changes in the academic and vocational programs and present valuable information to government officials regarding the value of their programs.

At Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC), the investigator piloted the first computerized follow-up database management system in 1992. The database was created by the investigator and the DCE computer specialist. Using the File Express software package, the investigator and the DCE computer specialist designed a program that organized data for each student. The DCE computer specialist provided input on the technical operation of the computer system. The investigator developed the separate categories that were important to the data collection process at NBJCC. For the first time in the Commonwealth of Virginia, follow-up data were collected for released juvenile offenders.

The computerized follow-up database management system served as the research instrument for this study (See Appendix A). The database was composed of three sections that include: student demographics, student DCE information, and student follow-up information.

Section one of the database contained student demographics. Data in this section were limited to: student name, case number, date of birth, age, program entry date, and program exit date. School transcripts at NBJCC were used to collect this information for each student prior to release.

Section two of the database contained student DCE information. Data in this section were limited to: vocational program, certificate of completion, certificate of credit, General Education Development (GED) certificate. School transcripts at NBJCC were used to collect this information for each student prior to release.

Section three of the database contained student follow-up information. Data in this section were limited to: name of probation officer, address of probation officer,

phone number of probation officer, follow-up contact date, student receiving DRS services, student employment, student occupation, student school return, and student court status. A follow-up survey was used to collect this information. Four questions were drawn from an existing DCE follow-up survey. The survey was designed in 1992 by the investigator to collect post-release follow-up information for the computerized database management system. The questions were intended to yield data from the probation officers regarding the post-release performance of their clients'. A copy of the follow-up survey is included in Appendix A.

Research Design

Four research questions were examined to determine the post-release performance of vocational education students six months subsequent to release. To analyze the data, tables with frequencies and percentages were used.

Procedures detailed in this chapter were followed to answer the research questions.

1. Is there a greater incidence of employment among students who complete a vocational education program?
2. Are students who complete a vocational education program likely to be employed in areas of their vocational training?
3. Are students more likely to continue their education than to find employment?
4. Are students who complete a vocational education program and earn a General Education Development (GED) certificate more likely to be employed than all other NBJCC students?

Summary of Methodology

Males age 17 to 21 who had been released from NBJCC during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years represent the population for the study. Data were successfully gathered for 137 members of the population. Data were recorded in the computerized follow-up database management system File Express. Frequencies and percentages were used to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

As indicated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to determine the post-release performance of vocational education students six months after release. To meet this purpose, probation officers of the 167 students released from Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years were surveyed six months subsequent to their clients' release. The student's length of stay at NBJCC ranged from one month to one year with an average length of stay of six months. Data were successfully collected on 137 students. The findings are reported as tables with frequencies and percentages.

Certificates Earned by NBJCC Students

Of the 167 juvenile offenders released from NBJCC during the calendar years 1993 and 1994, less than one fourth received a vocational certificate of completion. Roughly half of the students received a lesser vocational certificate of credit, and nearly one third did not complete any part of the vocational education program and did not receive a vocational certificate. In addition to the vocational certificates earned, approximately one third had received a General Education Development (GED) certificate (See Table 1). Students were more likely to attain a GED than to complete a vocational certificate program. The majority of students left the center with little or no vocational preparation.

Table 1

Certificates Earned by NBJCC Students

Certificate Earned	Frequency	Percent
Vocational Certificate of Completion	39	23
Lesser Vocational Certificate of Credit	77	46
No Vocational Certificate	51	31
GED Certificate	53	32

Research Question One

The first research question to be answered in the study was, "Is there a greater incidence of employment among students who complete a vocational education program?" To answer this question, the investigator studied the data regarding the employment status of the population six months subsequent to release. After close investigation, it was determined that roughly half of the juveniles who made up the total study group were employed. Two thirds of the juveniles who earned a vocational certificate of completion were employed. Nearly half of the juveniles who earned a lesser vocational certificate of credit were employed. Less than one third of the juveniles who did not earn a vocational certificate were employed (See Table 2).

Table 2

Vocational Completion of Employed NBJCC Students

Certificate Earned	Frequency	Percent
Certificate of Completion	21	66
Certificate of Credit	32	46
No Certificate	13	32

Research Question Two

The second research question to be answered was, "Are students who complete a vocational education program likely to be employed in areas of their vocational training?" To answer this question, the investigator studied the data regarding the employment status of the population six months subsequent to release in relation to their field of vocational training at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC). All students who had obtained employment in the construction field and had completed the building maintenance, woodworking, and brick masonry programs were considered to be working in a field related to their vocational training. All students who had obtained employment in the transportation field and had completed the auto servicing program were considered to be working in a field related to their vocational training. Another category included in the results was food service. Food service was not an area of vocational education training at NBJCC, but was included in the findings because of the significant number of students who had obtained employment in the food service field.

It was determined that less than half of the vocational program completors were employed in a field related to their vocational education program. Roughly half of the vocational program completors were employed in food service. Less than one fifth of the vocational program completors were employed in other fields not related to their vocational education training nor food service. Categorizing the total study group by vocational class revealed that less than half of the students who completed the auto servicing program were employed in a related field. Nearly half of the students who completed the auto servicing program were employed in the field of food service. Less than one fifth of the students who completed the auto servicing program were employed in other fields not related to their vocational education program nor food service. Investigation of the data from the brick masonry program revealed less than half of the students who completed the program were employed in a related field. Roughly half of the students who completed the brick masonry program were employed in the field of food service. Slightly over one tenth of the students who completed the brick masonry program were employed in other fields not related to their vocational education program nor food service. The investigator discovered that more than one third of the students who completed the woodworking program were employed in a related field. More than one third of the students who completed the woodworking program were employed in the field of food service. Approximately one fourth of the students who completed the woodworking program were employed in other fields not related to their vocational education program nor food service. Finally, the investigator discovered that more than one third of the students who completed the building maintenance program were employed in a related field. Over half of the students who

completed the building maintenance program were employed in the field of food service. Less than one tenth of the students who completed the building maintenance program were employed in other fields not related to their vocational education program nor food service (See Table 3).

Table 3
Employment Percentages by Occupational Fields for NBJCC Students

Study Employment	Auto Servicing	Brick Masonry	Woodworking	Building Maintenance	Total Group
Related Fields	40	40	38	38	39
Food Service	44	48	38	56	47
Other Fields	16	12	24	6	14

Research Question Three

The third research question to be answered was, “Are students more likely to continue their education than to find employment?” To answer this question, the investigator studied the data regarding the education and employment status for the total population six months subsequent to release. Approximately half of the total study group were employed. Roughly one fourth of the total study group were continuing their education in vocational training schools or community college. Over one fourth of the total study group were neither employed nor continuing their education (See Table 4).

Table 4

Continuing Education vs. Employment for NBJCC Students

Post-Release Outcome	Frequency	Percent
Continuing Education	33	24
Employed	66	48
Neither Continuing Education Nor Employed	38	28

Research Question Four

The fourth research question to be answered was, “Are students who complete a vocational education program and earn a General Education Development (GED) certificate more likely to be employed than all other NBJCC students?” To answer this question, the investigator studied the data regarding certificates earned at NBJCC and post-release employment status for the students six months subsequent to release. Nearly half of the students in the total study group were employed. Two thirds of the students who had received a vocational certificate of completion were employed. More than two thirds of the students who had received a vocational certificate of completion and had received a GED certificate were employed (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Vocational Completion and GED Completion for Employed NBJCC Students

Employment	Frequency	Percent
Certificate of Completion	21	66
Certificate of Completion and GED	15	71

Summary

Are the academic and vocational programs offered at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) beneficial for students who are returning to the community? The findings reported in this chapter provided data necessary to determine the impact of academic and vocational programming provided at NBJCC. In order to better understand the implications of the data reported in this chapter, the investigator provided conclusions and recommendations for policy, practice and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to determine whether vocational education programs offered at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC) had a positive impact on the post-release performance of juvenile offenders six months subsequent to release. It was based on previous research completed by Schaeffer and Shannon (1983) and Harvey (1990) and serves as an internal evaluation of vocational education programs at NBJCC while adding to the body of knowledge related to vocational education programming in a correctional setting. In this section, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research are presented based on the data gathered.

Summary

This section summarizes information about the study purpose, participants, instrument, and methodology.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of vocational education programming on the employment status for incarcerated males six months subsequent to release. Using follow-up data gathered during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years, the investigator attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a greater incidence of employment among students who complete

- a vocational education program?
2. Are students who complete a vocational education program likely to be employed in areas of their vocational training?
 3. Are students more likely to continue their education than to find employment?
 4. Are students who complete a vocational education program and earn a General Education Development (GED) certificate more likely to be employed than all other NBJCC students?

Participants

Participants for this study consisted of 167 males age 17 to 21 who had been released from Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center during the calendar years 1993 and 1994. Data were successfully collected on 137 individuals.

Instrument

A computerized follow-up database management system (designed by the Department of Correctional Education (DCE) computer specialist and the investigator in 1992) served as the research instrument for this study. The database was composed of three sections that included: student demographics, student DCE information, and student follow-up information.

Student demographics and student DCE information was collected using school transcripts from Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC). A survey was used to collect student follow-up information. Four questions were drawn from an existing DCE follow-up survey. The survey was designed in 1992 by the investigator to

collect post-release follow-up information for the DCE computerized database management system. The questions were intended to yield data from the probation officers regarding the post-release performance of their clients'.

Methodology

Four research questions were answered to determine the impact of vocational education programming on incarcerated juveniles as it relates to employment and continued education six months subsequent to release. Probation officers who had clients released from NBJCC during the 1993 and 1994 calendar years were asked to complete a survey regarding the post release performance of their clients'. The data were recorded on the computer database program File Express. Tables with frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data.

Findings

Data collected for the 137 individuals indicated that roughly half of the total population was employed six months subsequent to release. Further investigation determined that students who had completed vocational education programs were more likely to have obtained employment than those who had not, students were more likely to have obtained employment than to have continued their education in vocational training school or community college, and students who had earned vocational certificates and General Education Development (GED) certificates were more likely to have obtained employment than all other NBJCC students.

(A). Is there a greater incidence of employment among students who complete a vocational education program? The investigator discovered that the juveniles who

earned a vocational certificate of completion had a higher rate of employment than the juveniles who earned a lesser certificate of credit or no certificate. Also, the students who earned a lesser certificate of credit were more likely to gain employment than those who did not earn a certificate.

(B). Are students who complete a vocational education program likely to be employed in areas of their vocational training? The data indicated that less than half of the students who completed a vocational education program had obtained employment in a field related to their vocational education program. The majority of the students had obtained employment in food service which is not an area of vocational training at Natural Bridge Juvenile Correctional Center (NBJCC).

(C). Are students more likely to continue their education than to find employment? The investigator discovered that the students at NBJCC were more likely to have obtained employment than to have continued their education.

(D). Are students who complete a vocational education program and earn a General Education Development (GED) certificate more likely to be employed than all other NBJCC students? The data indicated that the students who had earned a vocational certificate of completion and had earned a GED were more likely to gain employment than all other NBJCC students.

Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of vocational education programming on the employment status for incarcerated males six months subsequent

to release. In particular, the study addressed the post-release employment and education status of juveniles who had earned academic and vocational certificates while incarcerated.

(A). For the first research question, the employment status of vocational program completors was determined. Findings revealed that two thirds of the juveniles who had earned a vocational education certificate of completion while incarcerated had obtained employment. In comparison, less than half of the students who earned a lesser vocational certificate of credit had obtained employment, and less than one third of the students who earned no certificate had obtained employment. Previous analyses by Harvey (1990) found a lower employment percentage for vocational program completors. One year after graduation, Harvey reported that approximately half of the correctional center program completors were employed. Schaeffer and Shannon (1983) found that more than two thirds of the correctional center vocational program completors had obtained employment. Although results in this study are not equivalent to those of Schaeffer and Shannon, the findings of this study provide visible evidence that there is a higher incidence of employment among students who complete a vocational education program while incarcerated.

(B). For the second research question, the employment status of students in their field of vocational training was determined. Findings revealed that less than half of the juveniles released from NBJCC had obtained employment in a field related to their vocational education program. Previous analyses by Harvey (1990) found that more than half of the correctional center program graduates were employed in a field

related to their vocational training. Schaeffer and Shannon (1983) reported that more than half of the correctional center program completers had obtained employment in a field related to their vocational training. The U.S. Department of Education (1994) reported that less than half of the high school vocational graduates had obtained employment. Lewis and Burrows (1994) reported that one-fourth of the high school vocational program graduates were employed in jobs related to their field of training. Iowa (1987) reported that approximately one-fourth of the high school vocational graduates were employed in a job related to their field of study. At first glance, analyses of Harvey (1990) and Schaeffer and Shannon (1983) would indicate a deficiency at NBJCC in training incarcerated students for employment in related jobs, but analyses of high school graduates by the U.S. Department of Education (1994), Lewis and Burrows (1984), and Iowa (1987) would indicate that NBJCC is preparing students for employment in related fields as well as secondary schools.

(C). For the third research question, the percentage of students who had continued their education was compared to the percentage of students who had obtained employment. Findings revealed that nearly half of the students had obtained employment upon release. In comparison, approximately one fourth of the students had continued their education. The Virginia Department of Education (1995) reported that more two thirds of the high school graduates had obtained employment and more than half of the high school graduates had continued their education. Iowa (1987) reported approximately half of the high school graduates were continuing their education as compared to two thirds who had obtained employment. Lewis and Burrows (1984) reported that one-fourth of the high school graduates were continuing

their education. Findings would indicate that the students at NBJCC and students in public school are more likely to have obtained employment than to have continued their education.

(D). For the fourth research question, the employment percentage for students who had received a vocational certificate of completion and had received a General Education Development (GED) certificate was determined. The findings revealed that more than two thirds of these students had obtained employment. Analyses of the Virginia Department of Education (1995) revealed that more than two thirds of the high school graduates who had completed a vocational education program had obtained employment. Iowa (1987) reported that nearly half of the high school vocational graduates had obtained employment. Findings from this study, the Virginia Department of Education (1995), and Iowa (1987) indicated that the completion of a vocational program in conjunction with high school graduation or equivalency produced the highest employment percentage among all students.

Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research

Based upon the interpretation of the data in this study and the investigator's experience in vocational and technical education as well as in corrections in general, it is recommended that:

1. The Virginia legislature should consider establishing a statewide policy requiring, as a condition of release, that incarcerated juveniles show evidence of having acquired marketable job skills.
2. The Virginia Department of Correctional Education should require specific job skill profiles of juvenile offenders upon exiting a vocational program to document the

level of training and skill acquisition.

3. Consideration should be given to the addition of a food service program at all juvenile correctional centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
4. A specific research effort should be undertaken which investigates the overall relevance and efficiency of current vocational course offerings in Virginia's juvenile correctional centers.

In conclusion, the investigator is aware from his experience with correctional education that most youth committed to juvenile correctional centers demonstrate poor educational backgrounds as well as poor employment records. If nothing is done to improve these deficient areas during incarceration, it is likely that these juveniles will return to illegal activities upon release. Even if further crimes are avoided there remains an increased likelihood of continued public dependence through unemployment and/or welfare assistance. This can add up to continued waste of tax dollars with little or no return.

On the other hand, if vocational education programs can be provided during incarceration and can be a factor in reducing the dependence on public assistance, then it certainly must be viewed as a feasible treatment intervention. If these juveniles are employed, they will be paying taxes rather than being supported by taxes.

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APPENDIX A

**RESEARCH INSTRUMENT
AND
FOLLOW-UP SURVEY**

FOLLOW-UP DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

STUDENT NAME: _____

CASE #: _____ DOB: _____ AGE: _____

PROGRAM ENTRY DATE: _____ PROGRAM EXIT DATE: _____

STUDENT DCE INFORMATION

VOCATIONAL PROGRAM: _____

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION: _____

CERTIFICATE OF CREDIT: _____

GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE: _____

STUDENT FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION

PROBATION OFFICER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____

FOLLOW-UP CONTACT DATE: _____

STUDENT RECEIVING DRS SERVICES: _____

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT: _____

STUDENT OCCUPATION: _____

STUDENT SCHOOL RETURN: _____

STUDENT COURT STATUS: _____

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

1. Is this youth receiving DRS services? (If yes, explain)

2. Is this youth employed? (If yes, indicate where and what occupation)

3. Is this youth in school? (If yes, indicate what type of school)

4. What is the current court status of this youth? (Explain)

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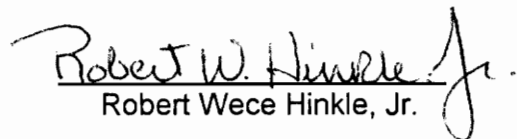
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