EMPLOYERS' CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF JOB SKILL LEVELS OF VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT CLASS EMPLOYEES

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

BY
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To the Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Diana Schmittou and entitled “Employers’ Current Perceptions of Job Skill Levels of Vocational Adjustment Class Employees.” I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Special Education.

E. Jane Irons, Major Advisor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Department Chair

Dean, College of Education and Human and Human Ecology

Accepted

Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies
DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate my work to my husband Mitch and our children; Crystal, Catrina, Chad, and Clay. Without their patience, love, encouragement, and help, I would not and could not have reached this phase in my education.
ABSTRACT

EMPLOYERS’ CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF JOB SKILL LEVELS OF VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT CLASS EMPLOYEES

Diana Ruth Preuninger Schmittou, B.S.

Master’s Thesis, August 1998

The intent of this study was to examine employers’ and vocational adjustment class instructors’ perceptions of the academic, self-help, and job skills of special education students in vocational placements. The study intended to compare the perceptions of the employers with the perceptions of the vocational adjustment class instructors. This study did not produce the intended results because of the poor rate of return of completed questionnaires. In light of the recent focus and additional requirements for transition planning and the additional requirements for high school graduation, perceptions from employers concerning the job skills of special education students in job placements is vital to insure appropriate vocational planning and training for each special education student. Thus, additional research to gather information from employers should be conducted. In addition, research to study the certification requirements, educational training, and need for continued training for vocational adjustment class instructors also should be conducted.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

"Living successfully in one's community should be the primary target of transition" (Heward, 1996, p. 697). When students leave the sheltered secondary school environment to enter the adult world of a community, their lives take on change. This change is called transition (Heward, 1996). School personnel long have known that students with moderate to severe disabilities (emotional disturbance, physical disabilities, and mental retardation) require transition services to successfully merge into the world outside the local high school (Bassett & Smith, 1996).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendment (IDEA, PL 101-476) of 1990 mandated that transition services must be initiated for special education students by their 16th birthday. Transition services include providing students with help in the areas of education, employment, transportation/leisure, medical/health, financial/income, and residential/living settings. However, Adelman and Vogel (1990) reported that 43% of adults with disabilities and their families felt that these adults need additional educational and vocational services to function successfully in their jobs. In addition, 27% of adults felt that their disabilities affect job performance.
Current review of the literature suggested that the transition process for high school students with learning disabilities would produce employees with improved job skill, if the process utilized input from employers concerning required job skills, communication skills, social skills, and prerequisite vocational skills that students with disabilities need for on-the-job success (Dowdy, 1996; Holton, 1992; Lichtenstein, 1993; Wehman, 1990). In the state of Texas, transition is a multi-agency collaborative process governed by the Memorandum of Understanding (Division of Special Education, 1994).

In 1991 and 1992, the United States Department of Labor published SCANS Report for America 2000. These reports addressed employers’ concerns that young adults entering the work force had not mastered academic and vocational skills needed for entry-level jobs. These reports further informed employers that individuals entering the work force would continue to lack prerequisite entry-level skills until employers began collaboration with schools to improve the transition process for all students, not just special education students (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991, 1992).

Only 46% of adults with disabilities were employed (Blackorby & Wagoner, 1996). Research has found that 75% of employed adults with disabilities were working part-time for minimum wage in unskilled jobs (Ramasamy, 1996). Approximately 70% of adults with disabilities hold occupational aspirations lower than adults without
disabilities (Rojewski, 1996). Lack of self-advocacy has been reported as a significant problem for students and adults with disabilities in the job market (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Feldman & Messerli, 1995; Gerber, Ginsber, & Reiff, 1992). Poteet (1995) found that employers identified written expression as a weakness in 80% of their employees from the general population. However, this research did not address the written expression skills of employees with learning disabilities.

There is a lack of current research regarding the specific vocational skills needed by students with learning disabilities to fill entry-level positions. Perspectives of employers of students with learning disabilities supervised by vocational adjustment teachers are unclear. There is a need to investigate employers' perspectives of the skills needed by these students specifically in the areas of self-advocacy, self-expression, reading, math, and social skills.

Problem Statement

Research has indicated that adults with disabilities experience high levels of unemployment and that employers need to become involved in the transition process of high school students. Employers of general population adults report their employees were weak in the areas of written expression and reading skills. However, there is a lack of research that specifically identifies the academic and vocational skills that special education students need to
successfully fill entry-level jobs. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the entry-level skills of vocational students with disabilities in field job placements from perceptions of their employers.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) design and field test a survey instrument to gather information concerning prerequisite job skills needed for entry-level positions by students with learning disabilities, (b) survey current employers of high school students in vocational field positions to identify job prerequisite skills and personal/social skills needed by individuals with learning disabilities to be successful in entry-level positions, and (c) survey vocational special education instructors to identify perceptions of curriculum and social skills needed for on-the-job success of their students.

**Limitations**

Survey research has several limitations. Perceptions of the respondents bias research because they may not be true reflections of the conditions but are expressions of the participants’ experiences. One-time only data collection limits the cross-section designs to group comparisons and no individual comparisons may be made. Data collected from volunteers may differ from data collected via a true random selection, because those who choose to participate may have
different perspectives from those who choose not to participate. The results of this study will generalize only to high school students with learning disabilities (Wiersma, 1995).

Review of the Literature

Historical Background

Until recently, students with learning disabilities were not offered transition services. It appeared that they were able to obtain the skills needed to secure and hold jobs, to establish appropriate and independent living environments, and to develop and maintain relationships without support (Bassett & Smith, 1996). However, recent studies have shown that students with learning disabilities experience unemployment and/or underemployment more frequently than their peers without disabilities. These students reside with their parents longer than students without disabilities and suffer greater levels of isolation due to lack of appropriate relationships (Bassett & Smith, 1996). Transition services were established for students with learning disabilities when research showed that they lacked the self-confidence, support, and skills to independently execute the actions needed to successfully move from the school environment into the community (Bassett & Smith, 1996). The need for transition services for students and adults with learning disabilities is supported by employers of general population
adults who report their employees are weak in areas of written expression and reading skills.

Responsibility of the School with Respect to Transition

Because the schools deliver services to all students with disabilities, schools are responsible for educational information needed by Individual Transition Plan (ITP) committees (Heward, 1996). The school staff is responsible for interpreting information about students with disabilities in order to project service agencies that provide specific service the students will need as adults. The school is responsible for scheduling ITP meetings for the students. The school invites the student, parent/guardian, and representative(s) of appropriate adult service agencies to the ITP meeting. At the ITP meeting, the student explains his or her interests, skills, strengths, and goals. The representatives use this information to develop a transition plan that will help the student reach his or her goals as he or she prepares to exit the school (Heward, 1996).

Results of Transition Research

In 1983, the U.S. Congress mandated the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (Blackorby & Wagoner, 1996). This study found that in less than 2 years after exiting school, the employment rate of adults with learning disabilities was 46%, while the employment rate for the general population was 59%. The National Longitudinal Transition Study further found the 33% of youths in the general population had established
independent living situations, while 13% of the youth with disabilities were living independently. Research by Wagner and DeStefano (1992) indicated that one-fifth of youths with learning disabilities were more dependent 3 to 5 years after leaving school than they were in the first few months after graduation. Wagner and DeStefano (1992) suggested that young adults with disabilities have experienced the loss of job(s), the inability to secure and maintain appropriate housing, and isolation by society.

Impact of Transition on Student Dropout

The dropout rate for special education students is double the rate for regular education students (Thompson, 1992). Current findings suggest that these students drop out of school in an attempt to regain their lives and preserve their self-estees (Lichtenstein, 1993). Lichtenstein (1993) reported these students reported that further academic training would result in additional anxiety and humiliation. Therefore, they were attempting to replace the unsatisfactory world of school with the satisfaction of earning money. The National Longitudinal Study found that after students had been out of high school 3 to 5 years, youths with learning disabilities who had graduated had an employment rate of 65%, while the youths with learning disabilities who had dropped out of school had an employment rate of 47% (Blackorby & Wagoner, 1996).
Impact of Low Self-esteem and Lack of Self-advocacy on Transition

According to Rojewski (1996), students' "educational and vocation aspirations" may be the factor that explains why adults with learning disabilities attain low-prestige occupations. Aspirations are reflections of past experiences and identified roadblocks to employment and are not factors that determine future employment attainment. Even adults with learning disabilities with college degrees aspire to lower prestige jobs than their peers without disabilities with the same levels of education. The aspirations of students with disabilities are reflections of the students' low self-esteem and low self-concept (Rojewski, 1996).

Studies have shown that students and adults with disabilities are much more successful if they have acquired self-advocacy skills. When special education teachers take on the role of advocates, liaisons, and "buffers" for their students, they prevent the students from learning how their disabilities affect performance in the classroom (Feldman & Messerli, 1995). When educators do not include students in the development of their modifications, the students never learn how their modified class work compares to minimal non-modified class work (Haberman, 1997). Not only does this prevent the students from developing self-advocacy skills, it also teaches them non-work skills. Non-work skills can spill over into the workplace and adversely affect the students' ability to successfully obtain and maintain employment.
(Haberman, 1997). Therefore, teachers should replace their advocacy roles with guidance roles (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Feldman & Messerli, 1995; Gerber et al., 1992). This practice will help students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, learn to compensate for their disabilities, and develop strategies they can use when entering the work force (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Feldman & Messerli, 1995; Gerber et al., 1992).

Methodology

The objective of this study was to survey vocational special education instructors and employers to obtain their perceptions of job skills that vocational special education students have mastered prior to being hired. This research project contained two separate studies: (a) the pilot study refined the measurement instrument, and (b) the formal study obtained data to evaluate the research questions.

Instrument Development

The questions contained in the survey were written based on recommendations from a panel of experts to establish content validity. These experts were current employers of vocational special education high school students, vocational and high school special education teachers, high school vocational counselors, and university special education faculty. The instrument was divided into three sections. Section 1 contained demographic information pertaining to the participants' age, gender, education, and years of
experience. Section 2 of the instrument used a Likert scale which allowed employers and teachers to rate their perceptions of the academic, self-help, and job skills needed by special education students currently holding jobs in the community. Section 3 contained open-ended questions that allowed teachers and employers to identify concerns and to make recommendations with respect to current trends and issues related to curriculum and social skills needed for transition.

Pilot Study Methodology

The purpose of the pilot study was to develop and validate the survey questionnaire for the formal study and to procure formative information regarding the effect of the independent variables; perceptions of vocational special education instructors and perceptions of current employers on the dependent variables of academic skill, self-help skills, and job skills of vocational special education students. A list of 13 current employers of vocational adjustment class students from the Irving Independent School District was obtained from a vocational adjustment class instructor. These employers were asked to complete the questionnaire. When none of these questionnaires were returned, the pilot study was completed by surveying 15 employers in a rural community. Responses were analyzed to determine clarity of the directions and amount of time required for completion.
Main Study Methodology

Data collection during the formal study included soliciting responses from a list of vocational adjustment class coordinators/instructors obtained from the Education Service Center, Region XI in Fort Worth, Texas during a 6-week period in the 1998 Spring semester. Surveys were distributed to the vocational adjustment class instructors listed by the service center. Participation in the study was volunteer. Surveys were distributed to employers by the vocational adjustment class instructors participating in this study.

Research Design and Questions

A cross-sectional survey research design was selected for this study because it is the least intrusive upon the participants' time. Data collection consisted of a one-time survey of a convenience grouping of volunteers from vocational adjustment class instructors and current employers of vocational adjustment class students.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the following research questions:

1. Do vocational adjustment class instructors and employers rate the academic, self-help, and job skills of vocational adjustment class students the same?

2. Do employers feel that students in the vocational adjustment class have the prerequisite academic, self-help, and job skills needed to successfully hold a job?
The following types of analyses were utilized: (a) demographic data use of descriptive statistics to report frequency tables to describe the information, (b) frequency tables were used to examine participants' perceptions of the academic, self-help, and job skills of special education students in vocational placements, and (c) qualitative responses were tabulated to analyze emerging trends and issues. The results of these analysis were to be used to compare the employers' perceptions of the prerequisite skills of the students with learning disabilities in entry level positions with the vocational adjustment class instructors' perceptions of skills the students with disabilities were prepared to successfully perform in the work place. The employers input would have also been used to identify the skills the students have difficulty performing successfully in the work place.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When students leave the school environment to enter the adult world in the community, their lives take on a change. This change is known as transition. The process of transition is very important for students with disabilities. Transition services for special education students have not been universally established for all students with disabilities. School personnel have been aware for a long time that students with severe disabilities (emotional disturbance, physical disabilities and mental retardation) needed transition services to successfully merge into the world outside the local high school (Bassett & Smith, 1996). However, it has only recently been noted that students with learning disabilities are also in great need of transition services (Bassett & Smith, 1996).

Individual transition plan meetings for students with disabilities are to be initiated by the age of 16 (Heward, 1996, p. 36). The purpose of these meetings is for the school to begin aligning the students' placement and individual education plans with the students' interests, skills, and future plans. Thus, by the time the students have reached the age of 16, the school will have planned and initiated
appropriate transition services for the students with disabilities. Transition services include providing the students with help in the areas of education, employment, transportation, recreation/leisure, medical/health, financial/income, and residential/living setting. However, the literature indicates that the transition process for students with disabilities exiting the school to secure employment have not improved over the years (Brolin & Gysbers, 1989).

History of Transition Services for Students and Adults with Disabilities

Vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities were established with the passage of the Smith-Fess Act in 1920. This legislation provided for 50% matching state and federal funds to establish vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with physical disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation services were extended to persons with mental retardation and/or mental illness in 1943 with the passage of the Bardon-LaFollette Act. This legislation also provided for the first funding for vocational rehabilitation services for persons classified as disabled due to blindness (Szymanski, King, Parker, & Jenkins, 1989).

From 1954 to 1972, vocational rehabilitation services significantly expanded. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act
Amendment of 1954 established federal grants to universities and colleges to train professionals at the master’s degree level to provide rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities. This law also increased the federal matching funds from 50% to 66 2/3%. Vocational rehabilitation services were expanded for the mentally ill and mentally retarded through grants for research, expansion and improvement of services, and facility development (Szymanski et al., 1989).

In 1973, the Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) was established to ensure that the individual with a disability and the individual’s family would be invited to participate in the individual rehabilitation plan. The Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan also provided for the priority of the severely disabled (Szymanski et al., 1989). This means that when the rehabilitation fiscal resources are strained, the individuals with the most severe disabilities (as identified by the legislative and regulatory definition of severe disabilities) will receive transition services first with the financial resources that are available. In addition, the 1973 Rehabilitation Act contained section 504. Section 504 provides that an individual with a disability shall not be denied access to a program or a service as a result of the disability. All organizations and institutions that receive federal funds are required to provide appropriate aides for persons with disabilities. These organizations and institutions do not have to provide all the aids at all times. However, these organizations and
institutions cannot exclude persons with disabilities because the appropriate aide has not been available or provided previously (Heward, 1996, p. 37).

In 1978, as a part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Amendments to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, new legislation established independent living services for individuals with disabilities who are not employable (Szymanski et al., 1989). The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986 reemphasized the services priorities for persons with severe disabilities by defining a more comprehensive definition of "individual with severe handicaps" (Szymanski et al., 1989). The 1986 amendments also established that the federal matching funds should be leveled off at the 75% mark (Szymanski et al., 1989).

History of Vocational Rehabilitation and Transition

Schools and state vocational rehabilitation agencies have worked cooperatively in the transition process for special education students for over three decades. Michigan and Minnesota received national recognition in the 1950s for their school and state cooperative vocational rehabilitation programs (Szymanski et al., 1989). In the 1960s the vocational rehabilitation programs placed students with disabilities in part-time employment. Pre-employment
preparation and on the job supervision were provided by special teachers (Halpern, 1992; Szymanski et al., 1989).

During the 1960s, work-study programs continued to serve persons with disabilities. School based vocational rehabilitation programs assisted students with disabilities to transition from school to work. Furthermore, the states established vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide continued transition services for persons with disabilities after graduation from high school (Halpern, 1992; Szymanski et al., 1989). In some states, matching funds were used to fund the state adult transition service agencies as well as pay the salaries of the special teachers who were providing pre-employment preparation and on-the-job supervision for high school students with disabilities (Halpern, 1992; Szymanski et al., 1989).

In the 1970s, regulations of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and questions pertaining to the appropriateness of the matching funds used to pay the salaries of special education high school teachers resulted in a conflict that halted the expansion of the work-study programs for persons with disabilities (Halpern, 1992; Szymanski et al., 1989). As a result, the number of students with disabilities served by the work-study programs severely declined in the later part of the 1970s (Halpern 1992; Szymanski et al., 1989).

While the number of students served through the work-study programs were diminishing, special education and
vocational rehabilitation administrators were working together to advocate that transition services be provided cooperatively among vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and special education agencies (Szymanski et al., 1989). The commissioners of education and rehabilitation services developed an historic memorandum for cooperative transition services for students with disabilities in 1978 and 1979. The purpose of this memorandum was to model cooperative transition services at the state level. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and the U.S. Department of Education finalized an agreement to cooperatively provide transition services to students with disabilities in 1979 (Szymanski et al., 1989). In the state of Texas, the collaborative transition agreement between the schools and the community adult service agencies is outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding. This Memorandum of Understanding specifically outlines the transition responsibilities of the schools and the community adult service agencies. Furthermore, this document prevents the participating agencies from providing duplicate services to individuals with disabilities in the State of Texas (Texas SBOE, 1997)

Differences in the Transition

Although special education and vocational rehabilitation agencies have cooperatively provided transition services to
students with disabilities since 1979, eligibility criteria for services through these two agencies are very different. Special education guarantees a free and appropriate education to all students with disabilities who qualify for special education services (Szymanski et al., 1989). Once a student has qualified for special education services, the federal law and state regulations mandate that the school plan annual meetings to evaluate the student's progress and to make appropriate placement decisions for the student for the future (Szymanski et al., 1989). The parent(s) and student are included in these meetings to help plan for the student's future. This is the only participation asked of the parent(s) or student in the process of establishing continued special education services for the student through the school. Thus, special education becomes a form of an entitlement service provider (Szymanski et al., 1989).

Vocational rehabilitation services, on the other hand, are not entitlement services. The student with disabilities or the student's parent(s) must complete an application process for the vocational rehabilitation agency to consider providing the student with post-high school transition services. However, persons with disabilities can meet all the criteria for vocational rehabilitation services, and yet not receive any of the services (Szymanski et al., 1989). Students diagnosed with mild disabilities may not be eligible for services if the vocational rehabilitation counselor decides that the disabilities will not interfere with
competitive employment and/or employment opportunities. Students with severe, life threatening disabilities can also be denied services through the vocational rehabilitation program (Szymanski et al., 1989).

In the United States, between 250,000 and 300,000 students with handicaps leave the school environment each year. Despite the history of legislation and financial expenditures by state and federal governments, most of these students leave the school without the skills necessary to make a smooth transition into the community and competitive employment (Haring, Lovett, & Smith, 1990). Thus, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative services has identified the successful transition of students with disabilities into adult life in the community as its national priority. Studies have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing transition programs (Haring et al., 1990).

The suggestions from research studies seem to indicate that the resources available through the schools and the community affect the transition process of students with disabilities as they enter the work force (Fairweather, Stearns, & Wagner, 1989). The availability of employment for special education students exiting the school has a major effect on the transition of students with disabilities (Fairweather et al., 1989). Vocational counseling and vocational training through adult service agencies has also been found to have a positive effect on the successful
transition of special education students graduating from high school and entering employment (Fairweather et al., 1989). The availability of these resources in the community has not been shown to be related to the size of the district or community. The wealth in the community influences the availability of employment, counseling, and training for youth with disabilities that have graduated from the school setting (Fairweather et al., 1989).

The Research on the Benefits of Transition Services

The proven benefits of transition services is inconclusive because the information is derived from inadequate data bases (Haring et al., 1990). Schools do not have tracking systems that follow former students who are no longer receiving services through the state vocational rehabilitation agency. Furthermore, it is estimated that 30% of all secondary students enrolled in special education programs drop out of school (Haring et al., 1990). Research has further revealed that conventional vocational education has had limited success with students with disabilities (Haring et al., 1990). The major service these programs have provided for the students with mild disabilities is a slight decrease in the drop-out rate (Haring et al., 1990). In addition, most persons with learning disabilities have not qualified for follow-up rehabilitative services upon high school graduation even though the same students qualified for
and received special education services during their school experience. Without special education services, these students could not have successfully completed high school. Thus, it is erroneous to believe that a student with mild learning disabilities no longer needs services just because he or she has exited the local high school (Haring et al., 1990). In fact, many studies have reported that without adequate vocational training, students with disabilities do not attain the vocational and social skills required to successfully enter competitive employment with only the special education services provided through the school (Minskoff & Moss, 1993). Thus, it is a mistake to assume that an unsuccessful transition period is due to the lack of effort on the part of the school. Instead, the absence of adequate community services through vocational rehabilitation may be equally responsible for the "bumpy road" these students must face on a daily basis (Haring et al., 1990).

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the employment rates of individual with disabilities. A study conducted by Buchanan and Weller in 1984 reported that 67% of the participants with moderate disabilities were unemployed (Ramasamy, 1996). Of the 33% who were working, 75% were working part-time for minimum wage in unskilled jobs (Ramasamy, 1996). Mithaug, Horiuchi, and Fanning (1985) conducted a follow-up study of former special education graduates in Colorado and found that only 32% of the former special education students were employed. In 1990, Sitlinton
and Frank reported that 86.9% of the learning disabled adults were working in semiskilled or unskilled jobs. Many of the adults in this study were underemployed (Sitlinton & Frank, 1990). In 1992, Karpinski, Neubert, and Graham found that students with mild disabilities had an employment rate of 74%. Similarly, Schalock, Holl, Elliot, and Ross (1992) reported only 77% of the students with learning disabilities were employed. Sitlinton, Frank, and Carson (1993) conducted a statewide study of graduates from the schools’ special education programs. The study reported that 5.8% of the adults with learning disabilities, 3.5% of the adults with mental retardation, and only 1 of the adults with behavior disorders had made successful adult transitions to employment (Heward, 1996, p. 696).

In 1983, the U.S. Congress mandated the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students. This study was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The National Longitudinal Transition Study studied 8,000 special education students in secondary school in 1985. Data were collected on these students in 1987 and in 1990. This study reported that in less than 2 years after exiting school, the employment rate for disabled adults was 46% while the employment rate for the general populations was 59%. The employment rate for the adults with disabilities 3 to 5 years after leaving the high school setting was 57% while the employment rate for adults without disabilities was 69%. This study further found
that 3 to 5 years after leaving school, 1 in 5 young adults with disabilities were unemployed and was not actively looking for work. After the students had been out of high school 3 to 5 years, youth with disabilities, who had graduated, had an employment rate of 65%. The youth with disabilities, who had dropped out of school, had an employment rate of 47% and the adults with disabilities, who had exited school because they had reached the maximum schooling age of 22 had an employment rate of 37%. These results indicated that a high school diploma does not mean that graduates with disabilities “are playing on a level field” with the graduates without disabilities (Blackorby & Wagoner, 1996). The National Longitudinal Transition Study further found that one-third of the youth in the general population had established independent living situations while only 13% of the youth with disabilities were living independently. This study further discovered that one-fifth of youth with disabilities were more dependent 3 to 5 years after leaving school than they were the first few months after graduation from high school (Wagner, 1992). This study suggested that these young adults with disabilities have experienced the loss of job(s), inability to secure and maintain appropriate housing, and isolation by society (Wagner & DeStefano, 1992).

Haring, Lovett, and Smith (1990) reported that 87% of the adults with disabilities surveyed enjoyed their jobs. However, only 5% were employed above the entry level and only
11% had ever received a salary increase (Haring et al., 1990). Thus, the success of transition programs cannot be judged by only analyzing the percentage of students and adults with disabilities that acquire entry level jobs (Gerber, Ginsber, & Reiff, 1992). Successful outcomes can only be judged by examining the work history of adults with disabilities (Gerber et al., 1992). Thus, "job maintenance, employment stability, career advancement, and the attainment of leadership roles" are the appropriate outcome variables to successfully judge and analysis the success of a transition program (Gerber et al., 1992).

Some research has suggested that the students with disabilities who have the best work record are those students who held competitive part-time or summer jobs while still in high school (Bellamy, 1985; Covey, 1987). Vocational education training provided in high school contributed to improved employment status. However, competitive part-time or summer jobs while still in school contributed to improved employment status, percentage of time employed after leaving school, and wage level (Bellamy, 1985). Thus, the subsidized, work-study programs did not result in the same positive, post-high school employment work record as competitive part-time and summer jobs (Bellamy, 1985). Securing and maintaining employment without school assistance enabled the students to learn to function and to survive after leaving the school (Covey, 1987).
Factors that Contribute to Successful Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

The research indicated that no matter how hard teachers push their students with disabilities and no matter how competent the teachers feel the students had become, the students with disabilities will not be able to compete for jobs with the top 70% of their peers without disabilities (Edgar, 1988). Research suggests that one of the most important factors in obtaining employment for persons with disabilities is the self-family connections. This research reported that most individuals with disabilities did not find jobs through the help of transition service agencies. Instead, most employed individuals with disabilities found jobs through relationships they and their families had made through involvement in school and community activities. These relationships provided employment opportunities for the person with disabilities searching for employment. In fact, one study showed that as many as 80% of the employed individuals with disabilities acquired their jobs through the "self-family-friend" connection (Bellamy, 1985; Edgar, 1988; Haring et al., 1990; Okolo & Sitlington, 1986). These studies further indicated that the majority of students with disabilities who received vocational training found their employment through the "self-family-friend" connection (Bellamy, 1985).
One interpersonal factor that has been reported to contribute to the successful transition and employment of an individual with disabilities is the desire to control one's own life (Gerber et al., 1992). Individuals with disabilities who have developed a strong desire to be successful and have set reasonable goals appear to reach success. These people have learned to view their learning disabilities in a positive manner and place the disability in a productive prospective (Gerber et al., 1992). These persons have learned to become self advocates (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Feldman & Messerli, 1995; Gerber et al., 1992). Employees with disabilities who have acquired self advocacy skills know how their disabilities affects them and can explain their disabilities to their employers. They recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Because they have identified their strengths, they have learned to compensate for their disabilities and can recognize how these compensations can help them be successful in the work place (Feldman & Messerli, 1995). They have the ability to chose jobs that allow them to complete tasks that draw from their strengths and that do not penalize them for their weaknesses (Adelman & Vogel, 1990). Successful individuals with disabilities also exhibit "external manifestations" that contribute to their successful employment (Gerber et al., 1992). These "external manifestations" include the ability to be persistent, the ability to use a set of coping skills, and the ability to find and maintain relationships with supportive persons who
can help them improve their skills through personal improvement goals (Gerber et al., 1992). It also should be noted that the individuals with learning disabilities, who have attained a level of success, report that the services they received through the school had little value and little connection to their success (Gerber et al., 1992).

Vocational Education for Students and Adults with Disabilities

The severe employment difficulties experienced by students and adults with disabilities have prompted the United States Government to mandate schools and adults service providers to provide vocational training for individuals with disabilities. However, only 5% of clients in vocational rehabilitation, nationwide, were individuals with learning disabilities (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993). Vocational education programs in schools should be viewed as only the first step in the transition process for students with disabilities (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993). Today, the changes due to technology in our society cause the elimination of jobs. For most persons with learning disabilities, a change in their careers will mean they will need retraining (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993). A smooth, successful transition to adult living could be experienced by students with learning disabilities if vocational training programs were implemented collaboratively by special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993).
The focus in our society is on excellence in education. This focus has resulted in increased academic requirements for all students for high school graduation. Consequently, special education teachers are expending more energy than ever to help their mildly handicapped students pass the required academic core classes (Brolin & Gysbers, 1989; Edgar, 1988). The focus on the core requirements diverts the attention from the career and vocational needs of the students with disabilities (Edgar, 1987). The focus on excellence in education and higher academic standards has also resulted in a decrease in funding for vocational programs (Edgar, 1987). Thus, vocational programs are disappearing and, as a result, academic classes have become the major focus for all students in today's schools (Brolin & Gysbers, 1989).

However, students in special education look forward to the opportunity for vocational training that the secondary school can provide to them. The academic classes they have been required to complete have provided them with one failure after another, increased frustration, and decreased self-esteem. Most students with disabilities believe that they can be successful in the vocational education classroom (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993). However, students with learning disabilities will need assistance to master the academic components of the vocational education classroom (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993). The increased academic requirements is also included in vocational classes. This requirement makes the acquisition of
vocational training even more difficult for the students with learning disabilities (Brolin & Gysbers, 1989). Consequently, special education teachers must not only help their students become successful in academic subjects but in vocational training classes as well (Minskoff & DeMoss, 1993).

In order to help a student with disabilities to be successful in the classroom, teachers use instructional modifications during the lesson cycle. These modifications change the lesson's mastery requirements for the students with disabilities. Such modifications often result in the students with disabilities never meeting the same minimal requirement of an assignment that is expected for students without disabilities. By not requiring the students with disabilities to meet the minimal requirements of an assignment, educators are teaching their students non-work skills (Haberman, 1997). Consequently, non-work skills "spill over into the work place" and have been found to adversely affect the student's ability to successfully obtain and maintain employment (Haberman, 1997).

Employers Contribution to Transition Curriculum

Today's society believes that our schools are to teach academic content. This implies that the special education teacher must adhere to the acquisition of reading, writing, and math skills (Dowdy, 1996). However, for students with disabilities to be successful in the transition process and into adulthood, school personnel must begin to incorporate
more vocational oriented instruction into the curriculum (Dowdy, 1996; Holton, 1992; Schmoker, 1997). The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has begun to stress that "private-sector employers" team with the school to design appropriate transition services for special education students (Halloran & Ward, 1992). In 1991, the U.S. Department of Labor told employers that if they wanted better prepared employees, they needed to serve as active vocational consultants to their local school districts. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has identified two "barriers" to successful transition planning to be the "lack of communication among parents, students, school staff, agency representative, and employers" and "unsuccessful employment experiences on the part of students" (TEA, 1993 p. 15). The importance of involving the employer in developing transition curriculum for special education students has been stressed by Dowdy (1996), Holton (1992), Lichtenstein (1993), The Texas Education Agency (1993), Wehman (1990), and the U.S. Department of Labor (1991 and 1992). As a result, vocational rehabilitation has teamed with special education to provide transition opportunities for students with learning disabilities (Dowdy, 1996). This collaboration between the school's special education department and the community based vocational rehabilitation services has resulted in guidelines and transition curriculum recommendations for the cooperative delivery of transition services to special education students. The transition curriculum recommendations focus on
acquisition of functional academics, vocational skills, and transition skills by students and adults with disabilities for successful transition to employment (Dowdy, 1996).

Employers' Perspectives of Career Skills

Research has shown that youth with disabilities are unemployed due to three reasons: poor interpersonal skills, poor academic skills related to the job, and vocational skills that are inadequate to perform more than entry-level service jobs (Okolo & Sitlington, 1986). The interpersonal skills which interfere with job performance are relationships with supervisors and peers, appearance, and personal conduct. Employers have reported that interpersonal skills are more important than prior work experience (Okolo & Sitlington, 1986). Employers further reported that education, personal attitudes, and personal characteristics are much more important skills for successful employment than job skills (Okolo & Sitlington, 1986). Many employees in the general population are terminated for failing to come to work, showing little or no interest in the work, persistently making costly mistakes, not following directions, and not showing interest in learning how to better perform the job (Okolo & Sitlington, 1986).

Another barrier to the employment opportunity for youth and adults with learning disabilities is that employers are less willing to make additional special allowances for the employee with learning disabilities than for persons with
disabilities in general (Jacobs & Hendricks, 1992). Employers can see visible physical disabilities and understand the accommodations that would be needed to help that employee be successful on the job. However, it is difficult for employers to understand the accommodations that cognitive and learning disabilities would require for job success (Jacobs & Hendricks, 1992). This barrier is compounded by the fact that employers do not have enough factual information about learning disabilities to fully understand how these disabilities will effect the performance of their employees (Jacobs & Hendricks, 1992).

Summary

This review of literature has found that teachers and employers view the entry level job skills of students with disabilities from different perceptions. While the schools are focusing on the academic skills and vocational training of students with disabilities, employers report that interpersonal skills are the most important factors in obtaining and maintaining successful competitive employment (Okolo & Sitlington, 1992). While employers' perceptions of the job skills for vocational adjustment class employees were not found, employers perceptions of the job skills for students with learning disabilities was found. Poor interpersonal skills, poor academic skills related to the job, and vocational skills that are inadequate to perform more than entry-level service jobs were found to be reasons
students with disabilities have difficulty obtaining and maintaining employment (Okolo & Sitlington, 1986). Research indicates that a desire to control one’s life and to find one’s niche in life are the two most important factors in determining how successful an individual with disabilities will be in the work force (Gerber et al., 1992). These factors have lead some researchers to advocate that transition services begin in elementary school and continue long after persons with disabilities have graduated from high school (Sitlington, Frank, & Carson, 1993).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the employer's perceptions of job skill levels of special education vocational adjustment class (VAC) employees for entry level positions. The study was completed in two parts. First, a pilot study was completed to clarify and revise the survey instrument to obtain an initial idea of the potential outcome of the main study. Second, the main study was conducted to obtain data used to evaluate the research questions.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was completed for two reasons: to develop an appropriate questionnaire for the main study and to clarify any ambiguous items on the survey instrument. The instrument was developed by: (a) identifying important demographic information of the research participants and (b) identifying the academic skills, self-help skills, and job skills needed by vocational adjustment class students to successfully obtain and maintain entry level positions.
Instrument Development

This is a cross-sectional research design. The survey instrument was developed with input from current employers of vocational special education high school students, vocational high school special education teachers, high school vocational counselors, and university special education faculty. The instrument is divided into three sections. Section 1 contains demographic information about the participants in the study. The vocational adjustment coordinator demographic information consists of personal information, teaching background, training, and experience. The employer demographic information consists of personal information, education and training, experience, and present position. Section 2 of the instrument covers the academic skill, self-help skills, and job skills for entry-level positions. The review of literature suggests that individuals with disabilities have higher levels of unemployment and underemployment than individual without disabilities. The literature further suggests that persons with disabilities have poor self-esteem, poor self-confidence, and lack the ability to be self-advocates. This section consists of a 5-point Likert scale to insure consistency of responses. Section 3 consists of open-ended questions that allow respondents to express their concerns and recommendations.

Subjects

The intended subjects for the pilot study were employers of VAC students from Irving Independent School District. A
list of 13 Irving employers was obtained from the Vocational Adjustment Class instructor in Irving. These employers were sent a questionnaire in the mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope. However, no survey questionnaires were returned. Thus, the focus of the pilot study was turned to employers of high school students in a small rural community who were known to the primary investigator to employ VAC students or graduates of the VAC program in the immediate community. The primary investigator contacted these employers and the pilot study was completed through telephone interviews with the subjects. The respondents were asked to respond to the questions using their experiences with their high school employees. Participation in the pilot study was voluntary. A Total of 20 employers were contacted, and 15 questionnaires were completed.

Results

Content validity was established through a review by experts. The items on the survey questionnaire were read to the employers through telephone interviews. The respondents answered the items quickly and easily and did not require clarification of an item. Thus, the questions appeared to be clear and understandable. Thus, no modifications were made in the survey instruments as a result of the pilot study. The pilot study found that 20 to 25 minutes were required to complete the survey instrument. The results of the pilot study found that 73% of the respondents agreed that their employees had mastered the academic, self-help, and job
skills needed to be successfully on the job. However, these finds can not be generalized to the outcome of the main study because, in the rural setting, employers hire individuals they know. Before the rural employers hire the individual with disabilities, the employers know that the individuals can satisfactorily complete the job requirements.

Main Study

Methodology

Approval to conduct this research study was received from the Human Subjects Review Committee at Texas Woman’s University on July 28, 1997 (see Appendix A). Human Subjects Review Committee approval is required in order to comply with federal guidelines when conducting research using human subjects. Approval also was given from the Graduate School of Texas Woman’s University to begin the study (see Appendix A).

Subjects

Names of vocational adjustment class instructors in North Texas were obtained from Education Service Center, Region XI in Fort Worth, Texas. A total of 140 VAC and employers questionnaires were sent to VAC instructors in 2 mailings. Each vocational adjustment class instructor was sent 1 VAC survey packet and 1 employer survey packet. The choice of an employer to complete the employer survey was left to the discretion of the vocational adjustment class instructor.
Each packet contained a survey instrument with a pre-addressed stamped envelope. Participation in the study was voluntary. The first mailing of the survey instrument yielded the return of 4 VAC instruments and no employer instruments. The second mailing of the survey instrument yielded the return of 6 VAC instruments and 1 employer instrument. The responses were returned to the home of the principal investigator. The return of 11 surveys yielded a 3.9% return rate. This poor rate of return can be attributed to the time of year that this survey was conducted. To maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, no names or identifying data were required on the survey.

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was selected for this study because it was the least intrusive upon the participants’ time. Data collection consisted of a one-time survey of a convenience grouping of volunteers from vocational adjustment class instructors and current employers of vocational adjustment class students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in the survey instrument:

1. Do vocational adjustment class instructors and employers rate the academic, self-help, and job skills of vocational adjustment class students the same?
2. Do employers feel that students in the vocational adjustment class have the prerequisite academic, self-help, and job skills needed to successfully hold a job?
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Information from the surveys sent to vocational adjustment class (VAC) instructors were analyzed. Demographic information representing the vocational adjustment class instructors who participated in the study is shown in Table 1. Due to the marginal number of respondents to the study, reporting cells were collapsed and combined to facilitate analysis of the data.

The first section of the survey contained demographic information on participants. Characteristics of the vocational adjustment class instructors report that 60% of the VAC instructors were between the ages of 41 and 51 and 40% were between 26 and 40 years of age. Most VAC instructors were female (60%) while 40% were male. Half of the teachers (50%) held a Master’s degree in education while the other half (50%) held a bachelor’s degree in education. A small percentage (10%) held a bachelor’s degree and 20% held a master’s degree in non-education fields. Half (50%) of the respondents had been a VAC instructor for 1 to 3 years while 20% had 4 to 6 years and 30% had 7 to 20 years experience as a VAC instructor. Half (50%) taught 1 to 10 years and 50% taught 11 to 20 years before becoming a VAC instructor. Prior to becoming a VAC instructor, 90% had experience teaching in
both regular education and special education while 10% have only regular education experience (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information on Vocational Adjustment Class Instructors (N = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Cell</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>26 to 40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 to 51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-education degree</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a VAC instructor</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 to 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 to 20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of teaching before VAC</td>
<td>1 to 10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 to 20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience before VAC</td>
<td>Reg.Ed. only</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reg. &amp; Sp. Ed.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Research Questions

The intent of this study was to examine participants' perceptions of the academic, self-help, and job skills of special education students in vocational placements using multivariate analysis to compare the perceptions of
multivariate analysis to compare the perceptions of vocational adjustment class instructors with the perceptions of current employers of vocational adjustment class students. However, the poor rate of return of completed questionnaires made this type analysis inappropriate for reporting the results of this study. Therefore, descriptive statistics were used to report the results of the vocational adjustment class instructors' responses. The number of surveys returned necessitated the collapse of the answer cells into the categories of disagree, agree, and not needed for position held. However, some vocational adjustment class teachers could neither agree nor disagree with some survey items. Thus, a neither agree nor disagree category was added.

The first 4 questions of the Section 2 of the survey instrument asked the respondents to evaluate the academic skills of their vocational adjustment class employees. Most of the VAC instructors (50%) agreed that their students were able to read and comprehend the material needed to successfully complete their job requirements, 40% disagreed, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed with the survey item. Concerning math computation and problem solving skills, 50% disagreed, 40% agreed, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed that the students possessed the skills to adequately perform their jobs. While 10% of the instructors reported that their VAC students did not need writing skills on their jobs, 60% disagreed, and 30% agreed that their students had adequately mastered the writing skills required on their jobs. Although
30% of the instructors reported that the students did not use spelling skills while performing on the job tasks, 50% disagreed and 20% agreed that the students' skills did not interfere with their job performance (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Vocational Adjustment Class Instructor's Perceptions of Academic Skills (N = 10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Not Agree or Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Math skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Writing skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Spelling skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 15 asked the vocational adjustment class teachers to report their perceptions of the communication skills of the vocational adjustment class students in vocational placements. All of the teachers (100%) agreed that the VAC students were able to follow verbal instructions. Concerning the ability to relay messages, 60% agreed, 30% disagreed, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed that the students could accurately relay messages. While most (80%) agreed that the students communicated appropriately on the telephone, 20% disagreed. However, 40% agreed, 40% disagreed, and 20% neither agreed nor disagreed that the
students were able to accurately take telephone messages. Despite the disabilities of the special education students in vocational placements, 70% of the VAC instructors agreed that the students were able to communicate effectively with others in the performance of their jobs; 30% reported that they disagreed that the students communicated effectively with others (see Table 3).

Table 3

Vocational Adjustment Class Instructors' Perception of Communication Skills (N = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Not Agree or Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Verbal instructions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relay messages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Communicate on telephone</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Telephone orders</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Telephone messages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Communicate effectively</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On survey items 10, 16, 17, 18, and 19 the instructors' reported their perceptions of the work ethics of their vocational adjustment class students. Most of the teachers
(70%) agreed that their students work until they complete the jobs assigned to them, 20% disagreed with the survey item, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. Most (90%) of the teachers agreed that their students reported to work on time with 10% disagreeing. Concerning the wise use of time while on the job, 90% of the VAC instructors reported that their students used their time wisely and 10% disagreed. Again, 90% of the respondents reported that the students did not leave until the end of their assigned shifts with 10% disagreeing. However, 60% agreed that the students worked well independently leaving 20% to disagree and 20% neither agreed nor disagreed (see Table 4).

Table 4

**Vocational Adjustment Class Instructors' Perception of Work Ethics** (N = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Not Agree or Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Completion of work</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Report on time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Wise use of time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Leave at end of shift</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Work independently</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The vocational adjustment class teachers were asked to give their perceptions of the students' ability to work with others on questions 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 29, and 30. The vocational adjustment class instructors agreed that their students could work well with other employees at a rate of 80% agreeing, 10% disagreeing, and 10% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. They also reported that 80% agreed that the students worked well with the customers while 10% disagreed and 10% did not agree or disagree. Most of the teachers (60%) agreed that the students showed respect for authority while 30% disagreed and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. While 70% of the VAC teachers agreed that the vocational special education students showed respect and courtesy for others, 30% disagreed, and 10% did not agree or disagree. Concerning the skill to work with one other person, 90% of the teachers agreed that the students did work well with another person and 10% disagreed. Furthermore, 50% agreed, 40% disagreed, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed that the students worked well within a team. Most of the VAC school personnel (70%) agreed that the students completed their fair share of the work while on the job, 20% disagreed, and 10% did not agree or disagree. Half (50%) agreed and 50% disagreed that the vocational special education students were able to accept constructive criticism while on the job. Slightly more than half (60%) agreed that the vocational adjustment class students could work in a collaborative group and assume
responsibility for their participation with 40% disagreeing (see Table 5).

Table 5

Vocational Adjustment Class Instructors' Perceptions of the Abilities to Work with Others (N = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Not Agree or Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Work with others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Work with customers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Respect authority</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Respect others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Work with one person</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Work on a team</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Complete share of work</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Accept criticism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Participation responsibility</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 23 and 24 asked the VAC instructors to indicate their perceptions of the personal appearance of their students. Most of the teachers (90%) reported that they
agreed that the students dressed appropriate for the job with 10% disagreeing. However, 80% of the teachers agreed that the students maintained an appropriate appearance while on the job and 20% disagreed (see Table 6).

Table 6

Vocational Adjustment Class Instructors' Perceptions of Personal Appearance (N = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Not Agree or Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Appropriate dress</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Appropriate appearance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey items 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, and 33 asked the vocational adjustment class instructors to report their perceptions of the student's job skills. When required to use equipment, 80% of the VAC teachers agreed that the students could correctly use the equipment, 10% disagreed, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed. Again, 80% agreed that the students could remember and follow the order and sequence of their job, while 10% disagreed and 10% did not agree or disagree. Most (90%) agreed that the students could understand and follow the safety rules and regulations of their jobs and 10% disagreed. Less than half (40%) agreed, 50% disagreed, and 10% did not agree or disagree that
the students asked for assistance when they do not understand what is expected of them. More than half (60%) agreed, 30% disagreed, and 10% neither agreed nor disagreed that the students maintain a neat, organized work station while on their jobs. While 80% of the respondents agreed that the students demonstrate knowledge of rules and regulations required on their jobs, 20% disagreed. Less than half (40%) agreed that the students demonstrate knowledge of professional ethics with 50% disagreeing and 10% neither agreeing nor disagreeing (see Table 7).

Table 7
Vocational Adjustment Class Instructors' Perceptions of Job Skills (N = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Needed</th>
<th>Not Agree or Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. Equipment use</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Job sequence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Safety rules</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Ask for help</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Organized station</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Knowledge of rules</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Professional ethics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Open-ended Questions

Concerns and recommendations emerged from the two open-ended questions in the survey. The concerns and recommendations began with concerns about the job skills of special education vocational adjustment class employees. The concerns reported by the survey respondents are as follows:

1. Vocational adjustment class students/employees are not able to maintain one job for a significant length of time.

2. Many times the vocational adjustment class instructors observe a lack of good work ethics.

3. The students are not adequately trained to complete job applications and to participate appropriately in job interviews.

4. The students lack experience and knowledge about how the real world of work functions. They are too idealistic in their beliefs concerning how hard it is to hold a job. They treat their first jobs like school. They grow impatient if they do not receive promotions soon after securing their jobs.

5. The students do not have the job training that would enable them to secure a job above entry level with minimum wage.

Recommendations regarding the academic preparation of the special education vocational adjustment class employees are as follows:
1. More true vocational training should be conducted within the setting of the school classroom. These courses should teach hands on skills that are consistent with performance expectations of employers.

2. Schools need to provide improved academic training and higher competency skills. This would result in better employees who could secure and maintain long term employment with better potentials for promotions.

3. The school should provide more teaching and training of social skills.

4. More oral and written communication skills and listening skills need to be taught to the students and practiced frequently.

Employer’s Perception of Vocational Adjustment Class Employees

One respondent returned the employers’ survey instrument. This employer was a female between the ages of 31 and 40. She was a high school graduate who had held the position of personnel manager for 4 to 6 years in a retail sales business in an area with a population of more than 50,000 people. Her business employed more than 100 people with 2 to 3 VAC students under her employ during the last 12 months. She reported that she agreed that the VAC students in her employ were able to read and comprehend the material they needed in the completion of their jobs. However, the students did not need to use math, writing, or spelling skills to perform their assigned tasks. She strongly agreed
that the students were able to follow verbal instructions. In addition, she agreed that the students were able to accurately relay messages, to communicate appropriately with others on the telephone, to take accurate telephone orders, to take accurate telephone messages, to work on a job assignment until it was completed, to work well with other employees, to work well with the customers, to show respect for authority, to show respect and courtesy for others, to effectively communicate orally with others, to report to work on time, to use their time wisely while on the job, to remain on the job until their shift was complete, to work well independently, to work well with one other person, to work well within a team of workers, and to complete their fair share of the work. She disagreed that the students dressed appropriately for the job and maintained an appropriate, neat appearance while on the job. She continued to agree that the students could currently use the equipment needed to complete their jobs, could remember and follow the order and sequence of their jobs, could understand and follow the safety rules and regulations, asked for assistance when they did not understand what was expected of them, could accept constructive criticism, and could work in collaboration and assume responsibility of their participation. She disagreed that the students maintained a neat, organized work station, and demonstrated knowledge of rules and regulations required for their jobs. She agreed that the students demonstrated knowledge of professional ethics. She reported that her only
concern regarding the job skills of her special education vocational adjustment class employees was making a price check. This task required speed and accuracy. Her recommendations for academic preparation of special education vocational adjustment class employees was to provide more social skills training before they enter the job market. She continued her recommendations by suggesting that mock interviews, scenarios with customers, and role playing of typical job situations be included in the school curriculum.

In summary, the respondents to this survey were in agreement with:

- Vocational adjustment students can follow verbal instructions. They can communicate effectively with others in person and on the telephone.
- Overall, students with disabilities in vocational placements report to work on time, make good use of their time while they are on the job, and usually work a full shift before leaving the work place.
- Vocational special education students work well with others in the work place, especially one other person, and complete their fair share of the work. They also work well with the customers.
- The vocational adjustment class employees dress appropriately for their jobs and maintain neat appearances while at work.
• The special education employees use the equipment in the workplace appropriately. They also know and follow safety rules and demonstrate understanding of the rules and regulations required for their jobs.

• Weak reading, math, and writing skills penalizes vocational adjustment class employees and keeps them from acquiring positions above the entry level.

• Vocational adjustment class employees have difficulty accepting constructive criticism, showing respect for authority, asking for help and clarification, and demonstrating knowledge of professional ethics.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

A survey of vocational adjustment class (VAC) instructors in the Education Service Center Area, Region XI in North Texas was conducted. The results of this study show that vocational adjustment class employees have the basic job skills and adequate self-help skills to be successful in the work place. However, these employees lack the academic skills needed to acquire and maintain productive jobs above the entry level. The results also yielded concerns and recommendations that will help better prepare students with disabilities to enter the work force.

The first step in reporting the results of this study will be to answer the research questions. The first question is: Do vocational adjustment class instructors and employers rate the academic, self-help, and job skills of vocational adjustment class students the same? Only 1 employer questionnaire was returned. The results of only 1 respondent are not statistically significant. Thus, this question cannot be answered.

The second question is: Do employers feel that students in the vocational adjustment class have the prerequisite academic, self-help, and job skills needed to successfully hold a job? Again, the results of 1 employer's responses
are not statistically significant. Thus, this question cannot be answered.

The second step in reporting the results of this study is to report the vocational adjustment class instructors' perceptions of the prerequisite academic, self-help, and job skills needed to successfully hold a job. The vocational adjustment class teachers reported that the students have adequate reading skills to successfully hold their jobs. However, inadequate writing, spelling, and math skills hinder their jobs performance. The students' communication skills are a reflection of academic skill levels. The VAC teachers reported that the verbal communication skills of the students were adequate for the demands of their jobs. However, the affects of poor writing and spelling skills were reflected in the teachers' reporting that the students have difficulty taking telephone messages and telephone orders. These results indicated that the academic expectations for students with disabilities need to be high and that more emphasis need to be placed on writing and math skills. However, the need to continue to emphasis improving reading skills can not be forgotten.

The vocational adjustment class teachers reported that the self-help skills of the vocational adjustment class students currently holding jobs are satisfactory for the requirements of their jobs. The students report to work on time, use their time wisely, work independently, complete
their work and their shifts, and maintain appropriate dress while on the job.

The vocational adjustment class teachers reported that the students demonstrate desired job skills by properly using and maintaining the equipment, maintaining organized work stations, observing rules and regulations, and following safety rules. However, the teachers reported that vocational adjustment class employees have difficulty knowing when to ask for help and observing professional ethics. The ability to work with others in the work place are job skills influenced by social skills. The vocational adjustment class instructors reported that the vocational adjustment class students work well with other workers and customers, respect other workers and authority figures, work well with one other person, and take responsibility for their work. However, they have difficulty accepting criticism. This may be directly related to the students' poor rating on asking for help. The students may not ask for help because they fear they will be criticized. The students also have difficulty working in a collaborative setting. This, too, may be a result of having difficulty accepting criticism. A student may find that collaborative settings produce a situation that sets them up to face criticism.

Specific curriculum recommendations to improve the academic, self-help, and job skills of vocational adjustment class employees are:
1. Teachers should set high academic goals for their students and demonstrate (to the students) that they believe the students can achieve these goals.

2. Students with disabilities should be encouraged to achieve their personal best in all areas of life. Their academic instruction should always be at the appropriate instructional level to acquire new knowledge and skills.

3. Schools should teach students social skills that will help them accept constructive criticism and know how and when to ask for help when they do not understand what is expected of them.

4. Teachers should use collaborative and cooperative learning strategies to teach VAC students to work in collaborative teams.

5. Instructors should develop classroom instruction designed to teach professional ethics and should provide frequent opportunities for role plays to practice professional ethics.

Specific recommendations for further research to explore the job skills of vocational adjustment class employees are:

1. In the opinion of this investigator, this study should be redone.

2. Methods to secure the participate of the employers should be explored.

3. Occupational preparation classes and their topics of study currently being offered in high schools in the North Texas area.
4. The effects of using cooperative learning to improve the social skills and job skills of vocational adjustment class students.

5. Adults service agencies and the transition services accessed by students with disabilities upon completion of high school in the North Texas area.

6. Analysis the roles of the job coach and VAC in the transition process for individuals with disabilities.

7. Analyze transition plan to determine what activities/courses students are taking to prepare them for the world of work.

8. Study the educational background, experience, training, and knowledge of disabilities of the vocational adjustment class instructors.

The intent of this study was to investigate the employers' perceptions of the job skills of the vocational adjustment class employees currently being employed. This data would have been used to make curriculum recommendations to improve the job skills of students entering the work place through the high school vocational adjustment class. Due the lack of responses, this was not possible. However, some recommendations can be made based on information provided by vocational adjustment class instructors. It is the responsibility of educators to continue to study the vocational needs of students with disabilities to improve the employability and employment history of these individuals.
REFERENCES


special education program. Learning Disability Quarterly, 15, 29-37.


Texas Education Agency. (1993). Overview: Case studies of family and community experiences in transition from school to post-school life for students receiving special education services, (GE3-410-08), Austin, TX: Author.


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Permissions to Conduct Study
July 28, 1997

Ms. Diana Schmittou  
P.O. Box 95  
Aubrey, TX 76227  

Dear Ms. Schmittou:

Your study entitled "Employers' Current Perception of Job Skill Levels of Vocational Adjustment Class Employees" has been reviewed by a committee of the Human Subjects Review Committee and appears to meet our requirements in regard to protection of individuals' rights.

Be reminded that both the University and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations typically require that agency approval letters and signatures indicating informed consent be obtained from all human subjects in your study. These consent forms and agency approval letters are to be filed with the Human Subjects Review Committee at the completion of the study. However, because you do not utilize a signed consent form for your study, the filing of signatures of subjects with the Human Subjects Review Committee is not required.

Your study was determined to be exempt from further TWU HSRC review. However, another review by the Committee is required if your project changes. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Human Subjects Review Committee at the phone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Chair  
Human Subjects Review Committee

cc  Graduate School  
Dr. Jane Irons, Department of Early Childhood & Special Education  
Dr. Lloyd Kinnison, Department of Early Childhood & Special Education
Ms. Diana Schmittou  
P. O. Box 95  
Aubrey, TX 76227

Dear Ms. Schmittou:

I have received and approved the Prospectus entitled "Employers' Perceptions of Job Skill Levels of Special Education Vocational Adjustment Class Employees" for your thesis research project.

Best wishes to you in the research and writing of your project.

Sincerely yours,

Leslie M. Thompson  
Associate Vice President for Research and  
Dean of the Graduate School

cc  Dr. E. Jane Irons, Special Education  
Dr. Lloyd Kinnison, Special Education
Appendix B

Cover Letter and Instrument
Dear Vocational Adjustment Coordinator:

I am currently working on a Master's degree at Texas Woman's University in the area of Special Education. I need your assistance with the completion of a questionnaire that will require about 20 to 30 minutes of your time so that I may collect data for my thesis.

The purpose of my thesis is to examine the prerequisite skills of high school students with learning disabilities for entry level employment positions through the school's vocational adjustment class. The skill mastery level of high school students with learning disabilities impact employability. The results of this study may contribute information that will help educators improve the skill mastery level of students with learning disabilities before they begin to seek employment. It is believed that better job training and career education would result in better employees.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate in this research study, simply do not return the survey questionnaires. Return of the survey questionnaires will be interpreted as informed consent to participate. You do not need to identify yourself or your organization by name at any time. In this way, there is no way that your survey questionnaire will be identified. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about this research at 940/365-9126, or you may contact my research committee chair, Dr. Lloyd Kinnison, at 940/898-2271.

If you choose to participate, please complete the questionnaire for vocational adjustment class instructors. In addition, please distribute the enclosed questionnaire packet designed for employers to 1 individual or organization currently employing a VAC student. The employer can return the questionnaire in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope included in the packet. If you would like a summary of the results of this study, please contact me at the address below and I will provide you with a summary at the completion of the research. Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Diana Schmittou

Principal Investigator: Diana Schmittou - (Phone) 940/365-9126
Chairperson Research Committee: Dr. Lloyd Kinnison - (Phone) 940/898-2271
DEMOGRAPHICS FOR EMPLOYERS

Please choose only one response for each question.

1. Age
   __ 22 to 25
   ____ 26 to 30
   ____ 31 to 40
   ____ 41 to 50
   ____ 51 and above

2. Gender
   ____ Female
   ____ Male

3. Highest level of education
   ____ Never finished high school
   ____ High school graduate
   ____ Graduate of vocational or trade school
   ____ Some college work
   ____ Associates Degree from a community college
   ____ Bachelor's Degree
   ____ Master's Degree
   ____ Doctorate's Degree

4. Current job title
   position.
   ____ Manager/Owner
   ____ Assistant Manager
   ____ Personnel Manager
   ____ Supervisor
   ____ Other - Please specify ________________

5. Number of years in your current position.
   ____ Less than one year
   ___ 1 to 3 years
   ___ 4 to 6 years
   ___ 7 to 10 years
   ___ 11 to 15 years
   ___ 16 years or more

6. Major function of your business
   ____ Retail sales
   ____ Food service
   ____ Service industry
   ____ Health industry
   ____ Entertainment industry
   ____ Manufacturing

7. Number of employees working at your business.
   ____ 1 to 3 employees
   ____ 4 to 6 employees
   ____ 7 to 15 employees
   ____ 16 to 25 employees
   ____ 50 to 100 employees
   ____ 100 or more employees

8. How many Vocational Adjustment Class (VAC) employees have you employed in the past 12 months?
   ____ 1 VAC student
   ____ 2 to 3 VAC students
   ____ 4 to 5 VAC students
   ____ 6 to 10 VAC students
   ____ 11 or more VAC students
9. What is the approximate population of the area where your business is located?

_____ rural
_____ less than 500
_____ 500 to 2,000
_____ 2,000 to 10,000
_____ 10,000 to 20,000
_____ 20,000 to 50,000
_____ 50,000 or more

I understand that the return of my completed questionnaire constitutes my informed consent to act as a subject in this research.
DEMOGRAPHICS FOR VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT CLASS INSTRUCTORS

Please chose only one response for each question.

1. Age
   - 22 to 25
   - 26 to 30
   - 31 to 40
   - 41 to 50
   - 51 and above

2. Gender
   - Female
   - Male

3. Education Major
   - Bachelor's
   - Master's
   - Doctorate

4. Degree other than education
   - Bachelor's
   - Master's
   - Doctorate

5. How many years have you been a VAC instructor?
   - 1 to 3 years
   - 4 to 6 years
   - 7 to 10 years
   - 11 to 20 years
   - 21 years or more

6. How many years did you teach before becoming a VAC instructor?
   - 1 to 5 years
   - 6 to 10 years
   - 11 to 15 years
   - 16 to 20 years
   - 21 years or more

7. Please indicate your teaching experience prior to becoming a VAC instructor?
   - Regular Education
   - Special Education
   - Both Regular Education and Special Education

   Please use the back to provide any additional information that you would like to share.

I understand that the return of my completed questionnaire constitutes my informed consent to act as a subject in this research.
Survey Questionnaire

This survey contains questions regarding the entry level skills of the vocational adjustment class students (special education students) that are presently in your employ and those that have been employed by you in the past.

Please read each statement carefully and answer according to your experiences with Vocational Adjustment Class students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill not Needed for Position Held</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The students are able to read and comprehend the material they need in the completion of their jobs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The students can use math computation and problem solving skills in the completion of their assigned jobs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The students are able to use writing skills to correspond with others in the completion of their jobs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The students' spelling skills do not interfere with interpreting the meaning of their written expression needed in the completion of their jobs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The students are able to follow verbal instructions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The students are able to accurately relay messages.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The students are able to appropriately communicate with others on the telephone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The students can take accurate telephone orders.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The students can take accurate telephone messages.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The students are able to work on a job assignment until it is completed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The students are able to work well with other employees.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The students are able to work well with the customers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. The students show respect for authority.
   1  2  3  4  5

14. The students show respect and courtesy for others.
   1  2  3  4  5

15. The students can orally communicate effectively with others.
   1  2  3  4  5

16. The students report to work on time.
   1  2  3  4  5

17. The students use their time wisely while on the job.
   1  2  3  4  5

18. The students do not leave work until their shift is completed.
   1  2  3  4  5

19. The students can work well independently.
   1  2  3  4  5

20. The students can work well with one other person.
   1  2  3  4  5

21. The students can work well within a team of workers.
   1  2  3  4  5

22. The students complete their fair share of the work.
   1  2  3  4  5

23. The students dress appropriately for the job.
   1  2  3  4  5

24. The students maintain an appropriately neat appearance while on the job.
   1  2  3  4  5

25. The students can correctly use the equipment needed to complete their job.
   1  2  3  4  5

26. The students can remember and follow the order and sequence of their job(s).
   1  2  3  4  5

27. The students can understand and follow the safety rules and regulations.
   1  2  3  4  5

28. The students will ask for assistance when they do not understand what is expected of them.
   1  2  3  4  5
29. The students can accept constructive criticism.

   1  2  3  4  5

30. The students can work in collaborative groups and assume responsibility for their participation.

   1  2  3  4  5

31. The students maintain a neat, organized work station.

   1  2  3  4  5

32. The students demonstrate knowledge of rules and regulations required of their job.

   1  2  3  4  5

33. The students demonstrate knowledge of professional ethics.

   1  2  3  4  5

34. What concerns do you have regarding the job skills of your special education vocational adjustment class employees?

35. What recommendations do you have regarding the academic preparation of your special education vocational adjustment class employees?

I understand that the return of my completed questionnaire constitutes my informed consent to act as a subject in this research.