AN ASSESSMENT OF THE OPINIONS OF MONTANA BUSINESS PERSONNEL REGARDING NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS OF EMPLOYEES THAT ARE SECONDARY SCHOOL BUSINESS EDUCATION COMPLETERS

by

Cynthia Jane Jacobsen

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APPROVAL

of a professional paper submitted by

Cynthia Jane Jacobsen

This professional paper has been read by the members of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency.

June 7, 1985
Date

Chairperson, Graduate Committee

Approved for the Major Department

June 7, 1985
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Head, Major Department

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there have been many studies done to determine the condition of public education. The results of these studies have generally not been favorable to the quality of education. Frequently the basis for the findings of the various studies have been college entrance test scores, such as the ACT and the SAT. The national averages in the areas of Math and English declined over a ten-year period (1970-1980). These test scores were deemed reflective of the lower attainment level of students in the basic skills; therefore, a national campaign has been started to improve the basic skills of students at all levels.

As a result of the move to improve the basic education levels, local school districts have implemented changes they feel will better meet the needs of students. Some of the changes include more requirements in English, Math, and Science, and raising graduation requirements. These changes are aimed primarily at the college bound students. However, statistics show that only 20% of the high school graduates will go on to graduate from college (Unfinished Agenda:1984) and, these changes mentioned above do not really help

prepare the remaining students to meet their future goals and objectives. In addition to not meeting the direct needs of a large segment of the student population, these changes are indirectly affecting the course selection of students wishing to enroll in vocational education electives. With the total graduation requirements increased, the number of electives decreases. Unless the school day is lengthened and/or the number of periods per day is increased; the number of electives that students are able to fit into their schedules is restricted. Students that are interested in enrolling in vocational courses during their high school years, with the goal of obtaining a job-entry level skills, are finding it very difficult to meet the requirements for graduation and meet their personal goals of preparing to enter the job market following graduation.

A second segment of the high school population that is affected indirectly is the group of students that have not set clear objectives for the future. These students need time and a variety of courses to explore and experiment with different subject areas offered at the secondary level.

The effect on vocational education will be very profound, if measures aren't taken to solicit support for these programs at the secondary level. There are actions that vocational educators can take to gather support for their programs:

1.) A temporary remedy could be to lengthen the day to allow greater opportunity for students to take courses in the vocational education field.

2.) By working closely with counselors, the instructors can help make sure that the information being presented to the students is both accurate and up-to-date. If there is cooperation between the vocational personnel and the people who arrange students' schedules, the needs of the students should be met more successfully.

Both of these solutions are short-term, but could fill the gap until more comprehensive measures can be formulated.

In order to develop more complete long-range goals for vocational programs, it is very important to first make an evaluation of current programs. Opinions of the employers of the graduates of the program should be part of the program evaluation. The employer's point of view can add greatly to the information on the vocational education program. Once this information is collected, it can be used to improve the total program. The data would indicate where the program needs to be improved, enabling students to better fill the positions in the market place. The different areas to explore are: verbal skills, broad

educational skills, specific occupational or technical skills, and general occupational or non-technical skills.

The skills necessary to maintain a job are generally divided into two categories--technical skills and non-technical skills. Technical skills refer to the knowledge and measurable skills which qualify an individual for a particular job. Examples of technical skills would be: a sufficient knowledge of accounting to be qualified for the position of an accounts receivable or accounts payable clerk, a skill level of taking shorthand at a rate of 100 wam., or the skill and knowledge to qualify for the emerging position of word processing operator. Primarily, technical skills are qualifications that allow an individual to obtain a job.

The area of non-technical skills refers to a very broad and diverse group of qualities needed for success on the job. Sub-groups within this area include: social skills, effective human relations, work habits and attitudes, and communication skills. Attitudes that will apply to the world of work are stressed at the secondary level, but sometimes the carry-over to a job situation isn't stressed.

The logical program in which to include the presentation and instruction of the non-technical skills, is vocational education, the business program in particular. Although good work attitudes and habits are stressed throughout the educational process, the business

curriculum is the obvious place to show students how these attitudes will carry over and be necessary in the world of work.

It is important in the development of the business curriculum, especially in view of the rapid changes presently taking place in this occupational area, that the importance of non-technical skills are not overlooked. With the emphasis on the ever-changing technological skills needed in the world of work, it is critical to the success of the student in obtaining and maintaining a job, that the non-technical skills remain a part of the business program. If these skills are overlooked or pushed aside, the students may acquire the technical skills necessary to qualify for job openings, but may not have the necessary skills to successfully work in an office situation.

It is important that the opinions of business personnel be solicited and evaluated as part of the development of the curriculum. Business personnel are in an excellent position to comment on the quality of students coming out of business programs. School programs can obtain an up-dated picture of the requirements of the job market and use that information to better prepare students to fill those positions. Businesses need the opportunity to have input into the development of the program which helps to meet the changing demands of the work situation.

> "Research related to the assessment of employer satisfaction with vocational graduates can serve as a vehicle for improved relations between vocational educators and employers." (Asche, 1980)

There is some question as to whether these attitudes and characteristics are being successfully taught and learned in school. In an attempt to answer these questions, this study solicited employer opinions of how important these skills were to obtaining positions. It also asked employers to rate characteristics as to their importance. A final question related to whether students of the business department were better prepared in these areas than those students who had not had the advantage of participating in the business program.

Statement of the Problem

The general purpose of the study was to gather information regarding the importance of non-technical skills as they relate to job acquisition as viewed from the prospective of employers.

Need for the Study

With the rapid change presently taking place in the field of office occupations, it is important to gather information from the employer's view. This information can be used to evaluate, update, or change business education

programs in the State of Montana. This study was needed for the following reasons:

1.) As technology creates rapid changes in the work environment, the importance of characteristics and attitudes appropriate to the world of work are increasing. Many employers are willing to train employees in the technical skills needed, if the employee has a positive attitude toward the job. Business education programs need the input from employers regarding their opinions as to exactly what attitudes and characteristics they feel are important to the success of an employee.

2.) Eventually most secondary students will have to enter the job market. It is important to have employers' comparisons of business education completers and those without a background in business education. If the results of this comparison support the contention that business education completers make better employees, the findings can be used to justify the existence of the business education program.

3.) Vocational education is being threatened due to scheduling conflicts resulting from the increased requirements for graduation and from the

limited amount of funds available at the local, state, and federal level. Having employers within the State evaluate the overall effectiveness of the job done by business education programs, can help programs maintain their viability.

Specific Questions to be Answered

During the research process the following questions were used as a guide.

1. How important are non-technical skills to secondary business education graduates in obtaining a job?
2. What are viewed as the more valuable non-technical skills in obtaining employment?
3. Do business education students have the necessary skills desired by employers?
4. Do non-business education students have the same necessary non-technical skills?
5. Do business education courses contribute to important non-technical skills necessary for job success?
6. Does the private sector (employers) have enough, if any, input into the local business education program?

Research Procedures

A survey of Montana business personnel was conducted to evaluate the importance of non-technical skills of high school business education completers in several areas.

Population. For the purpose of this study, the population consisted of businesses in the State of Montana that had participated in cooperative office education

programs with secondary school districts located in communities throughout the State. An effort was made to have representatives from large, medium, and small communities from all geographical regions. A random sample was obtained from the population.

Survey Instrument. The survey instrument used in this study was a modification of the instrument used by Dr. Ron Harris, Director of Cooperative Education at Montana State University, in his study, "An Analysis of Faculty Members' and Employers' Ratings on Non-Technical Employment Qualities and Attitudinal Characteristics of Cooperative Education Students in the Western region of the United States."

Part I of the instrument was used to gather demographic information concerning the number of present employees and whether those employees had taken business education courses. This part also gathered information dealing with the effectiveness of business education programs and the overall satisfaction of employers with employees from business education programs.

Part II of the instrument identified the level of importance for students seeking employment, as viewed by employers, of a list of non-technical employment qualities.

Part III ranked the level of importance of a list of attitudes and characteristics for students to possess as they seek employment.

Analysis of Data. The responses from the returned surveys were tabulated by recording the frequency of responses to each question. A description of the frequency of responses was done using percentages. The data are found in Chapter IV.

Limitations

The population was limited to employers identified as employing business education completers. It was felt that including all vocational employers in the population would result in the evaluation of vocational programs rather than just completers of business education programs. The study was limited to the State of Montana and to firms hiring business education students for the years 1979 through 1984. Business education completers were limited to those students completing secondary school business programs rather than those completing post-secondary programs or vo-tech programs.

Definition of Terms

Advisory Committee. A group of individuals, usually from outside the field of education, with specific knowledge and expertise regarding the need, development, and operation of a vocational program. (Cooperative Education Handbook:1981)

Business Education Completers. Those students who have successfully completed a capstone business education course.

Cooperative Education. A program of vocational education for persons who, through a cooperative arrangement 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 an 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/her employability. Work periods and school attendance may be on alternate half-days, full-days, weeks, or other periods of time in fulfilling the cooperative work program.(Cooperative Education Handbook: 1981)

Non-techincal Skills. Skills that refer to the qualities, characteristics, attitudes, and attributes which enable an individual to interact on the job with other individuals in an acceptable manner. This area includes social skills, effective human relations, work habits and attitudes, and communication skills.

Techincal Skills. The knowledge and specific skills that can be measured or exactly defined, which qualifies an individual for a particular type of job or occupation.

Training Agreement. A statement of fundamental agreements regarding the participation of the student in a work environment. Initiated by the school, the agreement reflects a voluntary and cooperative commitment on the part of the school, employer, student, and parent.(Cooperative Education Handbook:1981)

Vocational Education. Organized educational programs which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment, or for additional preparation for a career requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree.(Cooperative Education Handbook:1981)

Summary

As a result of the pressure for change in education, there is a need for vocational education programs to solidify support from the school and the community. It is important that employers have input into these programs to insure the proposed changes will help prepare students for the job market. One of the most critical areas to assess is employer satisfaction with non-technical skills.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Change has become a byword of the 1980's. Whether it is felt that change is too fast or too slow, whether it is felt that change is good or bad, change still takes place. Although changes may be more rapid in one field or area than in others, almost all segments of society are touched by change. "During the remainder of the 1980's, business occupations will be confronted with many far-reaching changes." (Luing:1983) This raises the question of what type of changes will affect business occupations. The demand for workers in the secretarial field is growing rapidly. "The Department of Labor reports that more jobs are opening up in the secretarial field than in any of the other 299 work classifications." (Kosak:1981) The Department of Labor also states, "that by 1985, we will be short 250,000 secretaries." (Kosak:1981) In order to meet this demand, there must be cooperation and communication between the groups involved, with education taking the leadership role.

> "Business executives, community and organization leaders, and professional secretaries alike are looking to educators for the essential leadership and support to help prepare secretaries and office personnel for success in the "real" office..." (Metcalf:1983)

All areas of society are undergoing change; therefore, it is important to investigate how that change will affect business occupations. The demand for office and secretarial workers will continue to increase at a rapid rate. Business will look to education for leadership in preparing students to fill these positions.

Background of Vocational Education

Vocational Education has been a recognized federal program in the public schools since the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. There are many areas or components that have been encompassed under the broad title of Vocational Education during the growth of this branch of education.

> "The secondary education graduate will generally exit from a federally reimbursed program which (a) will usually be at least one year in length, (b) will probably be offered only to eleventh and twelfth graders, (c) will probably be located in a public comprehensive high school or area vocational school, and (d) will usually be oriented toward the average high school student." (Asche:1980)

Under the heading of vocational education there are also many different teaching methods and learning styles that are utilized to benefit the students. "Delivery systems include

public schools, proprietary schools, on-the-job training programs, military programs, apprenticeship programs, and programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor." (Asche:1980)

In addition to training students to make a more successful transition from the classroom to the world of work, vocational education will many times serve other functions. "Vocational Education is frequently the catalyst that reawakens their commitment to school and sparks a renewed interest in the academic skills." (Unfinished Agenda:1984) There are a number of components that must be taken into consideration when discussing the development of the program, one of which is the attitude of the student toward the program. "It seems logical that at least one test of vocational education's effectiveness is the extent to which former vocational students are satisfactory or unsatisfactory employees in the eyes of the employer." (Asche:1980) Secondly, students must be prepared to be able to "identify the acceptable methods of getting work done and adjust the production habits learned in the classroom to the job situation." (Baumgardner:1981) Finally, "we (education) must also provide opportunities for students to work cooperatively as team members in order to make decisions and share responsibility for completing tasks." (Reese:1983)

Success of the vocational education student, in addition to sound technical skills, requires further skills from outside the technical area. "The potential for advancement on the job is excellent for workers who have needed job skills and good interpersonal skills." (Reese:1983) In support of this idea, Luing states: "The technology for increased productivity already exists, but without the proper development of human resources such goals can never be achieved." (Luing:1983)

Vocational education is a broad area with many different subjects under this general title. In addition to reinforcing academic competencies, vocational courses present two types of skills--technical and non-technical. It is important that prospective employees acquire good non-technical skills from these programs. Employees that can meet the challenges of technology and have the needed skills, both technical and non-technical, will progress in their careers.

Research Methodology

There are several important considerations to be evaluated when undertaking employer satisfaction research. The field of assessing employer opinions is still in the developing stages. "The state of the art of assessing employer satisfaction with business graduates is still uncertain." (Asche:1980) This allows for latitude and

innovation in establishing research methodology. "Little methodological research has been done on employer opinions; therefore, the area should be amenable to innovation and change." (Asche:1980) An abundance of research has not been done; therefore, a definite need exists.

> "Generally these items sought information from employers regarding whether or not (a) the employer has hired vocational graduates, (b) the employer would hire more vocational graduates, (c) the employer thought the graduates were prepared for employment, and (d) the employer thought the graduates had potential for advancement." (Asche:1980)

It is important that the researcher have realistic expectations regarding the value of the research. "While it would be naive to think that employer satisfaction research could prevent or cure productivity problems, it is reasonable to think that such research could be beneficial." (Asche:1980)

The researcher must carefully evaluate the type of information desired. "Future research must clarify the kind of information needed and the relative value of the kinds of information obtained from employers." (Asche:1980) Another important consideration is the clear and concise definition of terms with special attention given to vocational education students. "What constitutes a vocational education must be clearly defined in order for data on employer satisfaction to be of any real value to the vocational education system." (Asche:1980) With

understandable definitions, the quality of the information is greatly improved and, therefore, the value of the research as a whole will be more beneficial. The position of the individual filling out the research instrument in relationship to the former vocational education student has a major influence on whether the individual or the program is being evaluated. "The satisfaction expressed by employers will depend upon the amount of contact with responsibility for the employee. The line supervisor's ratings will vary from the personnel director's ratings and from the central administration's ratings." (Asche:1980) The closer the respondent is to the direct supervision of the vocational education completer, the more reliable the information gathered. "Data which are carefully collected from persons who are qualified to respond appear to be a rich source of evaluation information..." (Asche:1980)

The area of evaluating employers satisfaction is still in the developing stages, and therefore, lends itself to innovation and latitude in developing research methodology. An important consideration deals with clear definitions of terms and programs. Another, and possibly the most important consideration, is the relationship of the person answering the survey with the employee.

Impact of Educators

"Most teachers would agree that attitudes should be caught and not taught, but in a terminal, vocational class a program of planned "intervention" is justified." (Kornblatt:1981) It is a general concensus that business educators have other responsibilities in addition to teaching the skills necessary for aquiring a job. Snyder makes reference to the importance of attitudes: "In most office education classes, we teach those skills that will enable our students to become proficient office employees, but there is something else that will ultimately determine whether our students succeed or fail - their attitudes." (Snyder:1982) A similar feeling is stated by Reese: "Secretarial teachers, especially, have an obligation to the local business community--as well as an important responsibility to students--to ensure that classroom instruction teaches both the job skills and attitudes needed in modern business offices." (Reese:1983)

In addition to attitudes, a sense of responsibility, decision-making skills, and problem solving are areas that must be included in the instructional plans for office education.

> "Students must be brought to accept that, although there may not be a single "right" response to a given situtation, they must accept the consequences of their responses. They must achieve understanding of the nature of responsibility - being in charge of themselves - and the legal and moral implications of their personal decisions and actions." (Daggett:1983)

The instructional units dealing with the affective domain should emphasize the acceptability of students decisions with the standards of behavior set by business and society. "Our role as business educators in the affective domain is to teach the general legal and ethical requirements of employment and the ranges of standards of behavior required by employers." (Daggett:1983) It follows that evaluation is an equally important component of the overall instructional plan.

> "While the extreme importance of affective domain instruction has been equally honored, it is only recently that educators have attempted formal evaluation of their students' skills in this domain, which encompasses such complex areas as decision making, self-awareness, and interpersonal relations." (Daggett:1983)

As Oakley stated: "Learning how to organize work and set priorities is not an easy task, but it is a skill that can be developed." (Oakley:1982) Education must include this important subject matter into the curriculum.

The responsibility for instilling attitudes appropriate to the business world rests with business educators. Instructional units must also include decision-making skills, problem solving, and a sense of responsibility. It is important that students learn to make decisions that meet the standards required by business. A necessary component of any instructional unit is the method for evaluating materials and concepts presented.

Views From Business and Industry

Business leaders are positive about vocational education. "First and foremost has come the documented realization that vocational education is perceived by the business community as being one of the more successful components of public education..." (Broadbent:1982) However, there are still areas in which progress can be made. "They (directors of personnel) do not appear to know what counselors and placement officers do..." (Fifth Annual:1983) The communication and cooperation between business and education needs to be strengthened.

> "Business and industry needs a reliable source of trained personnel and a forum for the exchange of ideas. Vocational education needs a marketplace for its graduates, training sites for its student, and a practical base from which new and revised technology may be identified." (Asche:1980)

The same emphasis on cooperation between business and education is felt by education.

> "Industry needs the trained and competent graduates of our programs. We (education) need the advice and support of the business community to keep our programs operating. Today, more than ever before, it is vital that industry and education work together as partners, sharing interests and resources, for our mutual benefit." (Reese:1983)

As part of the idea of cooperation, business leaders are supportive of cooperative education. "They (employers) also frequently expressed the opinion that a student should have experienced work on a part-time basis either through a

cooperative education program or an after-school job before they solicit full-time employment." (Fifth Annual:1983) Employers also feel that this type of learning situation has additional benefits. "They felt that such experiences provided students with a realistic view of the world of work." (Broadbent:1982)

The education community must be the leaders in developing the needed rapport between business and education. "We must actively promote our training programs to employers." (Reese:1983) Educators must solicit help and input for their programs from business personnel. "Rather than sit back and wait for the business community to come to us, we must begin now to actively organize industry support." (Reese:1983) One method of getting that input is from federally mandated advisory committees. "Our advisory committee meetings must be vehicles for candid two-way communication." (Reese:1983)

There are areas of information that business leaders can supply on the importance of vocational education. "Business can share employment projections and labor market data with trustees, administrators, counselors, students, and parents." (Reese:1983) Local schools are at present meeting the need to improve the quality of education by increasing basic requirements and, therefore, are limiting access to electives. "Responsible community leaders are needed to intercede with local boards of education who,

however reluctantly, are making difficult but sweeping program cuts--especially in "elective" areas." (Reese:1983) An opposing view to this solution is that: "More is not necessarily better. Diversity may be more responsive to the problem." (Unfinished Agenda:1984)

There are several different approaches that business can take to help school officials understand the importance of vocational education programs. "Top management of local industry can speak out about the need for graduates of our training programs." (Reese:1983) Employers can also aid in adding information for specific areas of vocational education. "Working cooperatively with local employers, we can enhance the image of secretaries and more effectively promote office careers to students, parents, and counselors." (Reese:1983) The overall feelings are that input from business has a valuable place in program planning. "Employer feedback data do have the potential of assisting planners in modifying programs, developing better guidance services, and providing information for program assessment and other uses." (Asche:1980)

Industry and business need and want cooperation with education. Employers feel that students need a training situation in which to use concepts and skills learned in the classroom. This allows students to view the world of work realistically and allows business to add input to the knowledge base of future employees.

Business education programs can also benefit from closer ties with industry. In order to keep the business programs up-to-date, close contact must be maintained with business through guest speakers and field trips. The needs and concerns of business can be voiced through advisory councils to the administration and the school board. With the present move to increase basic requirements, the information presented from business leaders can give possible alternatives for meeting the needs of all the students. This can aid the business department in planning and implementing changes to better meet the demands of future job markets.

Interaction Between Business and Education

The field of office occupations is making rapid changes in the area of technology. "The requirements for the office worker will continue to change as technology and time interact; this dynamic state mandates an ongoing dialogue between the classroom teacher and the office supervisor." (Baumgardner:1981) With visits to the "real" world of work, students, teachers, and counselors can gain a more realistic view of the changes taking place in the office of today. "Business firms can open their facilities for on-site visits from counselors and students to demonstrate the new image of modern "high tech" offices." (Reese:1983)

"Historically, it is well known that more workers are discharged because of behavioral problems than because of their inability to perform job tasks." (Daggett:1983) Non-technical skills, those other than requisite job skills, continue to be considered important by employers. "The modern office expects more than technical skills of the beginning worker." (Baumgardner:1981) This need is being continuously communicated to education.

> "At present, there is a serious need for a continuing supply of trained secretarial and office workers--for a pool of potential new employees who have good basic skills, human relations skills, and communication skills in addition to requisite skills." (Reese:1983)

The future will place even more emphasis on these non-technical skills. "Business leaders indicate that with the changing work environment our graduates will face, these skills will take on even greater importance..." (Daggett:1983) Education must be prepared to instruct and evaluate the affective domain with greater efficiency. Many times these skills, and how well they are implemented, are responsible for enabling a student to move forward from a group of prospective employees and obtain the position.

> "According to personnel administrators, those persons able to project an aura of confidence through the spoken word during a job interview are often more impressive than others who may be equally qualified for a position, but lack the skill to communicate in an affective, persuasive manner." (Purdy:1983)

Technology is causing rapid changes in the area of office occupations. As a result of these rapid changes, non-technical skills will become more important in the future. Students must be instructed and evaluated in the affective domain if they are to move forward in the job market.

Importance of Attitudes

"Employers welcome positive young people with a willingness to learn. They feel that many younger workers have unrealistic expectations and do not feel the need to develop a good work record." (Fifth Annual:1984) There are many attributes and attitudes that will spell success or failure for employees. "But the attributes that make for success or failure have to do with understandings and their resultant behavior that either advance or hinder workflow and productivity." (Baumgardner:1981) It is also important how employees react to situations in the world of work. Employees need to keep a positive attitude as they are integrated into the world of work. "Recognition that the criticism is directed toward the product or the manner of production rather than toward the individual will help the worker react in a positive fashion." (Baumgardner:1981)

The value of personality factors and attitudes has continued to be of great importance for a period of time. "The exhibition of these characteristics will earn them top

evaluation marks, promotions, and higher pay, not to mention personal satisfaction. Conversely, poor attitudes may result in dead-end jobs, personal dissatisfaction and unhappiness, or even dismissal from work." (Snyder:1983) Willett stated: "Personality factors were most often cited as areas of strength or weakness." (Willett:1973) Ten years later the same point was made by Snyder: "Even a cursory examination of employment evaluation forms indicates that attitudes play a large role in employee evaluation." (Snyder:1983)

Employer satisfaction results show that in most areas vocational graduates are rated higher than non-vocational graduates. In a study done by Gell, graduates were asked to identify their employers. A questionnaire was then mailed to those employers with a 65 percent return rate. The results were noted by Gell: "Graduates were rated highest on ability to communicate, ability to get along with coworkers, and overall attitude." (Gell:1976) In a similar study which was done to gather information about employer's attitudes toward Ohio's vocational education programs, Talarzyk stated in the findings that: "Vocational graduates received the highest rating on all worker attributes except responsibility and ability to work with others." (Talarzyk:1975) In two different studies done in 1977 by Morton and the American College Testing Service, the findings were somewhat similar. Morton's study had a

response rate of 69 percent which was achieved on a mailed questionnaire sent to randomly selected employers identified by full-time employees, who had graduated from the program. The results indicated that 37 percent of the employers felt vocational students made excellent employees, 41 percent of the employers felt they were good employees, and 15 percent responded that vocational students made just average employees. Morton made reference to several specific items:

> "Results showed that the majority of employers rated the graduates average or above average on the following items: quality of work, quantity of work, willingness to accept responsibility, ability to work without supervision, willingness to learn and improve, and several other items." (Morton:1977)

The ACT test was designed as a pilot study to see if employer evaluations could be collected and analyzed effectively. The findings from this pilot study reported that: "Employers were generally satisfied with the quality and quantity of work, job skills, technical knowledge, work attendance, punctuality, cooperation, and compliance of graduates." (American College Testing:1977)

These same findings have been reported in more recent research findings. In three successive reports from the State of Hawaii the reports are the same. These studies were part of a five-year plan to evaluate the total vocational program within the State of Hawaii. The primary method of collecting the data was personal interviews with personnel directors and vice presidents of personnel. The

businesses were considered medium size in regard to the number of employees and were primarily service oriented. The findings from each of the three years were much the same.

> "One of the most critical items on the interview schedule involved a comparison of new employees with vocational education backgrounds in high school with those without such an experience. Of the total sample, 71.4% asserted that those taking occupational training in high school were "better prepared" for the world of work than those without such training." (Broadbent:1980)

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In addition to there being a demand for employees that are willing to learn, employers are looking for people that have a positive attitude toward the world of work and toward themselves. Personality attributes are important to moving forward and not being restricted to dead end jobs with no future. Results of employer satisfaction surveys indicated that in the area of attributes and attitudes, vocational

students have been rated higher than students without a vocational education background.

Summary

The literature emphasized the need for vocational education to help prepare students for the world of work. There was considerable evidence that business and education must cooperate in the development and assessment of vocational education programs. Business continues to stress to education the importance of attitudes and attributes within the affective domain. Many times these skills and attitudes will determine the student's future success on the job. Research showed that vocational students were rated higher than non-vocational students in the area of non-technical skills. Therefore, education must continue to integrate the concepts of non-technical skills into business education classes.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The general purpose of this study was to determine the importance of non-technical skills to the successful employment of business education completers in the State of Montana.

This chapter was organized to:

1. describe the population,
2. describe the survey instrument,
3. describe the administration of the survey instrument, and
4. describe the procedure for analysis of data.

Description of the Population

A survey of Montana businesses was conducted to evaluate the importance of non-technical skills of high school business education completers. When students are placed in cooperative education positions, an agreement is drawn up and signed by the student, the employer, and the supervising instructor. The agreement details the type of work experiences that the student will be involved with

during the cooperative work assignment. Copies of these agreements must be sent to the Office of Public Instruction in Helena. A list of names of businesses that had employed office education cooperative students was obtained from the Cooperative Education Division located in the Office of Public Instruction. The names were taken from cooperative agreements for the years 1979 through 1984. All communities which had cooperative office education agreements on file for this five year period were represented. It was determined that communities with cooperative programs were representative of the population as a whole. Because of the nature of this kind of educational program, the larger communities were more heavily represented. However, there were a number of communities with populations of four to ten thousand, and several communities of less than four thousand population.

The names and addresses of these businesses were listed and randomly assigned numbers 1 through 478. It was determined that a sample population of 200 would be selected from the total identified population. It was felt that 200 would be a good representation of the business population in the State of Montana. A table of random numbers was used to select the sample population of 200.

Description of the Survey Instrument

A copy of the survey instrument is found in appendix A. The first three questions of Part I of the survey instrument were designed in part to gather information about the number of total employees, whether any of those employees had taken business courses in high school, and the approximate number of those employees who were business education completers. The fourth question in Part I asked business personnel to assess the job done by business education programs in five categories: broad educational background, verbal skills, specific work skills related to training program taken, positive work attitudes and good work habits, and effective human relations. There were two parts to question number five. Employers were asked to identify which of the five categories was the single most important to their firm, and which was the single least important category to their firm from the five items listed in question number four.

The sixth question asked employers to compare business education graduates as employees with those employees who had not graduated from a business education program. The following scale was used for comparison.

a. Superior to graduates without a business education background
b. Somewhat better than graduates without a business education background

c. No better than graduates without a business education background

d. Not as good as graduates without a business education background

The final question of Part I dealt with the amount of input the business employer felt he/she had in the local business education program.

Parts II and III were developed by Dr. William Stull of Utah State University, and the test-retest method of validation was done by Dr. Ron Harris of Montana State University for use in his doctoral dissertation. Part II consists of thirty non-technical employment qualities that employers were asked to rate on a scale of 1-4, as to level of importance.

1. No Importance
2. Limited Importance
3. Important
4. Extremely Important

Part III contained thirty characteristics and attitudes that employers were asked to rate as to level of importance on a scale from one to four. The scale used in Part II was used again in Part III. Employers were asked to rate the necessity of students possessing these characteristics when they seek employment.

Administration of the Survey Instrument

A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a three-page survey form, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope were sent to each business in the population sample on Feburary 7, 1985,. After a three-week period ending February 28, 1985, 106 surveys were returned giving a return rate of almost 58 percent. As a result of this return rate it was determined that a follow-up letter was not needed.

Analysis of the Data

The individual responses to each of the questions were totaled and a percentage figure was computed based on the number of responses returned. By reporting percentage figures, it became apparent which characteristics were viewed as more important and which characteristics were viewed as less important in students seeking employment in Montana businesses. It was felt that the use of percentages would be the best method of interpreting the raw data. The results of the questionnaire were used to produce tables which were listed according to questionnaire number and then broken into percentages to help clarify the results. The findings and resulting tabulations are presented in Chapter IV.

Summary

The population of this study consisted of employers in the State of Montana who had been identified as employers of business education completers. An instrument was constructed to meet the objectives of the study. A random sample was selected and a survey with an accompanying cover letter and a self-addressed, stamped envelope were sent out February 7, 1985. The return rate was determined sufficient that a follow-up was not needed. The findings are presented in percentage form in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The importance of non-technical skills possessed by secondary business education students seeking employment was assessed by Montana business personnel. Businesses were identified from training agreements for the years 1979 through 1984. In addition to gathering information concerning the quality of the product and programs of business education, the first part of the study gathered information about the size of the businesses and the background of employees. A list of characteristics and a list of qualities were sent to businesses to be rated on a four-point Likert scale from extremely important to no importance.

There was no attempt to code or identify responses to encourage a larger number of returns. One mailing of 200 questionnaires and cover letters resulted in a return rate of 58 percent, with 106 useable surveys of the 116 received. It was determined that this was sufficient; therefore, a second follow-up mailing was not done.

The questions are presented in numerical order from Part I of the questionnaire, with the findings shown in table form.

Table 1

Question 1.1: NUMBER OF PERSONS PRESENTLY EMPLOYED BY YOUR FIRM.

Number of employees	#	%
1 - 10	54	50.9%
11 - 25	22	20.8%
26 - 50	10	9.4%
51 - 75	3	2.8%
76 - 100	6	5.7%
100 - plus	6	5.7%
no answer	5	4.7%
Total	106	100.0%

Although most of the businesses surveyed were located in the larger communities, more than half of the businesses were very small in size. This would support the idea that Montana is a state of many small businesses.

Table 2

Question 1.2: DO YOU HAVE ANY EMPLOYEES WHO TOOK BUSINESS COURSES DURING THEIR HIGH SCHOOL YEARS?

Businesses with Employees with Business Courses	#	%
Yes	93	87.7%
No	4	3.8%
Don't Know	9	8.5%
Total	106	100.0%

It would appear that businesses in Montana hire employees who have taken business courses at the secondary level.

Table 3

Question 1.3: IF YOU HAVE SUCH EMPLOYEES, WHAT IS THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER:

Employees with Business Courses	#	%
0 - 5	56	52.8%
6 - 10	17	16.0%
11 - 24	13	12.3%
25 - plus	8	7.5%
non-applicable	1	.9%
no answer	11	10.4%
Total	106	99.9%

These findings follow closely the findings from question 1.1. With the majority of businesses in Montana very small, the number of employees having taken business courses would also be small. However, when the number of firms with 1 - 10 employees (50.9 percent) is compared to the number of firms with 0 - 10 employees with a business education background (68.8 percent), it is apparent that a majority of Montana businesses employ personnel with a background in business education courses.

Table 4

Question 1.4: HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE JOB DONE BY THE BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

Areas of Business Education Programs	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NO OPINION
broad educational background	34.0%	40.6%	7.5%	17.9%
verbal skills	22.6%	50.0%	12.2%	15.1%
specific work skills related to training program taken	37.7%	34.9%	7.5%	19.8%
positive work attitudes and good work habits	44.3%	33.0%	11.3%	11.3%
effective human relations (communicates and works well with others)	37.7%	43.4%	4.7%	14.1%

Although the vast majority rated the business programs as either good or fair, there doesn't seem to be a clear consensus on this question. One explanation might be the number of different programs the employers are rating. An employer in one city in the State may rate a program highly, where another employer in the State rates the program he/she is familiar with lower. A second explanation might be that an employer doesn't know which programs their employees have taken, and rates all programs at the level of their highest or lowest qualified employee.

Table 5

Question 1.5.a: WHICH OF THE ABOVE ITEMS (REFERS TO QUESTION 1.4.a THROUGH 1.4.e) IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOUR FIRM?

Areas of Business Education Programs	#	%
Broad educational background	3	2.8%
Verbal skills	1	.9%
Specific work skills related to training program taken	12	11.3%
Positive work attitudes and good work habits	58	54.7%
Effective human relations (communicates and works well with other)	28	26.4%
No answer	4	3.8%
Total	106	99.9%

The majority of the business firms completing the survey stated that the area of POSITIVE WORK ATTITUDES AND GOOD WORK HABITS was the most important to their businesses. This would indicate that business personnel feel strongly about the importance of the non-technical skills of their employees.

Table 6

Question 1.5.b: WHICH OF THE ABOVE ITEMS (REFERS TO QUESTION 1.4.a THROUGH 1.4.a) IS THE SINGLE LEAST IMPORTANT TO YOUR FIRM?

Areas of Business Education Programs	#	%
Broad educational background	61	57.5%
Verbal skills	9	8.5%
Specific work skills related to training program taken	30	28.3%
Positive work attitudes and good work habits	0	0.0%
Effective human relations (communicates and works well with others	3	2.8%
No answer	3	2.8%
Total	106	99.9%

It would appear that a majority of the business firms feel that the BROAD EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND of employees is not nearly as important to the success of the employee and the firm as their (the employees) work habits and attitudes.

Table 7

Question 1.6: WOULD YOU SAY THAT GRADUATES OF HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE:

Quality of Business Education Graduates	#	%
Superior to graduates without a business education background	16	15.1%
Somewhat better than graduates without a business education background	59	55.7%
No better than graduates without a business education background	26	24.5%
Not as good as graduates without a business education background	1	.9%
No answer	4	3.8%
Total	106	100.0%

Although a wide majority of the business firms felt that business education graduates were either superior or somewhat better employees than those without a business education background, there was a substantial group, 24.5 percent, that felt that business education graduates were no better than those without a business education background.

Table 8

Question 1.7: DO PRIVATE EMPLOYERS HAVE INPUT INTO LOCAL BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMS?

Input Into Local Program	#	%
No input	41	38.7%
Limited input	50	47.2%
Substantial input	7	6.6%
No answer	8	7.5%
Total	106	100.0%

The findings would indicate that business firms don't feel they have enough, if any, input into local business education programs. Research points to the importance of communication and cooperation between education and business and industry. This would seem to be an area in which Montana business personnel do not feel their opinions are being adequately considered.

Part II of the survey asked business firms to rate the of importance for each item stated below as to its necessity for students seeking employment. All items are non-technical employment qualities.

Table 9

Non-Technical Employment Qualities	No Importance	Limited Importance	Important	Extremely Important
1. Follow instructions which are given	2.9%	0.0%	21.2%	75.9%
2. Arrive for work and appointments on time	2.9%	.9%	26.9%	69.2%
3. React constructively to conflict situations with customers/clients or other employees	1.9%	4.8%	34.5%	53.8%
4. Use time to the best advantage of the company	.9%	3.8%	42.3%	52.9%
5. Cooperate with supervisor/manager/owner	0.0%	3.8%	45.2%	51.0%
6. Cooperate with fellow workers	.9%	2.9%	46.2%	50.0%
7. Participate as a team member in the organization	.9%	8.6%	46.2%	44.2%
8. Use the telephone in a businesslike manner	2.9%	5.8%	48.1%	43.3%
9. Perform responsibilities in a thorough manner	0.0%	1.9%	55.8%	41.3%
10. Show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed	.9%	8.6%	53.8%	36.5%
11. Cope with change and new procedures on the job	1.9%	6.7%	56.7%	34.6%
12. Show tact in relationships with others	.9%	7.7%	55.8%	34.6%
13. Communicate effectively with others	.9%	6.7%	57.7%	33.6%
14. Have positive self-concept and be self-confident	.9%	7.7%	57.7%	33.6%
15. Create a positive first impression when meeting others	.9%	12.5%	52.9%	33.6%

Table 9 (continued)

Non-Technical Employment Qualities	No Importance	Limited Importance	Important	Extremely Important
16. Demonstrate motivation to achieve on the job	.9%	7.7%	58.6%	32.7%
17. Show initiative to perform on the job	1.9%	3.8%	62.5%	30.8%
18. Have a personal appearance suitable for the job	.9%	8.6%	59.6%	30.8%
19. Use correct English skills such as grammar	0.0%	20.2%	49.0%	29.8%
20. Demonstrate a pleasant personality	0.0%	16.3%	53.8%	28.8%
21. Perform basic mathematical skills	1.9%	21.2%	48.1%	28.8%
22. Maintain good health for the job	1.9%	12.5%	60.6%	25.0%
23. Display social skills and conduct acceptable to others	1.9%	14.4%	62.5%	21.2%
24. Support the concept of the free enterprise system	10.6%	36.5%	31.7%	21.2%
25. Take criticism when shown what has been done incorrectly	.9%	12.5%	67.3%	19.2%
26. Work in harmony with others whose values and beliefs differ	0.0%	14.4%	67.3%	18.3%
27. Deal with prejudice in business	2.9%	39.4%	42.3%	15.4%
28. Adapt to many varying types of personality styles when communicating	.9%	37.7%	51.9%	13.4%
29. Participate in constructive self-disclosure	8.6%	38.5%	35.6%	13.4%
30. Accept the changing role of men/women in business	6.7%	41.3%	41.3%	10.6%

The items of Part II (shown in Table 9) are listed in rank order from the most important to the least important. The two items that received the highest ratings were: FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS WHICH ARE GIVEN (75.9 percent) and ARRIVE FOR WORK AND APPOINTMENTS ON TIME (69.2

percent). In the opinion of employers, it would appear that these two items are essential for prospective secondary students seeking employment.

The items: COOPERATE WITH SUPERVISOR/MANAGER/OWNER (51.0 percent), COOPERATE WITH FELLOW WORKERS (50.0 percent), and PARTICIPATE AS A TEAM MEMBER IN THE ORGANIZATION (44.2 percent) were rated successively fifth, sixth, and seventh. The general concept of cooperation seems to be interrelated in these three items and important for employees to possess.

Items ranked ninth and tenth: PERFORM RESPONSIBILITIES IN A THOROUGH MANNER and SHOW ENTHUSIASM FOR THE TASK TO BE PERFORMED, were rated as important by a majority of the businesses surveyed. This would indicate that employers prefer employees who complete their work in a satisfactory manner and, in addition, have positive attitudes toward their work.

A prospective employee's SUPPORT OF THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM did not seem to have any clear rating by business employers. It received ratings of 21.2 percent for extremely important, 31.7 percent for important, 36.5 percent limited importance, and 10.6 percent felt it had no importance to an employee. This would tend to indicate that when employers are hiring entry-level employees, their skill level and attitudes toward the job are viewed as more

important than their opinions concerning our economic system.

The items that were ranked 26, 27, and 28 are concerned with working, dealing, and communicating with people who hold different beliefs and values than the employee. Employers view these qualities as important but not extremely important. The lowest ranked item, ACCEPT THE CHANGING ROLE OF MEN/WOMEN IN BUSINESS, received the same rating (41.3 percent) for both limited importance and important. This quality would appear to have little importance to the secondary business student when seeking employment in Montana businesses.

Part III of the instrument asked business personnel to rank by circling the level of importance for each attitude or characteristic stated below as they reviewed its necessity for students seeking employment from business education programs. The responses are shown on Table 10.

Table 10

Attitudes and Characteristices	No Importance	Limited Importance	Important	Extremely Important
1. Honest	0.0%	0.0%	14.7%	85.3%
2. Ethical	0.0%	2.9%	31.2%	65.7%
3. Courteous	0.0%	2.0%	44.1%	53.9%
4. Professional	0.0%	2.0%	46.1%	52.0%
5. Responsible	0.0%	0.0%	49.0%	51.0%
6. Polite	0.0%	5.9%	45.1%	49.0%
7. Loyal	0.0%	7.8%	44.1%	48.0%
8. Ambitious	0.0%	9.8%	49.0%	41.2%
9. Enthusiastic	0.0%	5.9%	54.9%	39.2%
10. Mature	0.0%	4.9%	56.9%	38.2%
11. Helpful	0.0%	3.9%	60.8%	35.3%
12. People-oriented	0.9%	10.8%	52.9%	35.3%
13. Tactful	0.0%	2.0%	64.7%	33.3%
14. Dedicated	0.0%	6.8%	60.8%	32.4%
15. Obedient	0.9%	26.5%	43.1%	29.4%
16. Understanding	0.0%	11.8%	60.8%	27.4%
17. Self-controlled	0.0%	5.9%	65.7%	28.4%
18. Cheerful	0.0%	6.8%	64.7%	28.4%
19. Adaptable	0.0%	8.8%	62.7%	28.4%
20. Self-confident	0.9%	5.9%	67.6%	25.5%
21. Logical	0.0%	9.8%	64.7%	25.5%
22. Persistent	0.9%	22.5%	54.9%	21.6%
23. Forgiving	0.9%	29.4%	51.0%	18.6%
24. Independent	4.9%	26.5%	52.0%	16.7%
25. Imaginative	0.9%	23.5%	60.8%	14.7%
26. Sociable	0.9%	29.4%	58.8%	10.8%
27. Intellectual	4.9%	30.4%	55.9%	8.8%
28. Courageous	7.8%	52.9%	30.4%	8.8%
29. Humorous	6.9%	46.1%	39.2%	7.8%
30. Religious	48.0%	32.4%	18.6%	0.9%

The characteristic of HONESTY was ranked as extremely important by an overwhelming majority (85.3 percent) of

Montana business personnel. This would indicate that employers are very concerned about the honesty of their workers. A large majority of employers (65.7 percent) felt that an attitude of ETHICS was an extremely important characteristic in employees. This corresponds with the high ranking of HONESTY.

The characteristic of OBEDIENCE had almost equal numbers of employers that felt it was extremely important (29.4 percent), and who felt it had only limited importance (26.5 percent). This situation was repeated with the characteristic of PERSISTENCE with 21.6 percent feeling it was extremely important and 22.5 percent feeling it had limited importance. The diversity of the ratings could be the result of the diversity of employers completing the survey. An attitude or characteristic that is very important in one type of business may only have limited importance in a different type of business. In a medical office, it would seem to be extremely important that the directives and orders given by the doctor be followed exactly as given--OBEDIENCE. In an advertising office, directions may be given in very general terms, and the employee is expected to add his/her own creative energy to that particular project. For those people employed by a legal office, persistence would be a valuable characteristic because of the legal consequences; there is no margin for error--PERSISTENCE. The employee must persist with a

particular task until it is done correctly. However, in the newspaper publishing business time is a luxury they don't always have. In the limited time available, it is more important to verify the accuracy of a story than the structural format.

It was somewhat surprising that only 8.8 percent of business employers felt that the characteristic of intelligence was extremely important. A possible explanation could be that at entry-level employment, other characteristics are simply more important than a high level of intelligence.

The religious characteristic was viewed as having no importance by 48.0 percent of business personnel. This would seem to say that employers are more concerned with attitudes and characteristics that are directly involved with the business than their religious beliefs.

Summary

Of the 200 surveys sent to selected business personnel in Montana, 116 were returned and 106 were deemed useable. The majority of those who responded were very small in size, but they did employ many people who had taken business education courses during high school. The areas of POSITIVE WORK ATTITUDES and GOOD WORK HABITS were found to be the most important attributes to the majority of employers, and a BROAD EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND was found to be the least

important attribute to the majority of the firms surveyed. A majority of those completing the survey stated that business education graduates made somewhat better employees than those without a background in business education. However, only a few of those responding felt they had any substantial input into local business education programs.

The qualities that employers felt that secondary business education students need to possess as they seek employment were ranked and it was determined that FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS AS GIVEN and PUNCTUALITY were most important. On the other hand, PARTICIPATING IN CONSTRUCTIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE and ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHANGING ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN BUSINESS were found to be least important. Attitudes and characteristics were also ranked with HONESTY and ETHICS being the most important. RELIGIOUS attitude was felt to be the least important to employers responding to this study.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The general purpose of this study was to gather and interpret information regarding the level of importance of non-technical attitudes, qualities, and characteristics to the successful job acquisition of secondary business education students as viewed by Montana business personnel. This study was conducted during the period from October 1984 to May 1985. The review of literature showed opinions of both business personnel and educators and stated the necessity of non-technical skills for success in the job market. In order to develop business education programs that will prepare students to enter the job market with these skills, it is critical that there be communication between business and education. Assessing the opinions of business personnel allows the development of business education curriculums which will better prepare students for entry-level employment.

A questionnaire was developed to gather information concerning the opinions of business personnel as related to business education programs, the type of employees business

education students became, and the level of importance of non-technical qualities, attitudes, and characteristics. A population of businesses was selected from training agreements provided by the Office of Public Instruction. Surveys were sent to 200 businesses and 106 of the returned surveys were determined useable for the purposes of this study. Responses were shown in both raw numbers and percentages.

Conclusions

At the beginning of the study, specific questions were established and these were used as a guide during the research process. Each of these questions is stated below with the conclusions that the researcher has drawn.

1. HOW IMPORTANT ARE NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS TO SECONDARY BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN OBTAINING A JOB?

When Montana business personnel were asked to identify the area that was most important to their firm, a majority of those responding stated that POSITIVE WORK ATTITUDES AND GOOD WORK HABITS were the most important qualities. These qualities translate into the broad area of non-technical skills. Business firms felt strongly that it was extremely important that business education completers possess these non-technical skills as they seek employment.

2. WHAT ARE VIEWED AS THE MORE VALUABLE NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS IN OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT?

In the area of non-technical qualities, results of the study showed that FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS and ARRIVING FOR WORK ON TIME were the more important qualities desired by employers. For entry-level employment, it is important that employees follow the directions given to them as to how the work is to be completed. Employers want the work assigned to be completed in the desired manner. It is important that this concept be stressed to business education students.

ARRIVING FOR APPOINTMENTS AND WORK ON TIME was rated as the second most important quality by business personnel. This quality is all part of being dependable. If employees don't come to work on time and don't keep appointments, an employer can't count on or depend on the employee to be and do what they have agreed to do. These two qualities are related in that the employee is given instructions and the expectation is that the instructions will be followed. If the expectations are not realized, the employer must take the time to correct the situation and/or make needed adjustments. This creates wasted time and repetition of effort.

In the area of non-technical characteristics and attitudes, HONESTY and ETHICS were rated as the more important of the thirty items listed. These attitudes are

related to the basic type of individuals the employers want to work in their firms. Employees who are honest and deal with business matters in an ethical manner are an asset to any type of business.

3. DO BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS HAVE THE NECESSARY SKILLS DESIRED BY EMPLOYERS?

When business personnel were asked to evaluate different areas of the business education programs, a large majority felt that the training students were receiving was fair to good. The indication from these findings is that business education students do have adequate non-technical skills, however, these need to be improved.

Employers stated that most of them had employees with a background of business education courses. In addition, a comparison of the number of total employees and the number of those with business courses indicates that a sizeable portion of the total employees have had some background in business education courses. If business education students were not receiving the necessary non-technical skills, employers would not continue to employ large numbers of people with business training.

4. DO NON-BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS HAVE THE SAME NECESSARY NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS?

Although the majority of those responding to the survey felt that business education completers make somewhat better employees than those without a business education

background, there was a significant number of respondents who stated that business education completers were no better employees than those without a background in business. It would seem, therefore, that business completers do make somewhat better employees, but there is considerable room for improvement in this area. Students receiving instruction to prepare them for entry-level employment should clearly make a better employee.

5. DO BUSINESS EDUCATION COURSES CONTRIBUTE TO IMPORTANT NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS NECESSARY FOR JOB SUCCESS?

Of the areas of business programs than employers were asked to rate, POSITIVE WORK ATTITUDES and GOOD WORK HABITS received more good ratings thaN the other components of the business programs. This would indicate that the business programs are providing training which enables students to succeed on the job.

6. DOES THE PRIVATE SECTOR (EMPLOYERS) HAVE ENOUGH, IF ANY, INPUT INTO THE LOCAL BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAM?

The vast majority of responses stated that they had limited, if any, input into the local business education program. Employers don't seem to feel they have adequate input into the development of business curriculums. It is very important that communication between business and education exist if the business programs are to produce graduates that meet the needs of local employees. This

communication is most beneficial if it is two-way and on-going. Both education and business can gain needed information and understanding as a result of this communication.

Recommendations

The results obtained from the study of the importance of non-technical skills provide information to support the following recommendations.

1. Evaluation of business curriculums should include the kind and amount of emphasis the program is placing on non-technical skills. The Office of Public Instruction should consider including this element in the evaluation process.

2. Additional emphasis of non-technical skills in all business courses should be addressed. This should better meet the needs of students as they enter the world of work.

3. Business education curriculums should include preparation of the qualities and attitudes found to be most important to business personnel.

4. Schools with business education programs should work more closely with an advisory council and other business groups to allow greater input into the program.

5. Additional studies should be undertaken to determine if business education programs are preparing

students who can successfully meet the needs of future employers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

104 Grant Chamberlain
Apt. 2H
Bozeman, MT 59715

January 28, 1985

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am presently a graduate student at Montana State University working toward a master's degree in Business Education. A professional paper exploring a subject area of concern is a partial requirement toward that degree.

I would like to ask for your help in gathering information dealing with the importance of non-technical skills in obtaining employment by Business Education completers. I am conducting a survey of Montana business firms, who have been identified as employers of participants of high school business co-op programs.

If you would take about 10 minutes and complete the enclosed survey, the information gathered through the surveys can be used to improve high school business education curriculums. I have enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Cynthia J. Jacobsen

Enclosure

APPENDIX B

NON-TECHNICAL EMPLOYMENT QUALITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS EDUCATION COMPLETERS

I. Please answer the following questions as they apply to employees that have participated in Business Education programs.

1. Number of persons presently employed by your firm. _____

2. Do you have any employees who took business courses during their high school years?
   a. _____yes b. _____no c. _____don't know

3. If you have such employees, is the approximate number:
   a. _____5 or less
   b. _____more than 5, but less than 10
   c. _____more than 10, but less than 25
   d. _____25 or more
   e. _____non-applicable

4. How would you assess the job done by the business education programs in the following areas?

	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
4a. broad educational background	____	____	____	____
4b. verbal skills	____	____	____	____
4c. specific work skills related to training program taken	____	____	____	____
4d. positive work attitudes and good work habits	____	____	____	____
4e. effective human relations (communicates and works well with others)	____	____	____	____

5a. Which of the above items is the single most important to your firm? (circle letter)

a b c d e

5b. Which of the above items is the single least important to your firm? (circle letter)

a b c d e

6. Would you say that graduates of high school business education programs are:
   a. _____ superior to graduates without a business education background
   b. _____ somewhat better than graduates without a business education background
   c. _____ no better than graduates without a business education background
   d. _____ not as good as graduates without a business education background

7. Do private employers have input into local business education programs?
   _____ no _____ limited _____ substantial

II. Please rate by circling the level of importance for each item stated below and on the following pages as you review its necessity for students seeking employment. All items are non-technical employment qualities.

---

1. No Importance
2. Limited Importance
3. Important
4. Extremely Important

How important is it for a business education student to:

1.	Arrive for work and appointments on time.	1 2 3 4
2.	Follow instructions which are given.	1 2 3 4
3.	Show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed.	1 2 3 4
4.	Have positive self-concept and be self-confident.	1 2 3 4
5.	Have a personal appearance suitable for the job.	1 2 3 4
6.	Cooperate with fellow workers.	1 2 3 4
7.	Use time to the best advantage of the company.	1 2 3 4
8.	Show tact in relationships with others.	1 2 3 4
9.	Demonstrate motivation to achieve on the job.	1 2 3 4
10.	Perform responsibilities in a thorough manner.	1 2 3 4
11.	Take criticism when shown what has been done incorrectly.	1 2 3 4
12.	Show initiative to perform on the job.	1 2 3 4
13.	Cooperate wih supervisor/manager/owner.	1 2 3 4
14.	Display social skills and conduct acceptable to others.	1 2 3 4
15.	Communicate effectively with others.	1 2 3 4
16.	Demonstrate a pleasant personality.	1 2 3 4
17.	Use correct English skills such as grammar.	1 2 3 4
18.	React constructively to conflict situations with customers/clients or other employees.	1 2 3 4
19.	Use the telephone in a businesslike manner.	1 2 3 4
20.	Create a positive first impression when meeting others.	1 2 3 4
21.	Participate in constructive self-disclosure.	1 2 3 4
22.	Adapt to many varying types of personality styles when communicating.	1 2 3 4
23.	Work in harmony with other whose values and beliefs differ.	1 2 3 4
24.	Accept the changing role of men/women in business.	1 2 3 4
25.	Deal with prejudice in business.	1 2 3 4
26.	Maintain good health for the job.	1 2 3 4
27.	Participate as a team member in the organization.	1 2 3 4
28.	Cope with change and new procedures on the job.	1 2 3 4
29.	Perform basic mathematical skills	1 2 3 4
30.	Support the concept of the free enterprise system.	1 2 3 4

III. Please rank by circling the level of importance for each attitude or characteristic stated below as you review its necessity for students seeking employement from business education programs.

1. No Importance
2. Limited Importance
3. Important
4. Extremely Important

1.	Adaptable	1	2	3	4	16.	Logical	1	2	3	4
2.	Ambitious	1	2	3	4	17.	Loyal	1	2	3	4
3.	Cheerful	1	2	3	4	18.	Mature	1	2	3	4
4.	Courageous	1	2	3	4	19.	Obedient	1	2	3	4
5.	Courteous	1	2	3	4	20.	Persistent	1	2	3	4
6.	Dedicated	1	2	3	4	21.	People-oriented	1	2	3	4
7.	Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	22.	Polite	1	2	3	4
8.	Ethical	1	2	3	4	23.	Professional	1	2	3	4
9.	Forgiving	1	2	3	4	24.	Religious	1	2	3	4
10.	Helpful	1	2	3	4	25.	Responsible	1	2	3	4
11.	Honest	1	2	3	4	26.	Self-confident	1	2	3	4
12.	Humorous	1	2	3	4	27.	Self-controlled	1	2	3	4
13.	Imaginative	1	2	3	4	28.	Sociable	1	2	3	4
14.	Independent	1	2	3	4	29.	Tactful	1	2	3	4
15.	Intellectual	1	2	3	4	30.	Understanding	1	2	3	4